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The Mobile Revolution

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“My wife and I purchased an iPad for personal use last summer and our daughter quickly took control of using it. She became proficient at using the iPad in a couple of weeks,” said Steve Melchiorre, CEO of Stratosphere Networks. “The wild reality that you may not believe is she was 18 months old when we bought it! It was truly mesmerizing to watch her learn how to power it on and off, adjust the volume, swipe and touch the screen to pick different applications and games to play, all before she could clearly speak! Now she is two and a half years old, and has mastered using the iPad. How about the popular gaming community? Gamers today are interacting and playing together, even though they are in different places, oftentimes globally. They are also talking to each other with headsets, messaging each other through the gaming system, and they can even see each other on their screen. They are really using VOIP to talk, multi-media to message each other, video conferencing to see each other, all in a complete collaborative experience. When the younger generations enter the workforce in the coming years, they will all expect to communicate via these new applications and avenues”.

It was just a few years ago when the first smartphones started to make their way into the hands of consumers; they were pretty standard, with voice, text and limited internet capabilities. How about once-unthinkable gadgets such as the iPad? Can you believe it has just barely been over a year since the first iPad was released?

Apple released the first iPad in April 2010, and sold 3 million of the devices in 80 days. During 2010, Apple sold 14.8 million iPads worldwide, representing 75 percent of tablet PC sales at the end of 2010. By the release of the iPad 2 in March 2011, more than 15 million iPads had been sold — more than all other tablet PCs combined. Fast-forward to 2011, and the reliance of mobility in the workplace is an absolutely integral part of a business’s day-to-day operations.

Before the iPad and Smartphone craze, business IT support revolved around traditional applications like Microsoft email, desktop support and server support. All of that has radically changed in just a few short years.

With the current economic climate, employees are constantly taking on extra tasks and responsibilities. This, in addition to being always on-the-go during and after hours, has created a dire need for workers to be able to work remotely. Mobility, Unified Communications and collaboration are now necessary requirements of business technology systems and keeping up with voice and data communications has become an important aspect of running a successful operation.

Virtualization, cloud, mobility, and unified communications are all now mainstream. Gone are the days of basic Microsoft functions and PC support—we are now inundated with tools that are designed to

make our workdays easier, more efficient and faster. Laptop computers, iPads, other tablets and smartphones have become a staple in the workplace. For example, according to CompTIA, more than 25% of healthcare practitioners alone have integrated tablet PCs into their practices.

How can a single IT manager possibly keep up with the rapid wave of new and complex technologies? The challenge lies within the deployment, integration, security, and on-going support of all of these new technologies. It is critical businesses have a team of experts that are proficient in each specific solution and application. Businesses can staff and manage these experts in house, use an outside company, or a combination of both. Most MSP's (managed service providers) not only provide a team of support experts, but the best ones also have a solid proactive monitoring solution, live in-house help desk, guaranteed onsite response times, vendor management, mobile and remote devices support, and more.

With all of these new complexities, it just is not realistic to expect one person to maintain their certifications and expertise in all of these new technologies. It is also difficult for one person to manage all issues, such as: email, spam, security, backup and disaster recovery, business continuity, system malfunctions, vendor management and more while trying to manage new projects and IT initiatives. Some of these initiatives include taking advantage of cost cutting solutions like virtualization, video conferencing, hosted phone systems, and cloud solutions.

According to CompTIA, 84% of IT service providers expect the managed services market as a whole to increase over the next year. In addition to that, 39% of MSP companies are adding desktop application support and likely mobile application support in the next year—proof that mobile integrations are taking over typical workplace applications.

For example, Stratosphere Networks, a nationwide managed service provider based in the Chicagoland area, is making it possible for businesses to seamlessly integrate mobile applications into their voice and data operations. At Stratosphere Networks, a full team of experts makes up the network operations center to proactively monitor the IT infrastructures of small, medium and large businesses. Malfunctions can happen at any time, so 24/7 monitoring has been implemented to provide customers peace of mind and reliability to day-to-day functions. With a reliable network operations center, businesses are assured that their networks are fully looked after and fixed in the event of a disaster.

“In the past few years we have seen a revolutionary change in business applications and communications. It is all things that you have been hearing about—UC, virtualization, collaboration,” said Tom Harr, CIO of Stratosphere Networks. “These technologies have gained so much momentum so quickly because of their significant and measurable return on investment. Our customers have greater needs because of the higher volume and complexity of responsibilities.”

In addition to the increasing number of businesses implementing mobile integrations into their day-to-day activities, cloud solutions continue to gain in popularity among all industries. Cloud solutions are allowing companies to be more agile and to receive information on demand without unexpected costs or prolonged installation timeframes.

What does “the cloud” mean? Here is the Wikipedia definition of “cloud”: “Cloud services are the widespread use of virtualization, service-oriented architecture and utility computing. Shared servers provide resources, software and data to technology devices on demand. This model for enabling convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources promotes availability and expediency.”

Now that you know the official definition, here is a better question to ask: what can cloud solutions do

for my business? There are a wide variety of reasons why businesses are opting to use cloud solutions within their infrastructure such as increasing revenue, simplifying management of applications like security and storage. According to CompTIA, 84% of cloud users cite simplicity or speed in implementation and on-ramping as a reason for seeking cloud solutions. Beyond that statistic, an additional 33% of users cite the desire to add new capabilities and features not available with alternate models as another major reason for seeking cloud solutions.

Remember that overworked and stressed IT technician? On top of maintaining the workplace infrastructure and monitoring remote devices, that person must also manage vendors of each software, cloud application, or hardware manufacturer. Not only do the vendors need to be called upon to assess the equipment, someone is also in charge of keeping track of warranties for each and every piece of the system. Vendor management services are increasingly becoming an integral part of today's business blueprint. Imagine the weight that is lifted when a team of experts can manage all of the different pieces of an IT infrastructure rather than adding that responsibility onto one person internally.

The evolution of technology in the past few years has made it possible for the most common goals of businesses to be attainable—to cut costs and increase productivity in the workplace. Virtualization, Unified Communications, cloud, mobility, tablets, collaboration and video, social media, iPads, instant messaging, text messaging—these are all applications that the Internet Generation, also known as Generation Z, and Generation Y uses in their everyday social lives.

There has clearly been a communication revolution that has happened in the last few years to present day—what will we be talking about in one, three, and five years from now?

About Stratosphere Networks

Stratosphere Networks is a multifaceted IT managed service provider focused on delivering comprehensive technology services and solutions to meet and exceed the always-changing, diverse business needs for all industries. Stratosphere Networks' team of experts works with you to develop a cohesive technology support plan specifically designed for your business. A fully staffed Network Operations Center provides full maintenance services and support ranging from desktop support, business continuity, disaster recovery, remote and on-site support, proactive network monitoring and ongoing maintenance services. Proactive 24/7/365 IT service, combined with guaranteed on-site response times provides Stratosphere Networks' customers with peace of mind and allows them to achieve their specific business initiatives. Visit www.stratospherenetworks.com for more information.