

Itec aims to extend communications reach



If you thought Itec was an office equipment and document management supplier, you would be right. But did you know they are also a fully-fledged Internet service provider and unified communications provider? It's true: for some years, the company has offered a diverse portfolio of communications solutions that optimise business efficiency by keeping staff connected anytime, anywhere and reducing operating costs throughout your enterprise.

Itec provides a range of communication services, including connectivity, cloud services, voice services, unified communications and collaboration, contact centre services and customer experience solutions, mobility solutions, security solutions and compliance solutions.

This makes Itec a significant player in the communications space. But why did an office equipment and document management company decide to move into this market area in the first place?

Colin Trollope, national sales manager of Itec Communications, explains that it was the next logical step for the company to evolve. "In many instances, office automation has become part of the IT function; and connectivity has become integral for managed print services.

"The addition of communication services provides our customers with a full end to end solution, and has proved over the years to be a sound strategic move

Itec Communications performs over and above what many other service providers do, Trollope adds. "Every customer has individual needs that have to be determined. So we do all the consulting and needs analysis to make sure we provide the correct solution for his circumstances."

Whether the customer is a one-man show, or has a 100-man workforce, communications solutions are an essential business enabler, helping them to reduce your bottom line through operational expense savings.

"Each business has different objectives and, based on this, different needs when it comes to the wireless work environment," Trollope says. "As a result, to ensure the

right solution is deployed for a specific business, it is important to undergo a needs analysis prior to determining the type of infrastructure required to meet their needs, address their challenges, and ensure that capital outlay is optimised.

"A needs analysis and audit will also assist the customer in understanding their exact business goals from a communications perspective, and will help in identifying how they can integrate new solutions with existing infrastructure, to achieve the strongest results.

"In some cases, it could be about slow and progressive integration and in others, it might be about rapid re-haul. The results are business sensitive and aligned to specific needs, timeframes and budgets."

The solutions from Itec Communications range from basic connectivity and hosted servers to cloud services, physical or virtual PABX and added value services like user apps and reduced call costs. The Itec service includes full security for all connectivity, including firewalling and DNS controlling.

"We truly offer a one-stop solution," Trollope says. "We have invested millions in our own platforms, and in deploying multiple servers in multiple data centres."

Itec takes its communications solutions to market via its significant reseller channel, and also has about 30 engineers employed full-time within the division.

The company already serves numerous customers with various communications solutions, and has plans to increase this by addressing its existing office automation customer base.

"We plan to migrate as many of our office automation customers as possible to the communications solutions," Trollope adds.

To do this, Itec makes sure it offers a complete communications portfolio that can address any of its clients' needs. We are a Tier One network provider and Internet service provider (ISP), with an IECNS licence. Not only does it provide a full range of connectivity services, from fibre and microwave to wireless and more, it also offers its customers a range of value-added services like security, firewall, cloud hosting

and a unified communications platform.

"So we have a full service offering, from A to Z, for our clients," Trollope says. "We don't only provide office automation, but a full communication service as well. In fact, Itec Communications is a lot bigger, with a lot more services, than many people think."

Today's business operational outlook is about adapting your product and service offerings to open up opportunities for your clients, and customised solutions such as mobility services enable you to do just that, Trollope adds.

"Looking at how competitive today's business environment is in South Africa, it is easy for businesses to fall into the trap of embracing communications solutions just for the sake of claiming that they run a more digitalised enterprise," he says. "As such, a key question to ask is whether the planned solutions truly speak to their client and staff needs, thus enabling them to become at least as competitive as their competition?

"Therefore, it is important that businesses look at solutions that integrate with their current business model and are relevant to their business operations, as well as offering to their client a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is a thing of the past and with the advent of different solutions – combined with leading products and technologies – businesses are empowered to reap the true potential of their communications.

"In fact, good, tailored communications solutions enable better business, better service delivery and increased productivity for the company."

Unified Communications on the go

The flagship added value offering in the Itec Communications stable is its unified communications and collaboration (UCC) solution.

Trollope explains that Mitel is Itec's telecommunications partner in the UCC space, and Itec was the first South African partners to offer a Mitel hosted platform for its customers.

Itec, with the Mitel product set, delivers a strong UCC facility with a managed cost,

secure with the added compliancy – without limiting the user’s seamless unique work experience across the daily corporate roaming working environment.

The Mitel UC&C solution is offered in both on-premise and hosted environments, with the MiCollab mobile app allowing companies to extend their office communications to wherever employees are and on the device of their choice.

