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What do people predict will be SIP's Future?

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We are entering a world of united communications where we will be able to reach each other more effectively than ever before, regardless of device, operating system, or network. We will simply communicate without the need to worry about scrambling for those lists of phone numbers or other unique identifiers tied to today's soon-to-be outdated devices and networks. Because presence data will allow us to know when the person we are trying to reach is available, we won't waste time trying to reach them until we know we can. Likewise, we won't be constantly interrupted during meetings and other important events if we choose not to be. The new world of communications will be much better than that which we know today. We should be more productive and will be able to take more control of our communications — not the other way around.

One of the engines driving this communications future to more effective communications is SIP, the IETF Session Initiation Protocol. SIP is already being used extensively in instant messaging, voice, and video conversations. SIP is also at the core of IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem), an architecture designed to allow wireless and wire line service providers to provide next generation services in an integrated fashion.

SIP is the protocol that helps us be accessible anywhere and everywhere — and on our terms. It allows us to stay connected to corporate PBXs, regardless of our location. SIP technologies allow corporations to confidently purchase SIP-based VoIP trunks to connect to their PBXs, eliminating the need for traditional voice T1s and other related equipment. And lots of toll charges...

SIP appears to be the up and coming standard protocol for Internet based human communications of the future. It is a peer-to-peer protocol and does not need a centralized server to work. But it can interface with such a server, if needed, in a service provider implementation, for example. SIP is powerful can be complicated, but those who fully deploy it can drastically reduce communications costs and increase communications speed and efficiency.

So, what better way to get the ball rolling on this first issue of SIP Magazine than to find out from some of the thought leaders what their thoughts are in this space. We offered these knowledgeable members of the SIP community an opportunity to weigh in on a series of questions — about the future of SIP, the impact that widespread adoption has had and will have on their product plans, and, perhaps most importantly, how SIP benefits the end user. For your perusal, deliberation, and reaction, their comments follow.

Where is the SIP market headed?

Anjali Gupta, Flextronics: SIP has become ubiquitous in the last couple of years for developers of next generation networks. The industry has witnessed the emergence of a new breed of alternate carrier — which is growing at a tremendous pace — by betting on IP for providing innovative value added services. This will continue to fuel unprecedented growth in SIP, at least for the next couple of years.

Henning Schulzrinne, Columbia University: Now that almost all telecom-related vendors offer SIP equipment, there are probably three growth areas: IMS, 802.11, and IM/presence. All of these have some question marks, but at least the technology for them is now becoming commercially usable.

Ian Colville, Aculab: The SIP market is, undoubtedly, headed for a bright future, having gone well beyond a 'heralding of the dawn' phase. The road industry commentary on protocols for use in next generation networks is focused almost exclusively on SIP. There are areas of concern, such as security, which provide opportunity for innovation — and solutions.

Jeff Ford, Inter-Tel: Inter-Tel believes that SIP will become the dominant standard for IP stations, gateways, and applications in the next generation enterprise communications network. It will enable businesses to fully leverage emerging third-party applications and endpoints, as well as next generation multimedia business enhancement tools, such as collaboration, conferencing, and presence management.

Ken Osowski, Pactolus: SIP is formulating the multimedia story for IMS-enabled networks. It will become the core signaling/event notification protocol for all real-time media — voice, video, messaging, presence events, multimedia messaging — that never before had been wrapped in a single application framework. All embodied interfaces, such as MMS and SMS, will be consumed by SIP, from the core network to the handset.

Al Brisard, Pingtel: SIP is taking enterprise communications far beyond its origins in voice. SIP is creating a robust enterprise communications framework that enables people to communicate in real time, whether by voice, video, or IM. SIP will be the unifying protocol that will blend communications and information to create increased value. We are at the beginning of a market transformation driven by the adoption of SIP and that will change how products are developed, packaged, and consumed at every level.

Peter Brockmann, SIPquest: SIP will dominate IP telephony for five reasons: First, SIP is simple and easy to debug. Second, SIP is standard, namely IETF standard, so there is a wide base of standards that it depends on, and that depend on it. Third, SIP is secure (see #2). Fourth, SIP seamlessly crosses the enterprise-service provider divide. Lastly, SIP applications abound since developers can build for either market with ease. Check out my whitepaper on this: <http://tmcnet.com/234.1>.

What are your expectations or estimates for SIP market growth?

Ken Osowski, Pactolus: For 2006, expect that incumbent service providers and carriers will start their migration off of TDM-based services platforms and move to SIP-based services and endpoints. This growth will continue to be fueled by increased competition from Tier 2 and 3 players that have SIP-based network approaches at the core of their business models. This market dynamic will force all players big and small to adopt SIP.

Peter Brockmann, SIPquest: We believe that the SIP market will explode, with phenomenal growth over the next three years. SIP will be as much a harmonizer in VoIP as IP was to the data network a decade ago.

