

Stratus Telecommunications Case Study: Wholesale VoIP Provider

Florida-based Pipeline Telecom's wholesale business soars to a higher level with Stratus Telecommunications' ENTICE™ solution

Background

Indialantic, Florida-based Pipeline Telecom (www.pipelinetelecom.com) leverages the Stratus Telecommunications ENTICE™ (Emerging Networks Telecommunications Infrastructure Control Environment) solution to provide wholesale Voice over IP (VoIP) services to customers. The carrier sells to customers globally with strengths to termination in the Middle East, Central and South America, and Asia. In addition to its main site on Florida's Space Coast, where it colocates equipment in a Class 5 network operations center (NOC), Pipeline delivers services from facilities in Columbia, Guatemala, and British Columbia, Canada.

The Challenge

Pipeline Telecom has always prided itself on providing outstanding voice quality and reasonably priced services, a model that has helped it evolve into a highly successful business in an intensely competitive industry. However, until recently certain limitations kept the company from realizing its full growth potential.

When it first began offering wholesale voice services in 2003, the company terminated and originated calls over a virtual network partitioned across another provider's backbone. The arrangement enabled Pipeline to avoid paying high startup costs for equipment and maintain low operational expenses to improve its profit margins. But it also left the company overly dependent on its switching partner, said Lance Littlejohn, President and CEO of Pipeline Telecom. "It was a great way to start without having to put out a high capital outlay, but we were always at the mercy of our switch partitioning provider's schedule," Littlejohn said.

For example, if Pipeline wanted to adjust routing paths to improve call quality for a specific customer, the company had to submit a request and then wait hours or even days for the change to be completed. Or if the company needed to provision additional capacity to meet growth or customer requirements, Pipeline would have to take the same steps and suffer the delay. This prevented the company from providing the fastest and most responsive customer service that it could offer.

The partitioning arrangement restricted Pipeline in other important ways. "If you're a switch partitioning partner you're basically a broker rather than a carrier. So there are credibility issues when you go out into the market," Littlejohn explained. "Since you don't own your own network you can have trouble attracting top tier customers because you can't promise the high quality and service levels that they expect."

Choosing the ENTICE Solution

In 2006 Pipeline decided to break away from its partitioning provider and build its own network. This led to a comprehensive search for a switch platform, a process

that involved evaluating 11 vendor solutions. "We talked to a lot of people and quickly scratched off the solutions that we felt were not stable, robust, or cost-effective enough," Littlejohn recalled.

By year's end, Pipeline had selected Stratus Telecom's ENTICE solution. "Through testing we found it to be a very reliable, high performance platform, and the number of features per dollar spent was unbeatable," Littlejohn said.

Why Stratus

For Pipeline, the ENTICE solution emerged as the winning choice for four key reasons:

- **All-in-one platform:** The ENTICE solution provides a complete package of network elements necessary for end-to-end delivery of IP based services, plus a host of advanced features at an affordable cost. Because all elements are included, customers can setup and deploy multiple network elements easier and faster than they can using competitive solutions.
- **High scalability:** The ENTICE solution can grow with the demands of any business; it easily scales to support more than 100,000 simultaneous calls.
- **Customizable solution:** Stratus Telecom offers customization assistance and help integrating third-party applications, enabling customers to provide innovative and differentiated offerings.
- **Knowledgeable and responsive staff:** The Stratus Telecom team answered queries quickly and in detail, underscoring the Stratus Telecom commitment to provide unparalleled assistance in planning, designing, implementing and managing VoIP networks.

Pipeline was most impressed by the ENTICE platform's comprehensive feature set. "We liked the fact that it is an all-in-one solution," Littlejohn said. "It provided us with all the features that we were looking for and more at a reasonable price point. The competing solutions didn't offer the features to the degree that Stratus Telecom does for the cost."

Every ENTICE platform features an IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) -ready, scalable, distributed clustering architecture for end-to-end IP-based transport across any IP-based network topology, including wireline, VoIP, mobile (GSM or CDMA), and IMS. ENTICE platforms provide full access to pre-existing supplementary services via SIP or SS7. Moreover, each ENTICE solution provides a full complement of components necessary for IP service delivery, including an application server, integrated session border controller, and systems for billing, unified messaging, and endpoint provisioning; plus a full set of web-based administration and customer portals to simplify management.

