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SMARTER TECHNOLOGY

VOIP and Telephony

While I Was Out

By: Ellen Muraskin 2004-06-14 Article Rating: 5/5 / 0 Share This Article

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Opinion: Why, after years of drought, has it started to rain VOIP providers?

While I Was Out (Page 1 of 3)

For six years at my old magazine, we proclaimed that VOIP was exploding—to 120,000, then 60,000, then finally 36,000 or so free-riding readers.

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CLECs (competitive local exchange carriers) and BLECs (building local exchange carriers) were installing DSLAMs (DSL access modules) in the basements of office buildings and apartment houses...

They were offering all of the Web enablement and convergence benefits of IP PBXs, and they rushed to wire the biggest metro areas, often before signing up customers.

Somewhere into those years, the dot-bomb hit. CLEC capital ran out, and their VC sources dried up. Telecom publications—our fortunes tied to those of the CLECs and the infrastructure companies that sold to them—shrank in ad revenue, page size and, inevitably, editorial staff.

The magazine all but ceased publication at the end of 2003 and reset its editorial sights on what looked like the safest corner of the telecom marketplace: the enterprise PBX.

So, its more than a little ironic to find, a little more than a month into this new gig at eWEEK.com, that VOIP has, indeed, exploded with full force. It now appears to be raining IP telephony services.

Its actually raised the dead: Many of the company URLs referenced in our old CLEC/BLEC stories now pop up sites of these very services, sometimes under new names.

In fact, who has not announced voice over data service recently? The cable companies all now ask if youd like broadband data and voice with your HBO and CNN.

The long-distance titans in the United States and abroad—see British Telecom, France Telecom, Deutsche Telekom—have come in with VOIP trials.

In the United States, this is not only a play at keeping their long-distance customers out of the arms of voice-over-cable—it also offers the interexchange carriers a way to circumvent the termination fees theyve had to pay the exchange-holding regional Bells—SBC, Verizon, Qwest and BellSouth—to complete phone calls.

The ISPs that arent cable companies—Yahoo, MSN and AOL—have figured out that their instant-messaging clients are just the place to imbed VOIP client software, and work presence information into the calling process, in the

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Read more [here](#) about AOL building Web and audio conferencing into AIM.

The companies that started in multinational data networking—Equant, Broomfield, Colo.-based Level3 Communications Inc. and others—have added voice to their offerings.

**Next Page:** Mushrooming VOIP services.

**Next: 'Mushrooming' >>**



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