

SimpleSignal and Edgewater Networks

As it was building out its infrastructure back in 2005, cloud-based unified communications (UC) provider SimpleSignal (<http://www.simplesignal.com>) was trying to solve two issues. The company needed an end device that could provide its customers with a managed hosted PBX that could offer superior QoS (Quality of Service) and VPN functionality and then additional VoIP-based telephony products that would simplify the deployment of its hosted UC solutions.

Given that one of SimpleSignal's selling points is its ability to offload the complexity of telephony systems away from the end user, this equipment had to be easy to monitor regardless of the services it is providing to a customer or where the customer's system is located. "We're going into businesses and determining what they need, whether it's hosted PBX, SIP Trunking or a complete UC solution. From there, we are layering applications that tie in mobile and applications [like] Salesforce.com, Microsoft Outlook and ACT that push businesses to become more efficient and focus on their day-to-day jobs," explains Michael Sterl, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at SimpleSignal.

With these goals in mind, SimpleSignal chose Edgewater Networks' end-user solutions over several competing systems. "The other manufacturers were trying to change their legacy telephony devices into VoIP products, whereas [Edgewater] offered VoIP from the ground up and emphasized VoIP design for end users," Sterl says. "It was great to find a company that could run alongside us this entire time."

Making the Shift Together

According to Sterl, SimpleSignal founders recognized the move toward both VoIP and toward cloud-based services and saw that the potential in



SimpleSignal is a hosted PBX and cloud-based Unified Communications service provider. SimpleSignal provides IP phone applications and cloud-based services to tens of thousands of satisfied business users throughout the US and Canada, with a growing list of multi-office clients in many International locations.

supplying telephony solutions that leveraged both trends. Although VoIP as a technology has the obvious potential to lower communications costs dramatically, its ROI is meaningless if companies have to devote additional time and resources to manage these systems in-house.

“[Our customers] don’t want to worry about upgrades or different systems not talking to one another,” Sterl says. “We make sure everything works together while delivering additional functionalities that don’t require them to have additional equipment on-site.”

SimpleSignal has been able to make this happen by deploying EdgeMarc Enterprise Session Border Controllers at customer sites, as well as EdgeConnect PoE (Power over Ethernet) switches for businesses using IP phones. The EdgeMarc products provide protocol harmonization, QoS for superior call quality and security features like VoIP protocol aware firewalls and stateful packet inspection.

For the most part, SimpleSignal determines which EdgeMarc model to use depending on the number of concurrent calls needed and whether SimpleSignal is providing the company with bandwidth as well. The EdgeMarcs work as all-in-one devices that provide a standard interface that can accommodate PRI, analog and IP-based PBX interfaces (important because support for SIP standards is inconsistent between PBX manufacturers), along with an integrated VoIP test agent that shrinks installation times from hours to minutes.

Making Communication Work

For a recent deployment done on behalf of a Fortune 500 customer, SimpleSignal set up EdgeMarc 5300s and had them work as the Enterprise Session Border Controllers (ESBC) between SimpleSignal and an Avaya PBX system and deployed 50 MB worth of Internet. “We certified together with Avaya, as well as certified with our switch, and we were able to send out deployments, which no one else was doing at the time. It really got us ahead of the curve,” Sterl says.

The EdgeMarcs worked seamlessly with the customer’s Avaya PBX system because it solved two purposes. According to Sterl, the EdgeMarcs accomplished registration for SIP Trunking so that authentication easily could be achieved between SimpleSignal and its customer. Sterl explains that because SIP Trunking standards are inconsistent, the ability to perform the conversion that enabled communication between the Avaya and the EdgeMarc and visibility of that communication for SimpleSignal was crucial.

“The SIP Trunking standard isn’t set up in a way where Avaya would communicate to us without the EdgeMarc doing the conversion. It would be akin to having a Philips screwdriver for a flathead screw. The EdgeMarc gives you the ability to see each other as the same,” Sterl says.

Unprecedented Visibility

SimpleSignal uses Edgewater’s EdgeView VoIP support system to monitor its core infrastructure, as well as those of its end users. Sterl says that EdgeView has given SimpleSignal visibility into both its infrastructure, along with the setup of its customers’ solutions.

Instead of having to rely on the word of an IT administrator or, in the case of smaller companies, a receptionist or outside expert, SimpleSignal can log into a customer’s system and immediately troubleshoot the problem. “We can be in there much faster and cleaner, and the end users see a faster result,” says Sterl. “Within 30 minutes we have an issue resolved, whereas before it could have taken a half a day because we had no visibility into that network.”

Value and Flexibility Leads to More Customers

SimpleSignal was also looking for the best value, and Edgewater’s solutions offered carrier class quality at price points that were in line with the service delivery model. “We weren’t looking based on our customers’ needs and our needs were at a carrier level. Edgewater offered the sort of flexibility and customer support we needed, unlike , other vendors, which typically decide what is in a release without significant customer input ‘Here are our fixes. We’ll push them out to you,’” Sterl says.

In contrast, Edgewater reached out to SimpleSignal to get its opinions on features and new technologies. “They said, ‘Hey, we’re developing this new thing. Can you give us feedback on it?’” says Sterl.

Among the new features that Edgewater has added since SimpleSignal started using its products are failover to analog and failover between two

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Internet sources. "These two things weren't on our list of must haves, yet as we continued down the path, we started testing those out, they became valuable to our end users. They did a great job on these two feature requests, and we benefitted," Sterl says.

In fact, SimpleSignal has landed several customers because Edgewater helped it to build unique designs for SimpleSignal's end users. "We didn't have all the answers on how they should be deployed. We reached out to [Edgewater], told them what we were trying to accomplish, and they showed us how to set it up and lab it out with us, and [ultimately] get us into that opportunity," says Sterl.