



# CONNECT

Connect  
Telephone & Computer  
Group

## Newsletter

1st Quarter 2008

### Connect Partners with Samsung

Connect Telephone & Computer Group announces the arrival of Samsung OfficeServ. Connect has partnered with Samsung to deliver converged systems to the small and medium sized businesses in Montana. The Samsung OfficeServ is a new IP based system that allows the connectivity of both IP and digital handsets. This system is also backwards compatible to the older Samsung handsets, allowing current Samsung customers to protect their current investment.

The OfficeServ product line offers several time saving applications: integrated messaging, OfficeServ Operator, OfficeServ Call, OfficeServ Data View and OfficeServ Softphone. These applications truly give your company a competitive advantage and increase your profitability.

The integrated messaging gives users the ability to get their voicemails on their computer screen through Microsoft Outlook. This allows them to save, archive and forward voice messages just like Email.



#### SAMSUNG AUTHORIZED DISTRIBUTOR

The OfficeServ Operator allows your attendant to answer, transfer and forward calls using the mouse instead of the phone. This will allow more time to focus on customer service instead of asking "who's calling."

The OfficeServ Call program allows all users the ability to "Screen Pop" in Outlook and dial directly from their Out-

look contacts. This program will greatly reduce the amount of time your staff wastes dialing the phone. If you wish, the system can create journals to capture notes on the call as well.

The OfficeServ softphone will allow users with a high speed internet connection located anywhere in the world to answer, place, and transfer calls as they would from their desk.

The reason to embrace technology is to increase profitability and competitive advantage. I think the Samsung product accomplishes that perfectly for small and medium sized businesses.

If you want to see how the OfficeServ family can increase your profitability and competitive advantage, please call, click, or stop by today.

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## THE POWER TO COMMUNICATE

### Connect Adopts New Technology



My mother always told me to "practice what I preach." I guess this is a great example of that. We, at Connect, talk about all the wonderful ways that technology can impact the businesses of our clients. Now we've had a chance to adopt a new technology that will greatly enhance our competitive advantage and increase our profitability.

We recently chose Verizon Wire-

less as the network of choice for our project. We have gone mobile.

Tigerpaw is our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software package. Until recently we have had to do all of this work from within the office.

Utilizing new smart phones running on Windows Mobile, we can now get client information from telephone numbers to service requests on our mobile phones. Our technicians can view their daily schedule and log their hours and work performed.

We will be phasing out the paper copies of the service orders and going to virtual service orders on the phones. Our customers will sign for services performed right

on the phone screen.

I bet you're still wondering about the part where it increases our competitive advantage. These tools give us the ability to have the entire database hanging off of the belt of each of our employees. They will have realtime access to the data to allow them to solve problems quicker, faster, and easier than our competition. In terms of increased profitability, the system will preclude the technicians from stopping by the office to see what is on their schedule for that day, thus giving our technicians 1/2 hour more per day to be in the field working with our customers. If you would like to explore taking your company mobile, please give us a call.

#### New Certifications

(to continue to provide the most certified technicians in the region, our employees constantly train to stay at the top)

- Brian O'Loughlin achieves the Samsung OfficeServ IP Telephony engineer certification
- Ben Boldt achieves the Samsung OfficeServ IP Telephony engineer certification
- Clint Croft achieves the A+ technician certification.
- Randy Begger achieves the Samsung OfficeServ IP Telephony engineer certification





### What is VOIP?

I have noticed confusion in the marketplace when it comes to VOIP. I wanted to try and explain the different types and show how each may be beneficial and how it increases a company's competitive advantage. First off, there are three different types of VOIP technology that are traditionally dumped into one category. It is crucial to understand which type is critical for your business to ensure that you do not invest your hard earned dollars into technology that will not accomplish your goals.

**IP Telephony.** This is a term that has been given to a technology that actually uses IP networks to deliver voice services to the desktop. In English this means your phone on your desk actually runs on a network connection as opposed to a digital phone that uses a proprietary "language" to communicate with its master, also known as the PBX. The advantages of IP telephony are in its ability to tightly integrate with applications and its open source that will allow the client to config-

ure that phone to function as an entry level computer. For example, a company could deploy a time keeping system that would allow users to "clock" in on a phone rather than using a separate system for timekeeping. Usually, the rule of thumb that I use is that if a company is very technology dependant, IP Telephony is a good choice for them.

