



## It's the Applications, Stupid!

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By [Ted Stevenson](#)

While most customers apparently haven't moved much past the notion that VoIP is a technology that gives them the phone features they're accustomed to—at a lower price—industry insiders know that the future of IP telephony is all about applications.

One company built on this understanding is Carrollton, Tex.-based [IPcelerate](#). In fact, IPcelerate doesn't do phone calls, just applications around phone calls.

In a recent briefing, IPcelerate president and CEO, Kevin Brown told *VoIPplanet.com* that enterprises considering replacing their legacy phone systems with IP-based technology typically hope to get some long distance or administrative savings, but that "their number one goal is often to make sure that the features their employees have gotten used to over the last seven or eight years stay in place. Sadly, all too often, if they achieve this, they feel they're done."

In sharp contrast, IPcelerate encourages customers to be thinking terms of putting telephony to work to further specific organizational aims. Brown illustrated by citing goal- or impact-oriented deployments made by a number of the company's existing customers:

"At Carter Blood Care, they're using VoIP software to increase their audit efficiencies, whereas down at Washington County Courthouse, they're using VoIP software to create a safer environment for their judges. The Bank of Oklahoma uses this to satisfy its customers and eliminate a \$1 million investment requirement that they were looking at to satisfy those clients." He went on to enumerate another half-dozen examples.

This is not to say that integrated corporate communications applications are a brand new phenomenon. On the contrary, companies with the resources to support the custom development of such applications have been deploying them for years. What's different about IPcelerate's contribution to the VoIP application game is that all the functionality is built into the product.

Brown drew an analogy to Microsoft PowerPoint (as an example of a typical desktop productivity application). If you look at PowerPoint's feature list there are nearly 80 separate application functions *built into the package*. (Microsoft might put the total higher, but you get the idea.)

IPcelerate's IPsession 'Network IP Application [NIPA] Middleware and Framework' (a serious mouthful), likewise consists of some 75 embedded application functions (Do Not Disturb, View IP Phone Presence, Live External Dial-out, Call Blocking, RFID Integration, E-911 Location Enforcer, and Pre-Scheduled Dial-Out, just to name a few random examples). These and their dozens of other functions are building blocks for communications application that can address specific business purposes and processes.



"As software developers, we say 'What are those capabilities we know customers are going to want to use—going to need—as part of their voice over IP deployment,' and we embed them inside the framework we provide," Brown said.

"That allows us to go and have a conversation with a customer and when they say, 'I really want to control my overtime,' we know that by turning on four or five of the capabilities out of this set, we can help them do that," he explained.

The essence of IPsession is interconnecting disparate communications services and aggregating multiple actions into coherent events and processes. To the former end, the IPsession framework provides application programming interfaces (APIs) to just about every communications protocol known to mankind—or at least those relevant to the IP world: SIP, JTAPI, XMS, SQL, RFID, and more. As a result, developers don't need to create interfaces to these services, they can just plug them in.

Typically, users interact with IPcelerate applications through an icon-based graphical interface. Kevin Brown showed us one such, developed for K-12 schools, has icon buttons for, *Principal's office*, *Dial 0*, *Conference*, and *Emergency*. But there's one, even more specialized button that illustrates what IPcelerate applications can do:

The icon is a picture of a Bomb. According to Brown, here's what happens when anyone hits that button: "It automatically starts recording the call—the bomb threat—it automatically conferences in three or four people from their emergency response teams so they can listen to that call, and it automatically sends an alert 911 to the police department, letting them know that, say, Hubert Humphrey Elementary has taken an emergency call that they feel is threatening."

Currently, IPcelerate is delivered through partners—more than 80 of them, including giants like IBM, Bell Canada, Bell South, and others. Depending on the partner's delivery model the software is delivered either loaded on server hardware, or over the network, as a service. IPcelerate is happy to allow that flexibility and has no intention of imposing its wishes here. "The only reason they wouldn't be able to do that is if I were foolish enough to limit their deployment strategy," Brown pointed out.

So many end-user customers may or may not be aware of the IPcelerate name. Some partners capitalize on the name, others keep the product identity more veiled. According to Brown, some partner/customers are beginning to negotiate deals where, IPcelerate executes custom tweaks of the package that the partners will sell exclusively under their brand.

On the other hand, Brown told *VoIPplanet.com*, "We also have enough experience with certain markets to start prepackaging solutions because we anticipate what they're going to be looking for." In other words, IPcelerate will soon be directly marketing vertical, industry-specific offerings. Already on the market are solutions, local governments and for schools. Coming soon (this quarter) will be packages for banks, healthcare, and colleges.