

## Corporate VoIP set to return in 2015

Voice over IP (VOIP) solutions are due for a resurgence in popularity during 2015, predicts Louis Jardim of Turr Networks, as networks have matured so that operators are finally in a position to offer enterprise-grade voice quality at affordable prices. Affordable prices are a result of Icasa's decision to lower interconnect rates in 2014, which makes VOIP more compelling to corporates.



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"A lot of people were burned by poor-quality voice services in the first wave of enthusiasm about five years ago," says Jardim. "The market was full of small operators trying to deliver VOIP over ADSL lines and the internet, with no quality of service guarantees, and the results were predictably cheap and poor VOIP quality. Anybody who's tried to deal with a call centre running VOIP over best effort mediums such as ADSL, will know the frustration of trying to hold a conversation over crackling, noisy connection."

At the time, says Jardim, higher-quality last mile mediums such as Telkom diginets, dedicated fibre and microwave links were still too expensive that they couldn't offer the cost savings that made VOIP attractive: "But the landscape has changed as new bandwidth has come online and costs have dropped dramatically. We can now build dedicated fibre and microwave networks to carry our clients' voice traffic, at a price that's truly competitive with Telkom while still offering quality of service guarantees."

The key question potential VOIP clients need to ask their service providers, says Jardim, is "How are you going to route n calls and what infrastructure are the calls going to be routed over? Via the internet, or via an MPLS network?" MPLS routing, if correctly configured, he explains, can guarantee that clients won't suffer dropped calls, crackling lines and degraded voice quality.

Clients with large voice bills, he adds, can easily shave 30-40% off their monthly costs - and thanks to geographic number portability, there's no need to change a single number. "No business wants to change its phone numbers if that can possibly be avoided," he says. "With an enterprise-grade VOIP solution, nobody except the IT department should even know anything has changed."

Apart from the cost savings, Jardim says VOIP is also attractive for its ability to provide uninterrupted service. "Nobody these days should be running their communications over a single medium; everything goes down sooner or later. With a choice of Telkom diginets, fibre and microwave links, businesses can be assured that the phone will always ring."