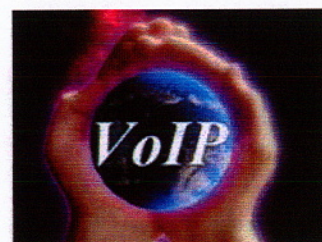
**VOIP.** This is a term that refers to a company that uses IP networks to connect multiple phone systems together. This can be accomplished over the internet or a private network. The advantage to the internet is that it is cost-effective, however without control of the network, call quality cannot be ensured. This is the typical technology deployed to link multiple "digital" systems together and have them act as one. The big disadvantage to this technology is that the client still has multiple systems with multiple databases and systems to maintain. This technology can be helpful to

allow clients that have already invested in technology to link multiple offices together to accomplish four digit dialing and no toll costs between locations.

**SIP Trunking.** This is a technology that allows companies to purchase their phone lines from an internet provider rather than a phone company allowing them to save on the cost of the lines and features. For example, if a client wanted to have Direct Inward Dialing (DID) and Caller ID over traditional lines, they would need to purchase a PRI from the phone company. This PRI comes loaded with 23 lines. This may be cost prohibitive. With SIP, they can get these features on a line by line basis, thus saving significant dollars per month. Another benefit of SIP trunking is that typically the providers include all of your long distance calling free of charge. Sounds like a great deal, but be careful, as discussed in the VOIP portion of the article, when running this over the open internet, expect call quality issues.

This is where certain providers offer a type of hybrid service that will allow you to take advantage of the savings, but forego the risks of deploying over the internet.

New technology can be a great boost to productivity and to the bottom line, but like anything there are inherent risks in deploying the technology. At Connect Telephone & Computer Group, we specialize in working with you and your business to determine your risk versus reward thresholds to determine what would work best for your business. If you would like to explore some of these options for your business, please give us a call.



*New Technology can be a great boost to productivity and to the bottom line*

## Network Car Expands Offering

Network Car, a leading supplier of fleet maintenance software, has expanded its offering to include state mileage calculations. This feature will allow trucking companies to automate the reporting to the state agencies in which its fleet operates.

Network Car is a web based program that allows the fleet manager, or small business owner, to see

where his vehicles are at all times. In addition, it can really streamline the amount of time it takes to maintain a fleet. Since Network Car is the only GPS based system that interfaces with the computer of your car, it can actually let you know when problems arise or when services are due.

This program has allowed many

companies to harness the power of the information on its fleet to provide better service, increase productivity, and keep their employees safe.

Network Car has also expanded its offering to include free roadside assistance, for those of you that are concerned about the

safety of your employees, this is another way that Network Car will increase your competitive advantage.

If you would like to learn more about how Network Car can help you get control of your fleet and your mobile workforce, please give us a call.



## Old Technology Does Cost Money



*If your technology is outdated, it may be costing you more than you are saving.*

I hear some clients tell me that unless their technology breaks, then it is working. I guess that makes sense if you do not look to the purpose of the technology.

If we think the purpose of a phone system is to place and receive phone calls, then the above statement is true. However, if we look at a phone system as a communication tool to increase our competitive advantage, then maybe not.

Here are a couple of examples that may make my point: a customer service firm is struggling to maintain their current customer base, while their outside sales force is working on new clients.

With new technology, they could tie the phone system to their computer software to generate the calls and allow the user to type notes about the call. This would ensure that all of their customers are being contacted and the company is being repre-

sented.

A legal firm that has not automated its calling into its database is manually tracking the charges to each of the clients. With newer technology, this process could be automated and \$150 per hour attorneys are not spending their time manually tracking charges.

*If you suspect that your old technology may be costing you, please give us a call.*



## How to Grow Your Business in Times of Over Employment?

In talking with business owners, I find one thing in common: we are all struggling to find more well qualified employees. In these times of "over employment", the government defines 4% unemployment as full employment, we struggle to grow our businesses because it is truly hard to attract new employees.

Latest figures have Montana at less than 2% unemployment. This means that going by the earlier definition of 4% is full employment, we have unemployed people employed.

We have ideas on how to help you cope with this dilemma. Use technology to solve mundane repetitive tasks so that the

employees you do have can focus on doing the things that technology can not do, or outsource more of the tasks within your business.

I just heard that the US Postal service is shutting down one of its rural Post Offices in Montana because they cannot find anyone to take the postmaster job in that town. I would suggest using some of its existing workforce to handle the load and automating some of the more mundane tasks. They could put a self service island in one of the post offices nearby to allow customers to purchase their own stamps and postage with credit cards or cash. The large retailers have already done this with great success: Wal-Mart, Kmart, and

Sears.

