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Building a UC Practice for Colleges and Universities

*"Current data and voice network funding models, developed in FY2000 (i.e., pay-per-jack models) are now outdated based on the current high and anticipated pervasive use of wireless on campus. The findings suggest that a campus-wide committee be formed to study and adopt a new model or a "common good" solution to provide sustained funding for the voice/date network."—**CU Boulder Voice & Data Network Strategic Plan 2006***

Building a UC Practice for Colleges and Universities

Current Status

Most college and university IT departments have seen a total depletion of revenue from traditional student land line services. IT, as a revenue-generator for college has become insignificant. Migration from TDM and VoIP solutions (Cisco and Avaya), and early adoption of education groupware services (Google and Microsoft) have become strategic tools for offsetting budget deficits driven by cuts and the move to student wireless services.

Today, most IT departments are operating on a minimal budget. While IT professionals in this vertical industry continue to review and assess the value of next-generation UC&C solutions, the business case for funding these applications are lacking. Consequently, the focus for this group has shifted to cutting costs, rather than being communication visionaries or enablers within the campus. More so, IT projects and their associated budgetary allocations have been reduced to demanding generated requests funded by specific departments, or budget allocations mandated by the replacement of failed systems and/or end-of-life and support conditions.

While generating revenue will be the driving motivation for moving to UC—colleges and universities will also realize the cost-saving opportunities as they leverage esnatech's UC investment to flatten and consolidate multiple applications into a single, fault-tolerant and energy-efficient platform.

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Proposed Changes

Proposed Changes

Taking a quote from the CU Boulder Strategic Plan from 4 years ago, we believe that all college and university IT departments should begin to develop and employ a usage/utility model or "common good" solution to provide sustained funding for the voice/date network.

This model would be driven by the creation of a UC practice within the enterprise that develops these "common good" solutions, with reoccurring revenue streams to students, departments, vendors and other interested and/or associated parties within the campus community.

While revenue generation will be a driving motivation for the move to UC, colleges and universities will also realize cost-cutting opportunities as they leverage esnatech UC's ability to flatten and consolidate multiple applications into a single, fault-tolerant and energy efficient platform solution.

Potential Revenue Generating Applications

Leveraging the move to Google Apps

Fueled by the lower cost of providing groupware services—faculty and staff are rapidly moving to Google. Integrating students with the infrastructure to access a user's location and rich presence offers added value. Utilizing esnatech UC can extend rich presence with on/off hook status to the mobile device, thus riding the wireless movement and extending the voice platform footprint outside the traditional VoIP or land line environment. Students can buy access to information regarding the availability of their professors, counselors, etc., improving their access to services and their overall higher educational experience.

Mass Notification for more than just emergencies

We should all know the benefits to be derived from the implementation of an emergency notification system. While Esna UC can definitely provide for such global communication—emergency notification is just one aspect of Mass Notification.

Within each major university there are hundreds of departments and social clubs, fraternities, sororities and communities each with their own communication needs. Whether it is a need to speed-up communications, organize events or fund-raising campaigns, these entities are extremely viable targets for the resale of voice services around Mass Notification—a fully-tenanted, multimedia solution with voice, fax, email, text and SMS capabilities. As such services can be sold based on individual requirements, they are funded by the groups or departments needing these valuable services.

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Potential Cost-Cutting Applications

Potential Cost-Cutting Applications

Reduction in staff with UC Apps

Esnatech UC can enable colleges and universities to create and enjoy new revenue streams from the resale of services. However, moving to UC also means saving money by deploying cost-cutting solutions like Speech Attendants or IVR applications, meaning that operator or department staff that require call routing or provide routine verbal information to callers can be offset by automation.

It is also important to consider that colleges and universities are businesses just like any other. While they are a unique vertical market, they also have department requirements across the educational vertical that include HR, operations, sales, marketing and security. Not only does esnatech provide a host of pre-packaged UC apps that can be leveraged, but with the addition of our open API and IVR SDK, custom apps can be developed and readily deployed to cut costs and meet the needs of these users.

Green Technology

As previously mentioned, colleges and universities may have multiple voice, data and imaging/ document management applications already in place, some of these include Speech Attendant, IVR, and Fax, etc. With esnatech UC, you not only have an opportunity to reduce operating costs by deploying valuable speech and IVR solutions, but also the ability to reduce your carbon footprint and the power-savings connected with the operation of these solutions. You can take advantage of the lower cost of maintaining multiple servers and support contracts by combining these applications into one scalable, fault-tolerant platform.

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Sales and Marketing

Sales and Marketing

An underlying tenant to all of these applications comes in the form of leveraging communication technology to sell advertising space and/or corporate presence to vendors requesting access to faculty, staff, students and other within the campus community. This is not a new idea, as the CU Boulder Strategic Plan noted:

"The findings from this subsection suggest that a campus-wide committee be formed to study and adopt a new model (that might include the...)"

