

Inter-Tel bolsters Linux-based IP PBX

Built-in presence, unified-messaging features are aimed at small and midsize companies.

By [Phil Hochmuth](#), 06/26/06

[Inter-Tel](#) later this month is expected to announce a Linux-based IP PBX with multimedia support, presence and other advanced communications features that could help users perform their jobs more efficiently.

The Inter-Tel 7000 will be a Session Initiation Protocol ([SIP](#))-based IP PBX that can support as many as 2,000 IP phones, as well as analog handsets, via a built-in gateway. The phone system includes built-in multimedia messaging applications based on SIP that could improve user productivity with features such as unified-messaging options and integrated instant messaging and presence technology, according to Inter-Tel.

The Inter-Tel 7000 includes two appliances: a call-processing server, which has SIP-based call control and features; and a media server, which includes presence IM and unified voice mail and e-mail applications. One media server feature lets users set an out-of-office reply in Outlook that will be flagged as such in the IM and voice mail systems. If a user is on the phone, his status will reflect this as well. For smaller deployments (fewer than 100 users), a single-server appliance can be loaded with the call-processing and media-server software.

Inter-Tel says it's using the SIP-for-Business, or [SIP-B](#) protocol extension framework, on its telephony and presence servers. SIP-B defines extra PBX-like features - such as multiline appearances and conference-call bridging - which are not supported by the standard 40 telephony features provided in the basic IETF version of SIP, says Jeff Ford, Inter-Tel's CTO.

For user interaction, Inter-Tel is launching the SIP-based Personal Communicator software client, which ties together voice and e-mail access with presence, contact-preference settings, address books and call logging. Inter-Tel also is launching new SIP-based IP phones: The 8690 has an LCD touch screen; the 8662 has a six-line LCD and the 8622 has a two-line text display. A Windows CE-based PDA IP phone client also is available.

One analyst says the Inter-Tel 7000 launch gives users a higher-scaling phone system than previous, H.323-based and digital PBX systems offered by the company. *"The existing Axxess [PBX] and Inter-Tel 5000 [non-SIP IP PBX] platforms have strong multisystem networking capabilities,"* says **Frank Stinson**, principal analyst at IntelliCom Analytics. *"The Inter-Tel 7000 provides greater scalability per system and delivers additional capabilities that will appeal to enterprise customers."*

Basing the product on SIP and offering a presence server as a default gives users a more flexible IP PBX system than some competitive, entry-level VoIP systems for small to midsize businesses. The Inter-Tel 7000 will be available in July and start at around \$640 per seat.

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