A Voice for Lync

Editor Ian Hunter talks to AudioCodes about their latest developments for voice enabling Microsoft Lync. Is this the offering that gives resellers a simple and all-encompassing solution to legacy voice integration and more?

Nimrod Borovsky, VP of Unified Communications at AudioCodes

With its promise of rich communications options, presence, instant messaging, voice, video and conferencing, Microsoft Lync is an attractive solution for companies looking to introduce unified communications. It supports integration with legacy and IP-based telephony systems through third-party solutions, several of which have been qualified by Microsoft as interoperable with Lync. However, the variety of solutions available from different vendors adds a level of complexity to voice migration projects. Many systems integrators and resellers lack the knowledge and experience to make the correct decisions for their customers which can lead to unnecessary costs and overly complex solutions.

System integrators offering Lync unified communications need to have at their disposal a simplified voice-enablement offering that includes all the necessary network elements, together with a strong global service portfolio that covers all stages of the implementation wherever the end customer sites may be located.

AudioCodes One Voice for Lync programme is a unified product and services offering designed to assist resellers and system integrators in simplifying and accelerating voice-enablement of Microsoft Lync implementations. One Voice for Lync is a comprehensive package that encompasses the major network elements, application solutions and services required to successfully implement voice communications within Microsoft Lync environments.

As Nimrod Borovsky, VP of Unified Communications at AudioCodes, explains, "With our new 'AudioCodes One Voice for Microsoft Lync' initiative, we streamline Lync voice project implementations by offering one source for voice products with one point of contact for all voice support issues, and one trusted partner for voice-related expertise and professional services."

The network elements included within One Voice for Lync are:

- **High-definition IP Phones -** offering full integration with Lync presence, excellent acoustic quality, automated provisioning and a sleek and modern design
- **Session Border Controllers (E-SBCs) –** enabling secure and reliable interconnection with SIP Trunking services
- **Enhanced Media Gateways –**enabling integration between Microsoft Lync and the PSTN or existing PBXs
- **Survivable Branch Appliances (SBAs) –** delivering local connectivity and survivability features for Lync branch office deployments
- **Voice Application –** additional voice applications such as call recording or a branch auto-attendant to complement Lync's native functionality

A crucial component of AudioCodes One Voice for Lync programme is the wide range of pre and post-sales services available to assist system integrators and resellers deploying Lync voice services. AudioCodes global services portfolio addresses all the challenges involved in integrating voice into Lync environments, beginning with an initial evaluation of the current environment, followed by understanding the unique business needs, through solution installation, training and on-going technical support. Resellers and system integrators can pick and choose the services they need from AudioCodes to complement their own offerings and extend their geographical reach.

In terms of management, AudioCodes One Voice for Lync offers a number of comprehensive tools to enable system administrators to have full control over their Lync voice deployments. AudioCodes Element Management System is an intuitive web-based platform that enables centralised operation, administration, management, and provisioning (OAM&P) of all voice elements. The Session Experience Manager (SEM) is an intelligent analysis tool used to monitor Voice over IP call quality, enabling the timely identification and resolution of potential service-affecting quality issues.

AudioCodes has also developed an integrated plug-in for Microsoft's SCOM monitoring solution, meaning that administrators can view and manage alarms and events generated from all Lync elements via a single interface.

Many resellers and system integrators are familiar with the benefits offered by unified communications in general and Lync in particular. One Voice for Lync simplifies the voice enablement of Lync deployments thanks to its comprehensive mix of products and services . With the increasing variety and complexity of enterprise networks, this new offering clears the way for system integrators to help their customers successfully migrate to Microsoft Lync.

Microsoft are also delighted to see the launch of One Voice for Lync with Giovanni Mezgec, General Manager, Microsoft commenting, "We see the AudioCodes One Voice for Microsoft Lync program as an opportunity to accelerate deployment of voice-enabled Microsoft Lync deployments. Simplifying the buying, integration and support processes, enables quick realisation of Microsoft Lync advantages. We are very pleased to have AudioCodes implement such a program and see clear benefits for our voice partners."

In terms of analyst reaction Diane Myers, Principal Analyst, VoIP, UC, and IMS, Infonetics Research told us, "Our most recent report covering the Unified Communications market shows Microsoft continuing to have strong gains, attaining the #1 position in terms of Communicator licenses in the third quarter of 2012. AudioCodes One Voice for Lync offering is a broad complement of solutions to the growing base of Microsoft UC deployments."

Ed Says...

Why buy multiple products from multiple vendors to try and solve a single solution? Many would say there are too many inherent points of weakness and resellers would certainly say the integration skills are challenging. Therefore, AudioCodes One Voice for Lync, a single vendor solution, should be welcomed by resellers and systems integrators alike.

This offering could unlock some of the difficulties Lync voice-partners are facing today when deploying Lync as a full UC system. Covering both product and services AudioCodes One Voice for Lync addresses the complexity of deploying and providing support for large-scale solutions – especially in the case of multi-branch and   international companies.

Commercially, One Voice for Lync helps integrators improve their profitability with Lync. Dealing with one hardware partner will reduce the overall costs, and the operational efficiency you also get makes a difference which cannot be matched by vendors offering just part of the solution's elements.