New upgrade streamlines message management
Business Connections

Innovation is essential in order to make the improvements in capabilities and efficiencies your business needs to stay competitive. As we all know, if you stand still, you will fall behind. Yet maintaining a spirit of innovation can be challenging. It requires taking chances, learning different skills, and committing to the undeniably hard work of creating something new.

This issue of Business Connections contains several examples of innovation related to the communications industry. On page 4, we discuss the upcoming transition from IPv4 to IPv6 and how it relates to the use of IP addresses. It’s a transition necessitated by the rapid growth of the Internet and one that Home Telecom is preparing for now to minimize disruption for our customers.

Our voice messaging service is getting an innovative new feature called Messaging-Unified, which you can read about on page 5. It’s an upgrade that provides a single contact point for all messages including voice mails, e-mails, and faxes. Also on the topic of innovation is the Business Spotlight on Insphere Insurance Solutions found on page 7. This company broke new ground by being Home Telecom’s first ComVerge Hosted PBX customer and shares their experiences on page 7.

Please let us know if you would like to learn more about any of the topics covered in Business Connections or need help finding answers to your specific communication questions. You can count on Home Telecom to provide you with innovative solutions.

Sincerely,

William S. Helmly
President & COO
Home Telecom
Networking functions can be intimidating, but engaging in meaningful conversations at these events is a learnable skill. Here are a few strategies to try:

1. Don’t just be interested in getting business. Instead, focus on starting and nurturing business relationships.

2. Have an informal “elevator speech,” or 30-second commercial ready to deliver when people ask what you do. It should include the products or services you provide, your target market, and what makes you unique.

3. Find common ground with the person you’re speaking with. A great place to start is the event you’re both attending. Ask if the other person has been to the event before, if they know many people in attendance, or what brought them there.

4. Ask questions. Find out what the other person does, and comment on anything you find interesting, or that might indicate a starting point for doing business together.

5. When someone hands you a business card, read it carefully to see if anything catches your attention or interest.

6. Have a goal for each event (e.g. meet five new people), but be open to other possibilities (e.g. reconnecting with a former co-worker).

7. Don’t be shy. Remember, everyone is there for the same reason—to connect—so it’s perfectly fine to approach other individuals or groups.

Even if networking doesn’t come naturally to you, the effort is worthwhile since attending these events may lead to significant business relationships. So get out there and get talking.

_The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce is a great resource for business networking opportunities. Visit www.berkeleysc.org/calendar to see a calendar of upcoming events._

_TIPS FOR BEING A TEAM PLAYER_

Teamwork and a collaborative attitude are critical to success in the business world. But what does it take to be a strong team member? To make sure you’re the best team member you can be, follow these guidelines:

- Openly contribute your ideas and solutions, and value the ideas of others.
- Recognize and respect various team members’ differences.
- Listen closely, without judgment or skepticism.
- Ask questions and clarify details.
- Keep commitments—whether it’s meeting a deadline for a specific responsibility or showing up on time for a team meeting.
- Stay flexible when priorities or strategies change, and maximize any opportunities to make a positive impact.
- Be sincere about your ownership in the team and its outcomes.
- Strive for “win-win” solutions.
- Share credit for successes, and don’t blame individuals for things that go wrong.
- Keep the lines of communication open.
What is an IP Address?
An IP address is a set of numbers that identifies a computing device on the Internet. IP addresses are actually binary numbers but to make them easier for us to remember, they’re usually displayed in decimal format. For example, in IPv4, the binary number 11011000.00011011.00111101.10001001 would appear as 216.27.61.137.

IPv4 uses 32-bit addresses (such as the binary number above), which allows for roughly 4.3 billion of them. That seems like a lot, but in the early days of the Internet, large research organizations like IBM and AT&T’s Bell Labs gobbled up many of the addresses. Beginning in the 1990s, addresses were handed out more conservatively but were still easy to obtain.

IPv6 makes room for vastly more addresses. Unlike IPv4, it uses 128-bit addresses, which creates space for trillions of unique numbers.

Data compatible with one protocol isn’t compatible with another. To get around this, ISPs like Home Telecom are working to make sure that both protocols will be able to be used.

