

# FoIP in Your UC Rollout

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In today's global business world, continual productivity and efficiency improvements are necessary for companies to survive. In the legal industry, too, communication speed is key to success. Attorneys and staff must efficiently deal with litigation documents, subpoenas, contracts, patent filings, intellectual property rights, etc., in various parts of the world. Competitiveness demands performance, and clients expect it from their law firms.

Thus, innovative, productivity-enhancing unified communications (UC) systems are being deployed by law firms worldwide, transforming how they do business inside and outside the office. Legal staff increasingly are using IP-based communication and collaboration tools such as instant messaging, Web-conferencing and calendaring. They require multi-device access to all business-critical voice, e-mail, online and network resources.

## Fax Over IP Is Often Overlooked

With convergence and UC in full swing, IT executives often overlook faxing as a crucial piece of the UC offering. According to Gartner, the fax is still an integral part of business communications on the legal landscape: "Law firms use fax servers and fax machines to exchange hand-marked-up contract drafts – as well as final signed versions – as legally valid means of communications."

For example, while on the road in Los Angeles, a New York lawyer, working diligently to resolve a contract issue for a business client, receives a crucial document on his fax machine in New York after hours. At a minimum, he will have to get someone to re-fax the document the next morning, losing both time and image quality in the process. And where should it be sent? To another customer's office in Los Angeles? Unethical. To a hotel or business center? Inconvenient and a threat to the client's privacy. How much time is wasted on these communication slip-ups when the technology exists to route faxes over the same networks and into the same inboxes as e-mail and voice mail?

## Challenges with Traditional Fax in UC and Converged IP Environments

For the lawyer described above, the promise of great productivity enhancements with his firm's UC deployment won't be achieved fully until all his communications are routed through the same telecommunications/IT infrastructure and are accessible with standard interfaces on any computer or device he happens to have where he's working.

Faxing is still one of the preferred methods for transmitting documents for most legal organizations because it is a legally binding means of fast, low-cost and secure document transfer. That's why there are still so many fax machines and multifunction peripherals (MFPs) around the modern law office. But using these fax methods means that firms must maintain separate analog communications overhead, while all other communications flow across IP networks. This is a common challenge in UC environments.

Too often the fax infrastructure comprises costly dedicated POTS lines or analog extensions with adapters, defeating the purpose of convergence and UC in itself. And worse, this infrastructure does not deliver fax documents when and where employees need them, lowering productivity and leaving fax services outside electronic document management systems, risking regulatory compliance.

## Bringing the Fax Online

In IP-based converged networks, boardless (software-only) Fax over IP (FoIP) solutions are the remedy for the UC fax problem. FoIP leverages the ITU's T.38 real-time IP fax protocol. This is already supported by most leading media gateway and UC vendors such as Cisco, Avaya, IBM, Nortel, 3Com, AudioCodes and Alcatel-Lucent. Boardless FoIP solutions, in particular, offer legal firms numerous benefits:

### Enhanced Employee Productivity

Time savings by sending/receiving faxes with diverse tools such as e-mail programs, desktop applications and Web browsers

Automated faxing from legal document management systems, and routing to multiple destinations

Real-time fax delivery anytime, anywhere to support business workflow and collaboration

### Substantial Cost Savings

Elimination of expensive dedicated analog fax lines, fax boards, fax machines and hardware, maintenance fees and supplies

### Improved Document Management, Security and Regulatory Compliance

Secure archiving and audit trails for all incoming and outgoing fax documents, including ones transmitted via MFPs, to facilitate regulatory compliance (e.g., HIPAA, PCI Compliance and Sarbanes-Oxley)

Security and privacy protection for confidential documents

### Streamlined Administration

Centralization of all fax transmissions, leveraging existing UC components

Solid fit for virtualization strategies because boardless FoIP solutions enable IT staff to efficiently combine and manage common resources for diverse applications, further enhancing UC deployments

When planning a UC strategy for your firm, be sure to include faxing in your considerations. FoIP is one more way to ensure your firm has seamless communication technologies in place to enhance collaboration and reduce costs.