- Development of new revenue producing services, yet competitively priced
  - advertising or importing information on the telephone display
  - market space on phone to housing or athletics

Applications, clients, web interfaces, verbal announcements and other aspects of Esna UC can be customized and private-labeled to vendors and advertisers for a fee, and provided as a "University of X, powered by Y" service. The possibilities are endless and if you consider the power that IT has over controlling access to databases and contact information, your audience for these offers is unlimited.

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Secure Messaging

Secure Messaging

The concept of security is no longer just a personal protection or data-hacking issue. IT groups now run a gamut from emergency notification, protection of staff privacy to data loss protection (DLP). As previously discussed, Mass Notification certainly can play a role here but today protection of privacy for staff and the elimination of communication leaks in the enterprise are taking center stage in the fight for enterprise security.

Secure Unified Messaging

Far too often the move to Unified Messaging increases the likelihood that privileged information will find its way outside your firewall. This can be resolved by sending a link to voicemail and streaming content to the end-user after they are 'authenticated,' this DLP solution ensures privacy of messaging for Higher Ed users. With institutions relying heavily on both private and public funding, such leaks can quickly lead to loss of support from boosters, agencies and other government funded sources. Secure UM from esnatech enables organizations to leverage the benefits of UM without allowing sensitive voice content to leave the enterprise.

Secure Instant Messaging

Similar conditions arise around the use of instant messaging—esnatech UC with IM is an 'enterprise-only' solution that can be tracked and monitored by administration to ensure its proper use.

One-Number Dialing

Campus life has become more complex—larger student communities can attract or become prone to harassment, threat and/or violence. With esnatech UC students, faculty and staff are assigned a one-number contact and can securely register multiple contact locations including cellular, home or office numbers all without the concern of having their privacy violated. In doing so, IT departments can readily track or modify contact destinations and protect the privacy and security of users by leveraging and extending the reach of the campus voice platform.

Threat Avoidance with Call Recording/Transcription

Most violent circumstances or security concerns start with the communication of a threat. Early identification, documentation and communication of these threats to the proper authorities can mean the difference between life and death. With esnatech UC, colleges and universities can provide a resource to record and document to record provocative, inciting or threatening statements made to faculty and staff. Such calls can be routed to campus security or local law enforcement within minutes and communicated campus wide through a mass notification system.

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Other Considerations

Other Considerations

Interoperability and low cost of entry

It is important to note that esnatech UC is a SIP-based, software-only solution that is backward and forward compatible with legacy and next-generation voice, data or groupware platforms from virtually any manufacturer. A campus can begin to develop a UC practice immediately without the need for costly rip and replace strategies employed by other vendors.

Esnatech UC is not an appliance, is OS-agnostic, and can run on your server standards and be managed like any other node in your network. Mac, Tablet, iPad and smart device friendly, esnatech UC requires no special clients to be loaded or supported. Esnatech UC is also voice, data and groupware agnostic. However, esnatech UC can be deployed in a mixed platform environment to provide simultaneous integrations to multiple email and third party core business apps like Salesforce, Microsoft CRM, Skype and/or PBX environment without the need for a coordinated dial plan.

Highly fault-tolerant architecture

The more you come to leverage or combine mission-critical systems into a single platform, you must be concerned about system availability, force majeure or other unforeseen service-effecting issues. Only esnatech provides a unique high availability UC architecture that virtually insures 100% uptime. Whether you are leveraging your virtual environment or deploying physical servers in a single site (redundant/geo-redundant) array, we have a solution for you that guarantees maximum uptime with automatic sync, failover and restoration of all events and databases all without the need for human interaction.

Flexible procurement models

Operating capital is at a premium. To remove roadblocks in the CAPX process, esnatech offers an OPX per user, per year model that can be customized to meet the financial needs of any Higher Ed organization. Utilizing esnatech's rich UC capabilities, coupled with the ability to tenant any app or community of interest; you can pay-as-you-go and isolate charges by department, organization or individual to streamline both the deployment and billing process.

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In Summary

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The concepts that we're discussing are complex, but they need not be complicated! Higher Ed organizations like U Mass Lowell, University of Maine and others have leveraged our experience to make the most of UC either on-premise or in the cloud, with minimal operational changes.

We provide installation, maintenance and ongoing software support. Additionally, we offer software design, application development and operational/administrative interface training/support for an additional fee. This enables you to depend on our team for web service interface development, selling and developing/managing apps more efficiently and with profit.

Esnatech UC can turn your university IT and telecom departments into a revenue-generating operation that provides value-added services to the campus community for a reasonable fee. Reoccurring revenues can provide a strong ROI for esnatech UC and become part of the solution to funding your departments ongoing strategic initiatives in the face of inevitable budget-cuts and staff reduction.