Another way to handle this would be to outsource to another company some work and allow their internal employees to job share at this small town.

In business I know that each company has main tasks that must be performed to sell their product or service and other tasks that are not part of our mission.

In almost every industry, innovation leads to small discoveries that propel that industry forward. Henry Ford with the assembly line, Banking with ATM machines. Connect's experts can help you innovate strategies to help your business.

Connect offers IT outsourcing that can provide your company with IT support, Help Desk, Training, and technology planning. Does your company have people doing these tasks that could be re-deployed to help grow your business? If you would like to grow your business, please give us a call.



*Imagine how much productivity the banking industry gained by deploying ATMs*

## Has Communication Become Function Rather Than Art?

By Russ Palmer

I love talking to people who ran businesses before the technology boom. I was having dinner with my grandmother several years ago and the subject of communication technology was being discussed. This woman was a real estate broker in the 50's and 60's. At that time the thought of operating a business the way she did, no cell phones, no copiers, no fax machines and certainly no computers, internet or huge databases was unimaginable to me. "How in the world did you communicate with your clients?" I asked as if this was a totally new concept to me. "One at a time face to face" she replied matter of fact. "If you wanted to talk to someone you either took the time to go see them and speak to them face to face or you called them up and had a conversation." She then turned the question on me "how do you do it?" "Everything moves so fast, when do you have time to talk to your customers?" Whoa! Good point grandma!

My grandmother understood something in her business, communication was much more than a function it was an art. Some-

thing she planned and looked forward to, the ability to get to know the people with whom she relied upon to make a living, the chance to listen and hear what they needed. As a result she was quite successful, even without Communication Technology.

Certainly communication technology has helped us get out more information, faster to the masses. It has greatly enhanced our ability to get the word or message out, but what has it done to help us listen? As we know communication is a two way street that requires speaking and listening.

I conducted a quick unscientific internet search experiment using common terms that describe communication technology. I broke them into two categories: one side that represented pushing information or "talking" and the other that represented gathering information or "listening". Talking search keywords included *Information software and Systems, Communication Systems and Talk*. Listen search keywords included *Survey Software and Systems, Feedback Systems and*



**Effective Communication requires listening as well as speaking.**

*Listen.* Google reported over 1 billion combined web hits, of those only 18% fell on the listen side of the search. This simple experiment clearly states we spend the overwhelming majority of our technology thought, planning and time to talk to or worse at people.

So what can we learn from grandma? Should we discard all of our computers, stop sending e-mails and go back to hand written letters? I'm certainly not advocating that, but we must stop and think about the process of communication before we can expect to enhance that process with technology. As I stated earlier, communication is a two way street that involves talking and listening. I think we have clearly defined that we use technology to talk pretty efficiently, maybe it's time to stand out from the crowd and listen.





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## *THE **POWER** TO COMMUNICATE*

### **Do your employees know how to run your critical application?**

In all my years in technology, I have never seen the emphasis on training as I am starting to see today. This brought me to an interesting place. Are things getting more complicated? Are we having more turnover? What is the reason for this new emphasis?

I think that most companies have rolled out technology in the past and have seen the effects of lackluster training. I know that most technology companies focus on the technology aspects and not on the training aspects. We, at Connect, are different. We believe that training is at the core of any successful technology deployment. If your staff does not know how to use the technology that you are deploying, it is safe to assume that the Return on Investment (ROI) that was built to purchase the technology will not come true.

We know your frustration.

How many of you reading this letter understand how to build an amortization calculator in Excel, or do a Mail Merge in Word, how about a conference call on your phone?

We provide training at regularly scheduled intervals on the most popular computer programs as well as all of the phone systems we sell. Be sure to click "Training" on our website to see which classes are coming up that may help you or your staff increase their knowledge and in turn build efficiency into their day.

The question is always posed to me: What about training on our software program? We don't have any way to help new people learn without setting them at a desk and let them fumble their way through the program. We call this "on-the-job training".

Connect will set up our training room as pictured below with up to 20 computers and an instructor computer that is hooked to the projector. This will allow you to bring in your instructor and have your people learn in a true classroom environment on your program with your database.

If we remember that we bought the technology to increase our efficiencies, then maybe if we teach our staff how to use it, our ROI would come to pass.

This past month, we have had two separate companies in to teach their employees how to use their critical applica-

tion. Companies like these are focused on providing better customer service and they know that a better understanding of the company's critical application can help them better serve their clientele. That, in my opinion, is increasing their competitive advantage.

If you would like to schedule a training for your staff, please call, click or stop by.

