

Case Study: IPiphany

Enterprise VoIP: Class 5 Hosted PBX

Choosing a VoIP Infrastructure and Engineering Provider for a complex Class 5 Deployment with large-scale End User Transition

IPiphany is a managed communication services company that provides VoIP services for small- and medium-sized businesses (see sidebar for detailed company profile). The Company has been providing telephony services for over a decade and has steadily grown their service offerings and service footprint.

In early 2009, IPiphany grew concerned that their current provider was not addressing critical issues that would allow IPiphany to provide the requisite services to their customers in the VoIP Hosted PBX Class 5 market. A confluence of events described in more detail below led to IPiphany's decision to begin working with VoIP Logic. The move required migration of all of the company's pre-existing customers to new managed services infrastructure while maintaining flawless, uninterrupted services to dozens of major companies and hundreds of smaller enterprises in aggregate, representing thousands of business telephone users.

This case study explores *why* and *how* IPiphany chose to migrate these very sensitive services—the technical considerations, business strategy, and the implementation lessons learned in this complex undertaking.

THE SITUATION

“We were spooked. Our provider was no longer current with VoIP technology...”.

IPiphany started working with their VoIP Managed Service provider in 2005 and generally had a healthy partnership with the larger \$70 million CLEC. IPiphany knew that their provider was using Sylanro products for residential use and wanted to grow their business offering to the business side. Due to fluctuations in the market and changes in direction of their provider's business mission, though, the provider was not providing the upgrades necessary for IPiphany to maintain its service commitments. The provider was dedicating increased resources to other products and was also perhaps undergoing some personnel turnover, all of which translated to a poor and/or an inattentive service offering to IPiphany, who in turn was hard pressed to meet dynamic End User customer needs in a rapidly growing and evolving Hosted PBX sector.

The tipping point for IPiphany was when they had an outage which led to inoperable systems for more than a day. In the sensitive world of business communications, a twenty-four hour disaster recovery procedure is devastating. In short, the outage and some new limitations on pre-existing service trickled down to IPiphany customers, thereby straining valuable and hard-earned customer relationships.

Formed in 2001, IPiphany provides managed communication services for small and medium sized businesses. The Chicago-based company was an early proponent and implementer of Voice Over IP solutions, including Cisco Call Manager, and converged voice data and video transport over wide area networks.

In 2004 IPiphany launched its own hosted VoIP service which provides not only phone system features but also internet access and unlimited local and long distance service. IPiphany has installed and continues to support over 3000 VoIP end-point devices, including Polycom and Cisco phones for over 200 clients. The company has successfully deployed small and large sites spread out over multiple cities and countries including Mexico, the U.K. and India.

The company's name, IPiphany, is meant to represent the sudden intuitive realization of how IP technologies can change and improve communications in your business.



With over a decade of experience listening to and working with small and medium-sized business regarding their communications needs, CEO Pete Langas was also concerned that IPiPhany would soon be unable to provide the forward-looking services necessary for their customers to be efficient in the marketplace.

“We want to handle our customers’ telephony services flawlessly so that they can concentrate on what they do best: doing business. We also want to offer the next generation services that will give customers an edge over their competitors.” Based on this core mission, and on his concerns, Langas knew he had to make some painful decisions—quickly and expediently.

FINDING A NEW VOIP INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDER

Once IPiPhany decided that they had to make a move, the next step was to carefully evaluate their provider requirements. Langas wanted a company that was “specialized, very focused, and fully dedicated to VoIP.” Concurrent with their provider vetting process, IPiPhany also understood a larger industry movement away from Sylanro feature server technology that had, at the time, been superseded by BroadSoft technology in the component category (and has subsequently been acquired by BroadSoft and announced for pending “End of Life”). In addition to meeting a rigorous internal vetting process, the new IPiPhany provider would need operational expertise in the pending replacement technology—Broadsoft’s BroadWorks platform.

As IPiPhany began searching the market for its options, there were a number of items on their wish list:

- **Carrier Neutrality:** IPiPhany’s current provider was also a carrier, and while there was no immediately evident conflict of interest, Langas knew that he wanted to work with a neutral party so he’d never have to second guess whether his business partner’s mission was equally aligned with his—and his customers’—interests.
- **Continuous Innovation:** IPiPhany wanted an infrastructure provider that would continue to change and evolve with the addressable market’s requirements.
- **Linked Incentives:** Cost is always an issue. IPiPhany needed an operator with affordable start-up costs and a pay-as-you-grow model, rather than a front loaded non-recurring charge. Essentially, they needed a provider who shared their incentive to grow with low churn.
- **Complementary Services:** IPiPhany wanted to remain in control of their carrier relationships and have the unfettered ability to make decisions on complementary services they might select to add.
- **Rapid timeframe for deployment and transition:** After the inconsistent service pattern experienced by IPiPhany, there was considerable momentum to deploy and transition their customer base to the new operator.

