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# The future is VoIP

Alexander Graham Bell would be delighted. His invention in 1876 of the ‘electrical speech machine’ – or telephone – was the start of the telecommunications industry. Now, speech can be transmitted over the Internet. It’s called VoIP: Voice over Internet Protocol, and it’s here to stay.

One of the biggest players in VoIP is Alcatel-Lucent. Dynax Now spoke to its UK managing director Graeme Allan to sound him out on the subject

## Business brief

First things first: what is VoIP precisely? It’s a method of converting analogue audio signals into digital data that can be transmitted over the Internet. It has much more functionality than traditional telephone networks – such as automatic routing for incoming calls, and generally improved communications. In the long run, a single voice and data network will cost much less to run and maintain than two separate networks.

Historically, businesses have always had separate networks for their voice and data requirements, but now these can be combined. The technical challenges have been overcome; so too have the network challenges. It’s highly likely that, one day, VoIP will replace the traditional phone system entirely.

Already, the take-up momentum of VoIP is well beyond the early-adopter mindset. The UK is probably ahead of the rest of Europe, with about 50% of new businesses using VoIP-enabled telephony. Even among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), VoIP take-up is about 13%.

For VoIP is applicable to almost any size of business, from a minimum of about 6 to 12 users. The likelihood is that maintaining two separate networks for voice and data costs more than moving to a VoIP network. So there are cost savings even before you take into account the benefits of increased functionality.

Developments in VoIP are definitely technology-led, but they are also beneficial to the user. Apart from anything else, there is a saving in the total cost of ownership – simply through having one network, and therefore one network management provider and one port of call for network advice.

VoIP offers a great many applications and business benefits. It enables data-type applications to be built into your handset, which will constitute the ultimate thin client. In the future, we will see price enquiries – for instance, stock market enquiries – placed through a handset, because it has the intelligence to do it, and the screen to show it.

This will mean that we’ll see a change in the desktop environment, especially in those areas of lower PC use. Many offices and shops have PCs, but they are not used at full capacity because their full functionality is not needed.

*“We are the number one in the IP telephony space.”*

Imagine a retail shop where the staff are young and inexperienced, and where the staff turnover is high. Why give them all expensive PCs to do their work, when they could all have handheld VoIP devices that offer the basic functionalities they need for the job?

But why choose Alcatel-Lucent for VoIP? Well, for a start, we are the number one in the IP