“When you look at connectivity, everyone offers pretty much the same service,” Trollope says. “We can compete with any of the big telcos on the connectivity side of things, but we are able to go further and offer value-added services.

“Mitel and the UC&C app is one of the services that distinguishes us from the crowd.”

Moving forward

Itec’s go-to-market strategy hinges on its very strong reseller channel, and this is no different in the communications arena. But resellers who traditionally operate in the office automation space require a different set of skills to sell connectivity.

“So we’ve been educating our channel,” Trollope explains. “Of course we have a predominantly OA set of resellers, but we are working hard on upskilling partners where it’s required. We also have sales people within our organisation who are able to work with our partners on the telecommunications side.

“We have invested a lot into the back office,” Trollope says. “We have ensured that we are a Tier One telco; we have a presence in Teraco and multiple data centres around the country. This has allowed us to record over 99,99% uptime on our core network over the last two years.”

Itec Communications also has a presence through Africa, so customers with branches in African countries can rest assured that their communications are handled by one service provider. “In fact, we are currently busy working with a customer that has branches in 20 African countries,” Trollope says.

Internet of Things (IoT) is the latest buzzword, and it’s an area that Itec Communications is focusing on.

“IoT is going to become pervasive, and will allow for a much greater range of control, using SIM cards and connecting through a GSM network,” Trollope says.

Fibre connectivity in the retail sector is a new offering that Itec Communications is also taking to market. “We are very excited about this,” Trollope says. “It’s a solution offering where we reticulate fibre into a mall or office park that previously had no fibre and then offer Internet and data and voice services to all of the tenants.” ■

MiCollab

MiCollab is a flexible, affordable realtime communications and team collaboration solution that can be implemented on any network of mobile device to enable faster, more effective business communications.

With MiCollab, employees can connect quickly and simply in rich, collaboration sessions, whether planned or impromptu. Individuals, workgroups and others outside the business can meet to share ideas and work together toward common project goals.

By integrating all required communications and collaboration tools in a single, unified solution, MiCollab makes connecting with others easy, and helps streamline business processes.

MiCollab increases employee collaboration and productivity by reducing communications latency, managing workflows, and eliminating device and media dependencies.

MiCollab’s mobile-first design enables an in-office experience for all your mobile employees, remote teleworkers and business travellers, using the device of their choice – be it a smartphone, tablet or PC.

MiCollab fits comfortably into existing IT infrastructures. It’s virtualisation capabilities also make it ideal for cloud deployment within a private datacentre or hosted in a private Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) environment.

It also integrates with leading business frameworks and cloud services, such as Microsoft Outlook, IBM Lotus Notes and Google, and other UC application tools, such as Microsoft Lync, ensuring that employees can communicate using their tool of choice.

The MiCollab solution comprises:

- Unified Communication (UC) clients for the desktop and mobile device that provide a uniform communication experience for employees;
- Web Portal for remote access to core functions;
- Unified Messaging services that make message storage and retrieval simple, yet flexible;
- Audio, Web and Video Conferencing services to address a variety of conferencing needs for both the office-bound and mobile employee; and
- Workstream communications and collaboration tool that provides a highly collaborative, persistent

workspace for team-based meetings, conversations, content collaboration and project management

Some of the key business benefits of MiCollab include:

- Get more done – from anywhere
- Increase employee collaboration and productivity by reducing communications latency, managing workflows, and eliminating device and media dependencies
- Single point of access to all communications and collaborations tools
- Mobile-first design with consistent experience across devices
- Build better connections using MiTeam, IM, voice, video or full Web collaboration from any location on any device
- Support for the broadest portfolio of mobile devices in the industry
- Easy administration
- Manage all collaboration tools using a single, user-friendly interface
- Maintain just one server, which can be deployed however suits you best – on premises or in virtualised environments
- APIs integrate MiCollab with your other business applications, like email, calendars and CRM systems
- Reduce costs
- Reduce your total cost of ownership, especially with a straightforward, cost-effective migration path to the cloud
- By giving your employees a better way to communicate, you can reduce travel time and expenses, improve productivity, and remain competitive

Features of MiCollab include:

- Communications forums that mirror conversations across all devices in realtime;
- Contextual and searchable message threads;
- Text chat
- Realtime voice and video calling
- Realtime voice and video conferencing with web sharing
- Screen sharing
- File sharing
- Third-party app integrations
- WebRTC Web client available
- Support for English, French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Danish, Finnish, Chinese