Al Brisard, Pingtel: SIP has already begun to reshape the communications market as evidenced by its rapid adoption and offerings at every level. SIP has significant momentum to a point that it will not be stalled or derailed by key players that depend on their proprietary models to lock in their customers at ridiculous prices.

Jeff Ford, Inter-Tel: We feel that SIP will see modest growth over the next two years. However, the real growth should come into play sometime in 2008, when we should begin to see SIP emerge as the dominant interface. Depending on a number of factors, including the development of third-party applications and devices, we could expect this escalation to extend another four to five years.

Anjali Gupta, Flextronics: SIP will continue to enjoy broad adoption, at least for the next few years, and is expected to witness a solid double-digit growth. The current SIP-enabling technologies market is estimated at \$33M and expected to grow beyond \$100M in the next five years. Though enterprise segment was the first to witness broad adoption, SIP network infrastructure market as a whole, currently estimated at \$4B is expected to grow beyond \$10B by 2009 with both incumbent carriers and CLEC's embracing SIP.

Henning Schulzrinne, Columbia University: It is pretty clear that lots of companies are now transitioning from the evaluation and experimentation to the purchasing phase.

Ian Colville, Aculab: Figures abound for forecasts, all of which confirm SIP is in the ascendancy. Aculab products benefit from an integrated SIP stack offered under a cost free license, which gives customers a great boost and contributes to the growth of the market.

How does the development of SIP affect your product plans?

Ian Colville, Aculab: SIP is a central pillar of Aculab's IP-centric product plans. Aculab offers a feature rich SIP stack and will continue to invest in enhancements in line with demand and the evolution of the protocol. Together with Prosody X, our SIP offering enables a wide variety of telco and enterprise communications solutions that bring many advantages.

Peter Brockmann, SIPquest: SIPquest was founded to exploit applications of SIP. SIP is an integral component of everything we do. We use SIP in our multimedia suite for Audio, Video and Data Conferencing, the Desktop Console application and our Mobile Console product for mobile WiFi devices, WiFi and Cellular devices and IMS devices.

Jeff Ford, Inter-Tel: Inter-Tel has supported SIP in our product lines since February, 2003. In fact, Inter-Tel is continuing its thought leadership by continuing to develop and release new SIP-based products and applications that will provide value and improve business processes.

Anjali Gupta, Flextronics: The broad adoption of SIP enables Flextronics Software Systems (FSS) to further strengthen its position as the leading SIP vendor, and introduce innovative products, both for OEM's and carriers. These ingeniously designed products enable OEM's to roll-out innovative solutions that can be rapidly deployed thereby facilitating SIP adoption.

Ken Osowski, Pactolus: As SIP pioneers, we're past baseline incorporation issues, so two product areas stand out: First, incorporating advanced user interactivity, call handling, and rich billing options into voice services, heightening the user experience and reducing their costs, and second, helping service providers achieve broad cross-market/subscriber voice service reach. For example, enabling long-haul IP network operators to deliver wireless services and leverage their backhaul capability.

Al Brisard, Pingtel: Pingtel sees SIP as the linchpin for enterprise communications going forward. Pingtel will be at the forefront of SIP developments and will lead

in key areas that are most important to customers in the coming months such as security and presence. And this development will always be done in an open, standards-based way.

How do your customers benefit from SIP?

Jeff Ford, Inter-Tel: Like all industry standards, SIP allows our customers to take advantage of best-of-breed applications and devices and build the best possible solution for their business. In addition, standards-based environments serve as catalysts for developing many creative and innovative third-party solutions.

Al Brisard, Pingtel: In the end, customers care about three things: value, cost, and quality. SIP combined with open source development, enables customers to get what they want, from the vendors they want, at a price they want to pay, with the quality and flexibility they require. SIP is the catalyst that will provide application unification tied to real time communications.

Anjali Gupta, Flextronics: SIP has become the de facto standard. It provides better value for end customers by providing imperatives such as multimedia, presence, device independence and instant messaging capabilities. As a result, carriers can increase their efficiency by migrating to SIP and provide an enhanced user experience to reduce churn and increase ARPU.

Ken Osowski, Pactolus: As devices, intermediate networks, and core networks all become SIP-based, everything becomes more functional and affordable for both service providers and consumers as proprietary devices and single function networks become obsolete. Specifically, while all cell phones today have Java applets, there'll be new events and applications that are driven by 3rd parties directly to the consumer.

Henning Schulzrinne, Columbia University: I think the largest benefit is the ability to mix-and-match systems. For example, we are locally running a commercial SIP PBX system for the department that combines at least three brands of "hard" phones and several soft phones.

Peter Brockmann, SIPquest: SIPQuest customers are assured of great software products with rapid debugging, rapid integrations, secure implementations, and scalable deployments.

Ian Colville, Aculab: Quite apart from the obvious value inherent in an Aculab SIP solution, which helps to protect margins in a competitive arena, the feature-rich nature of our API enables customers to use SIP for more than basic call control – third-party call control and the efficient use of media resources being good examples.