## IP Communications: *Technology and Applications To Be Key Business Drivers*

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January 03, 2008

Mark Ricca is Partner and Senior Analyst for IntelliCom Analytics. Ricca will address the audience at the upcoming *Internet Telephony Conference & EXPO,* which takes place January 23–25 in Miami Beach, FL. He is moderating two panels addressing unified communications collaboration and security. I took the opportunity to ask Ricca to share his thoughts on a variety of issues and trends currently facing our industry.

**RT: What trends are you noticing in the communications market?**

**MR:** We see four major trends:

*The Accelerated Adoption Of IP Telephony (IPT) Systems* in virtually all end user segments. IPT continues to go mainstream. It has been the technology platform of choice for the Enterprise segment, and is now being adopted by the Mid-Market and selected Small-Market segments.
*A Transformation From Primarily Hardware-to-Primarily Software-Based Solutions*. Communications and Business Improvement Applications are the wave of the future. Software and Services are the major areas of interest for end users. Accordingly, Software and Services are the growth and profit engines for the provider segment going forward.
*Intensified Requirement For Effective Security Solutions and Policies* in all end user segments. Breaches in security and privacy are on the increase in commercial businesses and government agencies of all sizes. The economic and credibility issues for the business community are significant. Continuously monitored and updated security solutions and policies are a "fact-of-life" for the future. Security is, and will continue to be a "hot" area.
*The Uptake In Managed Services*. Enterprises and Mid-Market companies are having difficulty in providing the resources (i.e., qualified staff and state-of-the-art tools) required to effectively manage the intensely-complex applications and technology environment. Consequently, end user companies are increasing receptive to the concept of Managed Services. They are subscribing to a range of Managed Services offered by manufacturers, network service providers, channels and integrators. This trend will accelerate over the next five years.

**RT: Did 2007 finish the way your company expected?**

**MR:** Yes. There were no surprises.

**RT: Is 2008 going to be a better year than 2007?**

**MR:** The economy will be a more influential factor than in 2007. But we expect the year to be the same as 2007 in terms of global end user and provider spending.

**RT: What technologies have altered the market the most?**

**MR:** The Internet, IP Telephony and the range of mobility offers.

**RT: How has Skype changed the telecom market?**

**MR:** Skype has an interesting business model, but not a profitable one to date. It certainly has not met the expectations of E-Bay.

**RT: How will Apple, Google and Microsoft each change the telecom space?**

**MR:** Each of these companies has an insatiable appetite for growth through innovation in their traditional and new adjacent markets. In general, their respective and collective involvement in traditional and new markets is an absolute "plus" for users. Apple, Google and Microsoft have delivered products and services that truly improve workplace productivity.

**RT: Do you have predictions about the 700 MHz auction?**

**MR:** Yes, there will be overpayment for spectrum.

**RT: What are the brightest spots in your business going forward?**

**MR:** Anticipating the rapid changes taking place in the end user, provider, competitor and technology environments. It may sound corny, but we enjoy dealing with "human-side" of our client engagements and delivering measurable value.

**RT: What are the biggest threats you see to your company's success?**

**MR:** Three potentially: 1) Not listening and responding to the needs of our clients. 2) Failing to innovate. 3) Failing to reinvent ourselves every couple of years.

**RT: What will conferees learn from your ITEXPO conference session this month?**

**MR:** I am moderating two panels that will address two very timely and important subjects: UC Collaboration and Security. These are two critical areas in virtually all businesses. There are excellent subject-matter-experts on both panels that will provide timely, practical information and insights.

**RT: Who should attend?**

**MR:** Anyone involved in the areas of UC Collaboration and/or Security.

**RT: What unique perspectives will you offer?**

**MR:** Practical information and insights, based upon in-depth research and hands-on experience.

**RT: What is the most exciting market change we can expect in communications in technology in 2008 and beyond?**

**MR:** Recognition by users in virtually every business segment that Technology and Applications properly designed, applied and managed are transitioning from being just a business enabler to a business driver.

**RT: Please make one surprising prediction for 2008.**

**MR:** Video Conferencing and Telepresence technology and applications will (finally) come of age. For many years Video Conferencing has been a solution looking for the problem. In addition, the technology was "good" at best. The new generation of Video Conferencing and Telepresence offers are very impressive and are gaining respect and market share.

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