



Left: Verizon's Voyager offers V CAST Mobile TV capability and full HTML Internet browsing. Right: The Motorola MOTO Q™ music 9m offers 2 Home Screen options – Multimedia and Standard. The Q 9m operates on the Windows® Mobile 6 OS and comes equipped with Blue-tooth® Stereo Wireless Technology, a 1.3 megapixel camera/camcorder with flash and a miniSD™ memory card slot which supports up to 4GB of additional memory.



## Growing The Small- and Mid-Sized Business? New Telecom Products Can Help

By Brenda Porter, Contributing Writer

Last March, Franklin Machine Products, Lumberton, a global distributor of restaurant equipment and parts, realized it needed help with keeping on top of the hundreds of phone calls it received daily. For years, the company had a receptionist to answer incoming calls before routing them to one of 50 sales and service agents in the company's call center. As Franklin grew, maintaining that personal touch became a greater challenge: the receptionist would have to answer the estimated 1,500 calls per day.

So Franklin Machine turned to Basking Ridge-based Avaya for its IP Office 412 solution. "Before we installed IP Office, our operator console could handle only 10 incoming calls at a time," says Bob Fisher, director of information technology for Franklin Machine. "Once 10 callers were in queue, the customer would hear the phone ring, but the call couldn't be answered. We have no idea how many calls were missed because the system simply couldn't handle them."

Avaya's IP Office 412 – which includes new, upgraded hardware that expands the product's capacity by more than one third – supports from two to 256 users, allowing Avaya to deliver the business benefits of IP telephony to Franklin and other small- to mid-sized firms around the globe. The system for Franklin was sold and installed by PhoneXtra, a New Jersey-based Avaya Gold-certified BusinessPartner.

With Franklin's Avaya IP Office system, any call that isn't answered right away is sent to an automated attendant. Customers can choose to wait in queue to speak with Franklin's receptionist, leave a message or speak with another member of the team. In addition, a second console has been added, allowing any of the company's call center agents to log in and assist the receptionist on particularly busy days.

On choosing Avaya's system, Fisher says, "We wanted a system that would allow us to maintain that human contact since that's how we established our



Diane Brown, director, SMB Group for Verizon, Basking Ridge

reputation for customer service.” He adds, “IP Office supports that objective.”

But Avaya’s solution for Franklin Machine is just one of many that the company offers to small- and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) in the state. Avaya itself is not



Charles Hand, president, Verizon Wireless, Basking Ridge

alone in its myriad of telecom solutions that are helping businesses grow by staying in step with the latest products.

### **The Right Factors for Business**

For some businesses, the moon and the stars may guide their way to selecting the right telecom products and services. But for the majority of the state’s other SMBs, careful planning and consideration are needed when choosing a partner, not to mention price - and customer needs.

“Customers are coming to us at different stages of their life cycle. So price, value for the dollar and product capabilities are a factor,” explains Diane Brown, director, SMB Group for Verizon, Basking Ridge. “We try to understand what they’re trying to accomplish — what is their end goal, their budget? We focus on making sure the solution is simple, reliable and is something that can scale as they grow.”

AT&T’s Executive Director of Marketing and Customer Experience, Tom Wilson, says the company works with clients to answer a number of questions up front. “The reality is every small business is different. So there are several factors to consider: size — the number of employees, how intensive communication-wise are those employees, mobility (i.e., field technicians) and how intensive are the company’s data and voice needs?” He continues, “Is there a technology adoption curve — do they want the tried and true or are they leading edge?”

Verizon Wireless’ approach can be described as a “deliberate, comprehensive process.”

Charles Hand, president, Verizon Wireless, notes, “What level of [services] do businesses need in a mobile environment?”

Adds 4Connections’ Vice President of Sales, Mike Sevret: “Our

clients consider price in relation to the level of diversity and scalability they require,” when choosing one of 4Connections’ two fiber optic cable products: dark fiber or individual fibers that have yet to be used within cables that have already been laid or connected; and “lit fiber” that is regularly used to transmit communications. Parsippany-based 4Connections is also a broadband technology enabler of advanced voice, data and video applications. The company constructs first and last mile fiber utilizing unique and diverse right of ways.

“Our dark fiber product is really an all-you-can-eat range of service. For instance, if the customer pays a flat rate, when the product is implemented, they are in charge of their own destiny,” says Sevret. 4Connections recently announced it will increase its “lit fiber” services to its existing “dark fiber” network, enabling the company to provide service and choice to end-users in remote areas, where often there is only one carrier available.

The company says by adding more lit services over its already robust dark fiber network, the telecommunications utility can now offer low latency, Ethernet services to a wider coverage area at speeds up to 10 Gb/s. Additionally, by expanding its coverage area, 4Connections is now able to monitor more of the existing backbone cables in its network. This could translate to an earlier response to repair a damaged cable in the field in the event of a minor interruption of service or catastrophic failure, according to the company.

