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Blaze Your Own Trail...

By Hunter Newby



As we all head in to the autumn season, some things change and others remain the same. It all depends on where you look. Just as there are regions of the country and world that enjoy the colors of fall foliage and the feeling in the air of holidays to come, others must contend with looming snow storms, ice, and cold. Indeed, there are regions that experience little change, and for those who enjoy a more pleasant lifestyle, a year-round 80 degrees with little rain and plenty of sunshine, life is bliss. But with the good comes some consequence: a blissful constant climate engenders insulation, contentment, and a general inability or aversion to dealing with the harsh realities of other climates. For example, many Floridians I know refuse to visit New York from October through April because they can't handle the cold and simply don't own a winter coat. Likewise, in business, it is not wise to ignore reality, or expect your environment to never change. If and when it does, you may not be ready for it.

It is interesting to see the parallel between earth's nature and human nature. One has a profound impact on the other and it carries through to almost everything that we, as interacting people, do. The nature of some people dealing with VoIP Peering is very much like those that can handle change and those that cannot. There are many who embrace it, thrive in it, and actually drive it to where it is going. On the other end of the spectrum, there are many who choose to sit and wait, or just outright ignore it. In the middle, there are adopters trying not to be psychologically held back by the naysayers, but they are also fearful of both the guides ahead of them and whether they're being led down the right path, or a path leading to some entity's desired and optimal outcome and not their own.

As time passes and the market heats up, more so-called "expert" guides show up at the foot of this VoIP Peering Mountain and the risk of getting lost on the way to the top increases. It is as if anyone with a voice or IP network background can claim to have the experience to navigate you through the perils of the Himalayas and there happens to be a blizzard going on. Do you trust them, pay them as a guide and follow, or do you go it alone, or perhaps sit and wait for others to go ahead while you lose time? Before you answer that question, it is necessary to understand the different kinds of VoIP Peering, what their purpose is, and how your network fits into the master plan. Picking the proper guide has everything to do with who you are, what you do, and where you want to end up.

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First off, VoIP Peering is not a single thing or service type. It is not solely about "free" on-net calls. Anyone that tries to base the utility of VoIP Peering on the amount of reachable IP-enabled endpoints is too narrowly focused and is missing the significantly large value opportunities in TDM trunk-side replacement and other beneficial uses of the interconnection method. Attempting to dismiss the relevance of VoIP Peering by stating that only a handful of numbers (ENUM) are actually accessible

is like saying you've been to New York and there wasn't much to do, but in fact you were there merely for the purpose of transferring flights at JFK International Airport. There's a whole lot more to it!

Connecting without any added costs or (significant) delays is important because the end game is always about the best "way" to get to the "destination." The destination with VoIP Peering may be going from the same point A to B that your TDM minutes do today; for instance from Carrier 1 to Carrier 2, but now rather than using TDM DS3s and circuit-switched minutes trunked between the carrier voice switches, IP is used to carry voice (as VoIP) over Ethernet trunks. This is simple, yet effective and the best part is that it has nothing necessarily to do with free calls. Replacing the trunking technology produces savings in both local loop consolidation and elimination and lower equipment costs.

Another beneficial facet of VoIP Peering that has nothing to do with endpoints is protocol conversion. It is fairly well known that SIP dominates the VoIP landscape today, but there still remains H.323 and even flavors of SIP that may need to be mediated. This would be analogous to a currency exchange service within international airports, but actually is much less complex. (There are far more currencies in the world than VoIP protocols.) Do you Yen for Euros, or want to SIP on it? Translations in these businesses are a necessary evil. Currency is not the actual flight itself just as the VoIP protocol is not the actual call, but they go hand-in-hand. Conversion, or protocol translation, is a type of VoIP Peering service that is very real and robust as a business model feature. Any report stating that VoIP Peering services will not have a significant impact on voice networks disregards this fact.

The important point here is to be informed and not be confused by the misinformed, or narrow-minded who like to try their hand at educating. Who knows what the various agendas out there are. Whether they are intentional, or just ignorant, it won't matter much if you are aware of the current events and implementations of VoIP Peering and the reasons why network operators employ them. Once you've reached that plateau of knowledge you will be educated enough to independently pick the right path for you over VoIP Peering Mountain and be less reliant on the "expert" guides just trying to sell you on a ride. IT

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