



WHAT IS 'IP CENTREX' AND WHAT CAN IT DO FOR MY BUSINESS?

This FAQ document is targeted specifically to business leaders and others in a decisionmaking capacity. It is non-technical and is focused on issues surrounding business communications from a pragmatic perspective. It is intended as a source of information for those considering improvement to business communications infrastructure as a means of:

1. Gaining competitive advantage in the marketplace.
2. Reducing expenses associated with equipment and/or services.
3. Improving productivity with current staffing levels and positions.
4. Decreasing overhead associated with managing multiple vendors.
5. Gaining flexibility in the location, mix, and function of existing staff.

WHAT IS IP CENTREX?

IP Centrex is a dramatically simplified “business communications” service provided by a single vendor, usually in a regional geography. Business communications is the total solution of services, equipment, and software that allows a business to communicate internally, with employees, and externally, with business partners and customers. A business communication system is comprised of email, voice mail, telephone and data service, web-based applications, faxes and other messaging and communications services and products, such as video.

IP Centrex is a ‘total’ business communications service that provides most, if not all of the communications tools a business needs. IP Centrex is delivered to customers using technology that has been in use and proven viable by Fortune 1000 organizations for years.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IP CENTREX AND OTHER BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS OFFERINGS?

Other telephone service is achieved using a PBX or key system, software for that equipment, a voice cabling network installed at the customer’s location and local access and long distance services provided by carriers such as Qwest, WorldCom, etc. In addition, businesses typically require high speed Internet access, email, voice mail, and fax services, web site hosting, calendaring (i.e. MS Outlook), and possibly video service. These additional business communication capabilities require additional equipment, software and/or services.

In total, other business communications solutions require a customer to deal with up to six or more vendors. And customers must own or lease and maintain much of the equipment



required to implement those solutions, i.e. voice mail hardware/software, internet modems/routers, fax machines, PBX or key system, etc. Other services run on separate cabling networks in the customer's location, which adds failure points and integration challenges to the total business communications solution. And other services are not integrated; the telephone handset is used for telephone and voice mail service, fax machines are used for receiving and sending faxes, and computers are used for Internet access, e-mail, and calendaring services. This segregated approach is difficult to maintain, because many 'experts' are required.

IP Centrex is provided through a single vendor that integrates all of the aforementioned services into a single offering. IP Centrex includes unified messaging - the integration of fax service, e-mail, calendaring and voice mail, with access to messaging from a variety of avenues. Unified messaging allows businesses to access all messaging (via username and password protection) from one's telephone, or company-network-connected, or any other Internet-connected computer (handheld, desktop, laptop, etc.) anywhere in the world. Unified messaging translates directly to incredible flexibility and customer service capability, which in turn translates to saved time and effort and increased sales. Customers using IP Centrex can do significantly more with less stress on their organizations, because it's easier to communicate.

IP Centrex runs on a single, usually existing, cabling network. It eliminates the need for two separate cabling networks in the customer's facilities, eliminating failure points, simplifying building construction/remodeling, and eliminating integration challenges. IP Centrex includes local access and long distance services, e-mail service, web site hosting, fax-to-the-desktop, voice mail service, calendaring service (similar to MS Outlook), highspeed Internet access and more.

WHAT ELSE IS INCLUDED WITH IP CENTREX SERVICE?

IP Centrex includes automated back up of voice mails, e-mail files, calendaring files, and received and sent faxes; the back up is housed in a secure datacenter with fully redundant equipment, off site from the customer's location. Essentially, IP Centrex includes a portion of the customer's disaster recovery plan. IP Centrex includes an intuitively simple web portal; it allows system users to program many of their individual settings from any Internet-connected computer. Compared with other solutions, IP Centrex dramatically simplifies programming telephone features and functionality. IP Centrex includes virus checking for incoming email. IP Centrex includes call accounting functionality (management reporting for call detail by extension). And IP Centrex includes software upgrades as new functionality is introduced.

WHAT QUALITY OF SERVICE CAN I EXPECT WITH IP CENTREX?

Voice quality is similar to, or better than traditional telephony equipment. Because IP Centrex is provided by a single vendor, 'finger-pointing' and vendor management hassles are eliminated. Compared with traditional solutions, IP Centrex improves service quality



considerably. For smaller businesses, network simplification, automated back up of messaging, call detail reporting, and other functionality only offered by relatively highcost solutions, offer tangible benefit in cost savings.

WHAT EQUIPMENT IS NEEDED FOR IP CENTREX?

IP Centrex requires IP-enabled telephones, a router and a data switch. At attractive rates and plans, all equipment can be had from the IP Centrex service provider.

WHAT DOES IP CENTREX COST, COMPARED TO OTHER OFFERINGS?

Monthly service fees for IP Centrex are comparable to other offerings. However, when one considers IP Centrex' all-in-one functionality and single-vendor environment, IP Centrex' total cost of ownership is significantly lower than other offerings. For example, faxes being received at one's desktop as opposed to a central fax machine will save heavy fax users thousands of dollars each year. Virus elimination in email has saved thousands of dollars each year in avoiding lost productivity. A single-vendor environment can save thousands of dollars in avoiding having to manage multiple contracts and avoiding down time associated with finger pointing among vendors. The IP Centrex solution can be leveraged for significant time and effort savings, dramatic improvements in customer service, and elimination of capital expense.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT IP CENTREX?

Compared with other business communications systems, IP Centrex is far easier to implement, mainly due to IP Centrex' single-vendor environment and unified services offering.

With a global base of customers, the IP Centrex provider represented by The NT Group is local to Minnesota, and maintains an experienced, professional staff of project managers. Customer training on IP Centrex' full functionality and use is included during implementation for no additional charge. Compared to other business communications solutions, the single-vendor environment of IP Centrex and a local provider with global experience translates to a simple implementation for customers.

HOW CAN I TAKE A FIRST STEP TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IP CENTREX?

Simply call The NT Group. We can answer many of your questions over the phone. If you like, we'll meet with you to learn more about your business and provide you a quote for service. We can also arrange a demonstration of IP Centrex service. We believe you'll appreciate our 'no pressure' approach and our level of experience and professionalism.