With the Comcast Cable Business Class suite of services, business owners have the opportunity to bundle high-speed Internet, video and Comcast Digital Voice services — all from one provider and as an alternative to the local phone company, explains Gary



Gary Williams, regional vice president of business services for Comcast Cable, New Jersey.

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Generally, "The one thing companies in the SMB segment have in common is this: they all want communications that make a difference in their business. Like any business, they want to reduce costs, grow revenue and lower risk," says Avaya's Joe Scotto, global director, small business solutions marketing.

### What You Don't See

Telecom companies pride themselves on reliable products and services, but before customers find that out for themselves, the telecoms conduct extensive testing. For example, in 2000, Verizon Wireless invested \$40 billion to create a device test lab in the state.

An additional \$20 million has been set aside to ensure that equipment and staff remain up to date.

"We want to make sure that the experience the end user has is what we intend it to be," says Hand.

AT&T engages in testing at different intervals prior to implementation. "Then we do testing on site to ensure the product interoperates properly. Additionally, we perform extensive manufacturer product testing with outside vendor equipment or equipment that would likely be found onsite," Wilson explains.

For its part, 4Connections uses special test equipment, known as OTDR, that checks for the continuity, and integrity of the dark fiber before final installation to the client, says Sevret. For instance, the 4Connections NOC monitors the fiber optic cable they have installed, but it is ultimately lit and managed by the customer through its own network operations center - the same as if the customer would have lit the cable.

In general, vendor training support before and after installation is usually a mix of on-site walk-throughs and hand-outs as well as follow-up from in-person and online help.

### New Products

Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP appears to be the technology on the agenda for every SMB in the state.

Avaya's Scotto says, "Even a very small dot-com startup will definitely look into what VoIP can do for them, as will legal and pro-

fessional services firms. From our perspective, beyond voice, VoIP is the pipe that opens up the ability to link in business-critical applications on top of it, making them available whether you're at your desk, working from home, visiting another office site, or on the road."

In addition to its IP Office solution, Avaya offers Quick Edition, a peer-to-peer communications system that enables small businesses and stand-alone branch offices to convey a professional image, improve customer service and drive down costs. Quick Edition is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)-based telephony solution that is simple to set up and use, with all the software in the phone. Adding phones is quick and easy, as the technology enables the phones to connect to each other as they're installed.

Comcast says it helps SMBs meet their business objectives by providing advanced communication solutions, such as Business Class High-Speed Internet, Business Class Digital Voice and Business Class TV. Newly launched is the Microsoft Communication Services from Comcast, available at no additional cost for Business Class Internet customers.

This new service provides hosted Microsoft Outlook 2007, allowing companies to share business e-mail, calendars, contact lists and documents anywhere there is Internet access.

"These features are fully integrated with Comcast's network and supported 24x7, so business customers get the benefits of major companies without having to manage the IT infrastructure and staff to support them. Customers will continue to benefit from Comcast's long-term relationship with Microsoft and other partners as we continue to innovate and enhance our products and services for SMBs," Williams says.

Says Verizon's Brown, "De-



Avaya's IP Office 412, which includes new, upgraded hardware, supports from two to 256 users, delivering the business benefits of IP telephony to small- to mid-sized firms.

pending on the needs of a business, we have the solution that will get the business up and running and we have more customized solutions (like managed security services) that can grow with the business as it expands and grows. We do not have a one-size fits all solution; rather, we like to work with a small business owner to assess [his or her] needs."

Verizon continues the rollout of its FiOS fiber optic network to business customers across the tri-state area by introducing access to broadband speeds of up to 50 Mb/s download. In January, the service provider announced FiOS Internet symmetrical speeds at 20/20 and 15/15 for SMBs.

"At 50 Mb/s this means small-business customers, such as an architectural firm or a physician's office, can e-mail a set of blue-prints or download large medical images in seconds, instead of minutes. Verizon even offers a Static IP service that is an ideal business solution for videoconferencing, Web hosting and running Web cameras for surveillance," Brown says.

Also on Verizon's short list of innovations for small business customers are solutions like Webex Conferencing, Citrix® GoToMyPC®, Chase Paymentech to offer credit/debit card processing services, Verizon Secure Mail (encrypts e-mails), and Verizon Online Backup (which helps protect company and customer information and enables easy collaboration with colleagues who are working off-site, file sharing with clients, or accessing files when away from the office).

Similarly, AT&T offers SMBs a suite of innovative solutions as well. Among the many services is AT&T Voice DNA (hosted VoIP service) which is said to leverage AT&T's global IP network to provide SMBs with reduced telephony and data communications costs, including unlimited on-net,

local and long distance calling and faxing plans.

Converging wireline and wireless solutions, Verizon Wireless continues to "deliver services that people can access at the home, the office and through their mobile device. We are expanding the functionality to access the information they need when they need it," Hand says.

In support, the company

has launched a number of new handheld devices like the Voyager, which features full e-mail capabilities, video and voice applications as well as a fully functioning keyboard.

In the end, whether it's handheld devices or a new desk phone, New Jersey's telecom companies have a number of dedicated SMB solutions to suit the individual company. **\$**



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