



**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Next Generation Voice Solution for Retailers**

### ***Tellumat IP platform cuts cost, enables customer service and integrates into the back-office.***

Having extensively trialled its Voice over IP (VOIP) platform at multiple mid-sized, multi-branch retailers for six months, Tellumat expects significant adoption in the next few months.

The trials provide definitive answers to retailers' main concern about VOIP, namely the technology's proven cost savings, and its integration with existing infrastructure. But it is VOIP's customer relationship management (CRM) possibilities that Tellumat is most excited about. Says Bennie Langenhoven, GM of Tellumat Communications: "VOIP's customer interface applications make the difference. Combined with the technology's savings and our integration skills, the CRM angle with business benefits gives us an unassailable value proposition."

"VOIP has been punted as a big cost saver, however negative sentiment still remains in regard to Quality of Service (QoS) and its reliability," adds Ziyaad Barnes, Tellumat Communications business manager for Inter-Tel in the Western Cape. "But retailers, by the very nature of their business, want to maximise customer value, so they want to be very sure VOIP can improve their bottom-line and be reliable, and they want to know how much. A return on investment within 12 to 18 months is realised more than often." And if that doesn't excite a retailer, Tellumat's rent-to-own facility will.

Barnes says most service providers recommend forklift upgrades for VOIP enablement without retaining some or if any of the existing PBX infrastructure. This coupled without any proof of concept, encourages doubt amongst decision-makers with many moving towards Skype. However many soon realise that Skype's limitations and its suitability within a dynamic environment such as retail, is risky and unsatisfactory. "This presents us with a real opportunity to showcase the quality and robustness of our technology and to justify the bottom-line benefits by delivering a full-scaled business case," says Barnes.

Another issue that many VOIP providers have not resolved is to deliver a solution based on the customer's needs. Most VOIP offerings require numerous unavoidable infrastructure changes such as stores telephone numbers and the need for Virtual Private Networks (VPN) to enable VOIP. "That is not acceptable and causes much reluctance for retailers," says Barnes. "With the Tellumat solution, you can easily deploy VOIP either for inter-branch OR entirely swop-out the existing handsets at stores without any compromising changes to maximise your gain in business efficiency, performance and cost savings.

But aside from investment protection and cost savings, Barnes says retailers are most excited by the feature-richness of the Tellumat's IP platform, which allows them to use telephony as a Business tool. "The telephone is instrumental in the way retailers conduct their business. Most retailers are adept at handling customer's enquiries at the point of sale (POS), and use applications like e-mail and SMS well. But the telephone remains largely ignored. Many telephone enquiries remain unanswered by the retailers, so follow-on sales opportunities go amiss, leaving new and existing customers unsatisfied."



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He explains that it is hugely beneficial for a retailer to know why customers are calling; to be able to return abandoned calls to recover lost sales opportunities; to track and measure how many customer calls are handled during promotions or advertising; and to offer call-waiting with options to a leave voicemail while customers are on-hold." These are innovative services for the retail market, with many positives," Barnes says.

"Some big retailers set up call centres to enable this kind of rich business intelligence. Coupled with VOIP's network transparency across a distributed environment, Tellumat's IP platform gives you that customer interface without the need for a call centre. You can distribute that interface throughout the organisation via IP connectivity."

Barnes explains that a central IP platform at head office and ADSL connectivity to the branches ensures full-feature transparency throughout the organisation, giving branches the benefits that are enjoyed at Head Office too. The IP platform allows customer calls to be automatically routed between branches if branches are too busy attending to in-store customers, which encourages better customer service and eliminates the needs for customers to call back. "Customer calls can be routed or offloaded to any store without the cost implications of local or national call charges from Telkom. The difference in value when compared to other VOIP providers is that we do not charge retailers reduced rates when they engage in inter-branch communication or routing of customer calls for that matter. We don't charge for calls" says Barnes.

The savings on Cellular call costs are also maximised, he says. "This presents a significant return for retailers, especially those who frequently return customer calls to cell phones. Most retailers benefit from Leased Costing Routing at Head Office but couldn't maximise these savings at store-level due to insignificant spend" says Barnes.

"Another option on the Tellumat IP platform is customer call-back," continued Barnes. "You could integrate Tellumat platform to the POS system and whenever an out-of-stock product is in stock again, the customer can be notified automatically through an SMS. In addition, incoming calls from customers can be screen-popped, providing further leverage to impress customers and to deliver innovative service. In short, a number of applications exist on the IP platform that can help to reduce business expenses, improve efficiency and business performance.

The Tellumat solution is aimed at helping retailers maximise their investment in technology and to streamline the various media types often used by them such as fax, SMS, voice (and its ancillary applications) and e-mail."

Some applications possible on Tellumat's VOIP platform:

- Offload routine enquiries such as balance enquiries, prescription refills using an IVR
- Targeted ads or promotions can be flighted while customers are on hold
- Create an 086 000 000 sales number, to track and measure marketing effectiveness
- Conference calling between branches