Home Telecom’s Plans In Motion
Home Telecom will deploy a “dual-stack” approach, which allows IPv4 and IPv6 to work simultaneously on the company’s network, according to Heather McGrath, Internet Product Coordinator.

“What the dual-stack will allow Internet users to continue to operate as they have been with IPv4 equipment and software without interruption of service. Home Telecom expects to run a dual-stack for years, so businesses will have time to migrate to the new protocol. We’ve acquired a set of IPv6 addresses and have inventoried all of our hardware and software for compatibility. We have a lab set up for testing IPv6 with a variety of hardware and software configurations so we can anticipate any problems before they arise,” explains McGrath.

She adds, “Home Telecom is working to preserve our remaining IPv4 addresses while we transition to IPv6; new policies require a business to explain their IP address needs more thoroughly than in the past. However, we’ll work with businesses to help them use their existing IP addresses efficiently.”

What a Small Business Should Do
Small businesses won’t need to make major new investments in hardware and software right away. Now is a good time, however, to assess your compatibility with IPv6 and identify potential problems you’ll need to address. To meet future technology demands, consider these issues:

• Education. Cultivate an awareness of IPv6 and learn about its requirements.
• Assessment. Identify software and hardware that is and is not compatible with IPv6.
• Planning. Integrate migration to IPv6 into your technology upgrade cycle.

Visit www.ipv6actnow.org for more information on IPv6 migration for small businesses. You can also contact a Home Telecom Business Sales Representative at 888-571-5775.
Managing Messages Just Got Easier

MessagingUnified provides mobility, efficiency, and a competitive edge

Excellent customer service is critical for success in business, and keeping up with correspondence is key to providing excellent customer service. But with so many channels—voice, e-mail, and fax—staying up to date can be a challenge. Home Telecom has the solution: MessagingUnified. It’s an upgrade to our existing voice messaging service that provides a single contact point for all messages including voice mails, e-mails, and faxes. Mobile and remote professionals especially benefit from MessagingUnified with quick and easy access to messages from anywhere, anytime.

Voice Mail to E-mail
Heather McGrath, Voice Product Coordinator at Home Telecom, says of MessagingUnified, “It’s so much easier to have my voice mails delivered to my e-mail than having to call into the voice mail portal to listen to my messages. I receive an e-mail as soon as the message is left and can listen to it immediately with one click, no matter where I am.” She adds, “Anyone who is in front of a computer as much as I am will appreciate this feature.”

Other Useful Features
MessagingUnified also simplifies the process of forwarding messages. Users can easily e-mail a WAV file to anyone, even if they’re not on the same voice mail system. Additional features that add convenience to message management include:
- Screening option
- Live message playback
- Restore option for deleted voice mails (up to 14 days)
- Easy 1, 2, 3 voice mail navigation
- Set-up reminder calls
- Mark messages as new
- Compose messages and send to a distribution list
- Web interface (CommPortal)

• Sub mailboxes (perfect for small businesses)*
• Fax messaging (receive, view, and forward faxes electronically)*

The CommPortal interface allows you to manage every aspect of your account. For example, not only can you listen to voice mails, you can record new messages using a microphone attached to your PC, activate live message screening, set reminder calls, and change the schedule that affects how your account deals with incoming messages.

FREE Upgrade
The best part? MessagingUnified is FREE to all current voice mail customers. All current business voice mail users will be upgraded to MessagingUnified by the end of the year. If you don’t want to wait for your upgrade and are ready to switch now, please call one of our Home Telecom Business Sales Representatives at 888-571-5775.

MessagingUnified improves customer service and employee activity, facilitates mobility, and provides businesses with the competitive edge needed in today’s marketplace. For additional feature details, visit www.messagingunified.com.
For pricing information, call 888-571-5775.

*Added fee applies.
Going Beyond Customer Service

Build loyalty by providing a great customer experience

What is it about your company that makes customers want to do business with you, and even tell others about it? Is it your fantastic products? Great selection? Impressive expertise? It’s probably all of these things to some degree. But, to an even greater extent, it’s how they feel about doing business with you, or what is known as their customer experience.

