

IT

Do you have the right Presence?

Robert May,
Managing Director
of Surrey based IT
specialists ramsac,
says new
technology is
making life
simpler and that
the future lies in
your presence.



How many points of contact do you actually have? In all likelihood you can probably be contacted on a mobile phone, your main office switchboard number, a direct dial number or your home number. Alternatively, I could send you an SMS text or an email and so on. This smorgasbord of connectivity options is collectively described as your 'Presence' – and is, without doubt, currently one of the huge areas of change in the technology world is Presence Technology (PT).

By definition Presence Technology is an application that makes it possible to locate and identify a mobile technology device wherever it might be as soon as the user connects to a network.

Many people are already using a form of PT in the form of Instant Messaging (IM). IM makes collaboration possible wherever and whenever users are online. Another example is GPS powered Satellite Navigation devices, where route guidance can be dynamically

changed to avoid traffic delays as the presence or location of the vehicle is tracked.

The big changes that we are now seeing are in telecommunications. The latest business phone systems or PBXs are now controlled by Microsoft Server back ends and sit on your IT network. Attached to the PBX is a wireless device and, as many mobile phones are now fitted with Wi-Fi, this means that the PBX detects the presence of your mobile phone on the internal network. If you're in the building it then routes the internal call made to your business DDI (Direct Dial In) to your mobile as an internal handset. Should you then leave the office the server automatically knows that you have left and therefore routes the call as a mobile conversation.

At the same time the server software detects you've left the office and can be set to automatically switch on your out of office notice in Outlook. This means that employees now only need one handset and one number.

Most companies can save considerably by calling from mobile to mobile and landline to landline and while there are systems on the market that allow you to do this on a traditional PBX, this is another beneficial side effect of a Presence-based phone system as the server automatically routes the calls.

A common point of discussion with our clients when project planning the introduction of these new systems is the issue of privacy. This is easily addressed through a high degree of user-defined control, allowing people to select conditions in which they are detectable.

For example, if you leave the office early because you're going away for the weekend and want to get on the road, the system can be told that DDI calls should be forwarded to your mobile until 18:00. However after this, your voice mail can be set to forward messages to you via email as wav file attachments for you to look at or forward to a colleague as and when you're ready.

Thanks to the Internet Engineering Task Force's (IETF) Instant Messaging and Presence Protocol (IMPP) Working Group there are core standards which manufacturers use to make presence technologies interoperable. Because of this, more and more devices are being introduced into the workplace, which makes the adoption and deployment of PT easy and compelling.

Contact ramsac on
0870 756 9001