ENTER VOIP LOGIC

VoIP Logic was uniquely situated to meet the challenges and wishes posed by IPiPhany with its team of experienced Class 5 engineers, its field experience (by 2009) on over a dozen comparable deployments, and its revenue and corporate structures, offering linked incentives and no conflict of interest, respectively.

“Before we even signed with VoIP Logic, we got access, real-time access to their top engineers and engineering resources. They knew what they were doing. They knew VoIP. It’s in their name.” – Pete Langas

Among the many advantages IPiPhany found in working with VoIP Logic, access to expert engineers for detailed deployment planning was pivotal to sealing the deal. The engineering and testing involved in the deployment was extensive. Some of the more crucial (and difficult) work was as follows:

1. **Importing user information for a large amount of End Users.** There are more than a hundred settings, choices, and options for each User. VoIP Logic was able to use some internally developed code to quickly bulk provision users into the system. Because the information was loaded by machine rather than by hand, there were many fewer errors.
2. **End-to-End infrastructure setup.** VoIP Logic was able to produce IP addresses, a working VoIP Peering SBC, Access Line SBC, a feature server partition, training and testing in three weeks.
3. **Critical support during the cutover.** To contend with the many issues that could (and did) come up, VoIP Logic provided 24/7 support to check on connectivity and call processing as the Users were migrated. The extra trained eyes and ears help identify and resolve issues more quickly.
4. **Ongoing progress reporting on device failure and reason for failure during the cutover.** VoIP Logic was able to provide continuous reports on device registration moves to confirm the success of the port or to identify the reason for failure (i.e., invalid username or password) from the end device perspective. As this one element occurs, coupled with accurate re-provisioning on the VoIP Logic infrastructure, the cutover is successful.

IPiphany's set-up went well because errors were identified and corrected, there was no constraint on available resources, and the systems were, by and large, accurately deployed and provisioned. Thanks to considerable advanced preparation, VoIP Logic and IPiphany moved over 3,000 End Users during this transition.

THE TRANSITION: A COMMERCIAL PERSPECTIVE

While quantifying results of the engineering transition and subsequent training is in some ways very straightforward—a comparison of invoices and uptime might be easy (and persuasive) - there are a number of other commercial considerations IPiphany found compelling.

- **Improvement of Gross Profit:** Along with the other benefits, IPiphany saw a notable improvement in gross profit, primarily, attributable to enhanced control of all network and carrier costs.
- **Control of Infrastructure:** In addition to controlling costs, IPiphany was now able to monitor and control response time to customer problems. Langas' best estimate was a 50% improvement in customer-facing response time.
- **Neutrality:** Langas noted, "We weren't looking for a white label program. We wanted to control what we can do and how we could grow, where we could sell and new areas where we could innovate." Going with VoIP Logic ensured this control, freeing up the company to see and pursue new markets and opportunities.

THE TRANSITION: AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE

From an engineering perspective, the transition made good sense on a number of levels. Steven Cho, Senior Director, Engineering at VoIP Logic, offered insight on the benefits to IPiphany:

- **Voice Quality** IPiphany gained direct control of their voice quality by interconnecting their MPLS service to the VoIP Logic platform for managed IP access all the way to their customers premise and by selecting and peering with their own carriers for origination and termination services.
- **Geographic Redundancy: Quality Assurance** Geographic redundancy ensures that IPiphany customers continue to have service, even if there is a major outage event at the primary site.
- **Real-time Control** IPiphany has a highly competent technical staff which, when given control of call routing and other real time decisions, is able to be much more responsive to End User issues.

CONCLUSION

IPiphany faces many of the questions and problems common to selling Enterprise VoIP services. With the growing menu of required integrations—(Outlook, Salesforce.com, etc.), unified communications features, End User web portal self-management requirements and advances in the capabilities of the underlying technology,—it made sense to turn to an option where Langas felt like a 'facilities-based' service provider without the burden of owning, operating and making continuous capital improvements in the infrastructure.

To learn more about VoIP Logic and how we can help you implement your VoIP strategy, visit our website at www.VoIPLogic.com or contact our sales team: sales@voiplogic.com

"We wanted a company that specialized in VoIP, a company that would stay current and, ideally, be forward thinking in the hosted PBX sector. We needed a Class 5 provider with deep industry partnerships and a flexible, experienced IT staff that would be accountable for our telephony infrastructure needs—someone to help us hit the ground running."

—Pete Langas, CEO, IPiphany