**Improve Customer Experience, Improve Business**

A 2010 study by RightNow Technologies found, “Customer service is the most influential thing a company can do to increase customer advocacy [focus on what is best for customers].” The study revealed that 55 percent of consumers recommend a company because of its customer service, compared to products at 49 percent and price at 42 percent. In addition, customers are willing to pay more for a great customer experience—up to 25 percent more!

Incredibly, according to a MarketingCharts.com article about the RightNow study, “RightNow estimates the U.S. airline industry could make an additional $10.6 billion in revenue this year if they could guarantee a superior customer experience. That is more than five times the predicted deficit for the airline industry this year.” Just think what your company might accomplish with additional attention to customer experience.

**Emotional Bonds are Hard to Break**

Customer experience is a somewhat new concept in business. Wikipedia defines it as follows: “The sum of all experiences a customer has with a supplier… awareness, discovery, attraction, interaction, purchase, use, cultivation, and advocacy.” With each of these stages in the relationship, there are many opportunities to provide an excellent customer experience.

The key to doing so is identifying what emotions customers want to feel when doing business with you, then creating situations that enable it to happen. Examples of positive customer emotions include joy, trust, contentment, and the feeling of “being taken care of.” The cumulative emotions customers experience as they do business with you result in an emotional bond that becomes hard to break over time.

Practices that can instantly improve your customers’ experience include making them feel valued, listening carefully to their concerns, and over-delivering.

**Benefits of a Customer Focus**

You may be concerned that improving customer experience will cost you more in staffing, marketing, and training; however, such improvement can actually help your bottom line in these ways:

- **Customer Loyalty.** It costs less to retain current customers than to attract new ones.
- **Additional Income.** Happy customers are willing to pay more for your products or services.
- **Word of Mouth.** Customers who love doing business with you will tell others about you.

Remember, it’s not only what your customers think about your company, but also what they feel about it, that matters. Customer experience is at the heart of it all.
Insphere Insurance Solutions specializes in preserving the economic stability of families, self-employed people, and small businesses through insurance products. David Rosenberg, District Sales Leader, gives this example, “Proper health insurance coverage can prevent an illness or accident from bankrupting a family or business.”

The 30-year-old company has had an office in Charleston for 12 years. This office includes 25 agents who sell life, health, disability, and long-term care insurance. Insphere’s agents assess each client’s current situation and help them find “holes” in their insurance coverage.

Insphere has been a Home Telecom customer for two years. Wanda Mingo, Business Service Sales for Home, notes that Insphere was Home’s first Hosted PBX customer. She says, “They have a large number of users and it’s going well.” The company also gets Internet service and a traditional fax line from Home.

Rosenberg notes, “The ComVerge phone system we have from Home works great. The initial hiccups were taken care of fast. Best of all, we experienced a significant cost savings by switching to Hosted PBX.”

The features provided by ComVerge have proved valuable to Insphere. “One convenient feature is portability. One of our agents can move to a different office in our building without any rewiring needed; we just unplug the phone and plug it into a different office,” says Rosenberg. He also appreciates being able to listen to voice mail messages recorded on the system with his mobile phone, explaining, “The system sends an e-mail with a WAV file to my BlackBerry. It’s a cool feature.”

Rosenberg has been pleased with the treatment received from Home Telecom employees. He says, “Home takes customer service seriously. They do a lot of little things that make you happy to do business with them. They’ll just stop by to say hi, and it’s always nice to see them.”
Protect Your Investment with HOME Business Security

Just because you’re out of the office doesn’t mean you have to be out of
the loop. With Home Telecom’s newest Security add-on – Total Connect
– you can utilize the Internet, PDAs, cell phones and other web-enabled
devices to control your security system, receive information remotely and
much more for only an additional $6.00 per month.

Put Total Connect to work for you and you’ll have the critical information
you need to help manage your business, your employees and even the
unexpected.

• Security Monitoring - $25.00 per month
  with a Better Business Bundle
• Security Monitoring - $29.99 per month
• Fire Detection - $2.00 per month
• Cellular Back-up - $13.00 per month
• Total Connect - $6.00 per month

Contact one of our local Business Sales Consultants to
customize a security system to meet your specific business needs.

HomeSC.com • 888-571-5775

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