

Lync Migration Featured Article

Lync Rebranding and UC Landscape Assessment

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TMCnet recently interviewed Frank Stinson, a partner and senior analyst at market research firm IntelliCom Analytics, and speaker at the upcoming [ITEXPO Miami](#), to get his thoughts about these topics and others.

IntelliCom Analytics offers in-depth information and analysis on the intelligent business communication market. That includes providing benchmarking, market demand, and pricing analysis on services and solutions in the marketplace; knowledge worker demographics and requirements, vendor preferences and drivers, and other factors related to user and business demand; details on what's happening in terms of industry transformation; and go-to-market data including channel partner profiles, distribution and value proposition information, and margin, market share, outlook, and revenue breakdowns.

Stinson will be moderating two panel sessions at [ITEXPO](#) Miami, which will take place Jan. 27 through 30 at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

- On Jan. 27 at 3 p.m., he will moderate a panel that will examine the impact that Microsoft Lync has had to date on the enterprise UC market and what the introduction of the new Skype for Business version will mean for customers, partners, and competitors.
- On Jan. 29 at 1:30 p.m., Stinson will head up a session that will address the bring-your-own-application trend and how businesses can balance the enhancements in user choice and productivity such an approach might provide against the corporate policy and security concerns that IT and other areas of the business could potentially raise as barriers.

Here's a preview:

What do you think of Microsoft's decision to rebrand Lync as Skype for Business?

Stinson: It raised eyebrows when it was announced because a lot of people questioned whether it was a wise move to discard the equity that the Lync name had built up over the past several years. But that was primarily with enterprise IT decision makers, and there are a lot of entitled Lync licenses out there that enterprises have technically paid for through broader agreements but have not activated due to a lack of pull from their end users. It seems to me that the renaming is partly an effort to try to leverage the consumer positioning of Skype to boost this demand at the individual user level.

Looking more broadly at the unified communications and collaboration space, how would you characterize the change that has taken place in the UC market in 2014?

Stinson: The legacy enterprise providers as a group have occupied a tenuous position for a number of years now. Mitel's acquisition of Aastra early in the year and subsequent attempt to devour ShoreTel kicked off a long-expected round of consolidation. Once you get beyond market leader Cisco and chief disruptor Microsoft, there are big question marks. No one else has shown much

Lync Migration Resource Center

ability to grow organically, and several face significant business model challenges based on their current trajectories and growing competition from cloud providers.

What was the most exciting technology announcement of 2014?

Stinson: Single-pane-of-glass collaboration interfaces like Cisco Project Squared and Unify Circuit emerged as a new category promising a lot of value to the individual user, but it remains to be seen how enterprises will resonate to purchasing them as incremental capabilities for their employees and to what extent providers will be successful at monetizing them as discrete services as opposed to functioning purely as tools for enhancing access to underlying applications.

What are your thoughts about the status of WebRTC today and its potential?

Stinson: In a business context, enhanced customer contact would seem to be the area getting the most attention from providers today. But as we have seen with earlier standards like SIP, some vendors are closely following the standard while others are lobbying for modifications to WebRTC or pursuing other alternative approaches that might provide them with a unique advantage. How these implementation questions ultimately sort out is an open question, but the underlying concept of browser-based, real-time communications has a lot of potential over the long haul.

Speaking of real-time interactions, let's talk video. How often do you use video for business communications? Is video helpful in business interactions in your opinion?

Stinson: We tend to use video selectively rather than for most day-to-day interactions. It has become more and more common in the web conferencing calls we participate in, particularly in presentations to distributed groups. Improvements in the video quality of the latest releases of many of these solutions are rapidly transforming the category to more of a true converged conferencing value proposition.

What technology has most impacted how we work in the past two years?

Stinson: Ongoing innovations in mobility and cloud solutions are having the largest impact in how, when, and where people work. The capabilities that users now have access to in the consumer space are often superior or otherwise more up to date than the typical enterprise productivity tools deployed in a fixed office environment. This creates its own set of challenges in terms of corporate policies and the evolving role of IT, but the concept of work from anywhere has largely reached fruition for those who value it.

Indeed. One of the other challenges of the increasingly distributed network and workforce is security. What does the recent trend toward high-profile network breaches tell us about digital security and what both businesses and individuals are doing to protect their digital assets?

Stinson: Clearly, digital security remains a moving target. Hackers and rogue nations present a formidable and evolving challenge and have potential access to deep resources when sufficiently motivated against a particular target. But, so do disgruntled or careless employees that businesses could conceivably better insulate themselves against with better policy administration and tools restricting access to sensitive information.

What are your thoughts on wearable technology in the enterprise?

Stinson: For certain job functions and industry segments like health care, it can be very useful in controlling access and/or monitoring users. But I think its broader use within the enterprise raises privacy concerns and will likely prove to be controversial with employees should businesses extend the monitoring outside of the office environment or to include personal habit and health parameters.