Making
convergence
simple

People you
can count on
Solutions you
can trust

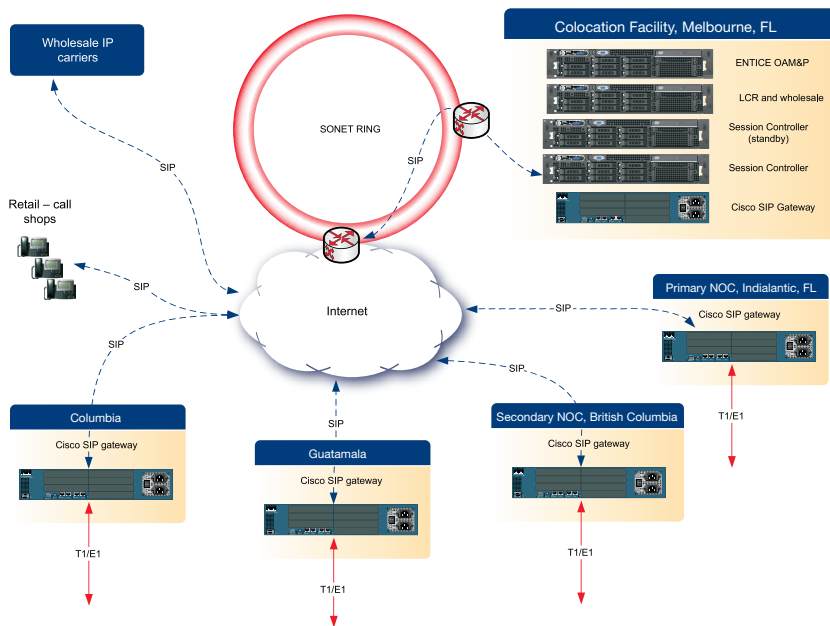
Littlejohn noted that the responsiveness of Stratus Telecom personnel was also a key factor that tipped the scales in Stratus Telecom's favor. "Their salespeople answered all of our questions directly and honestly, and their response time was very fast," he noted. "That boded well for the future and we have not been disappointed. Their service was exemplary from day one."

In addition, Stratus Telecom agreed to customize specific elements of the ENTICE solution. For example, Stratus Telecom modified the platform's billing module and added supplementary least cost routing features. "Finding a switch vendor that had the resources and expertise to help us customize a solution to fit the unique needs of our business and network was critical for us," Littlejohn said.

Following the Deployment

Equally important was the platform's high scalability, Littlejohn noted. "We wanted a platform that would enable us to grow easily and quickly," he said. "The ENTICE solution allows us to add capacity and provision new customers exceptionally fast." For instance, when Pipeline recently increased capacity by 50 percent, the process required only one simple phone call, Littlejohn noted. "It was literally a 10 minute adjustment, where they went in and added more ports," he said.

ENTICE Pipeline Telecom Network



Specifications and descriptions are summary in nature and subject to change without notice.

Stratus Telecommunications is a registered trademark. ENTICE and the Stratus Telecommunications logo are trademarks of Stratus Telecommunications, LLC. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective holders.

Moreover, the ENTICE solution's integrated billing services platform was a key element that Pipeline knew it would need for wholesale billing. "Its ability to capture call detail records and form them into a billable invoice that we could follow for accounting and reconciliation was a crucial feature for us," Littlejohn said.

In December 2006, after receiving comprehensive training from Stratus Telecom, Pipeline engineers deployed Stratus Telecom's ENTICE platform. The solution sits on a redundant SONET ring along with three IP backbone providers in the Class 5 colocation facility in

Melbourne, Florida. The main NOC is in Indialantic, Florida with a secondary NOC in British Columbia, Canada. The company currently uses Cisco gateways to send and receive traffic and to connect to the ENTICE platform via IP from its other locations.

Since deployment, traffic carried on Pipeline's network has increased 10-fold, from 10 million minutes per month to over 100 million. "We couldn't have grown as much as we have without Stratus Telecom," Littlejohn said, adding that owning the ENTICE platform has enabled the company to improve service quality and customer service, and therefore attract larger customers.

A large part of the attraction is Pipeline's ability to promise very high performance and reliability metrics. "The ENTICE solution has been rock solid," Littlejohn said, noting that since deployment Pipeline has experienced zero unscheduled downtime. "That's critical not only because we avoid losing revenue, it also helps us maintain confidence with our customers that we're up and will stay up. Customers rely heavily on the consistency of our service."

Pipeline is also impressed by the Stratus Telecom's commitment to improve its products. "When we offer advice or ask for changes, the people at Stratus Telecom listen," Littlejohn said, noting that after Pipeline recently submitted a wish list of features, Stratus Telecom implemented most of them in the latest software revision. "They take our concerns very, very seriously."

Toward the Future

In the near future Pipeline expects to cross a new threshold in Columbia, where it will soon make cost-effective sense to deploy the ENTICE platform. "Having had nothing but positive experience with the Stratus Telecom solution for the last 2 1/2 years, we will be able to deploy the new platform with confidence," Littlejohn said.

During the coming year, Pipeline will begin to leverage the enhanced capabilities of the ENTICE solution's billing module. In addition to wholesale billing, the integrated billing services platform supports prepaid and postpaid calling card services, which Pipeline plans to offer as a virtual partition provider to customers looking to create, manage and bill their own custom branded products and services using Pipeline's Stratus Telecom platform. "The ENTICE's advanced capabilities unlocks our potential to create and provide new revenue generating services," Littlejohn said. "That should serve us very well in our mission to grow and become increasingly successfully in the years ahead."

About Stratus Telecommunications

Stratus Telecommunications is a provider of complete VoIP and converged service solutions for telecommunications service providers. By helping its customers connect their world using trusted, innovative solutions and backing it with people they can count on, Stratus Telecom is making convergence simple. Stratus Telecom's solutions are installed in hundreds of service providers' networks including 14 of 20 of the world's largest carriers.



www.StratusTelecom.com