

BOULDER COUNTY BUSINESS REPORT

Coupled systems alleviate phone tag, save time, money

By Ryan Dionne

January 26, 2009 -- BOULDER - Playing phone tag with a business connection isn't as fun as chasing each other around on the playground. It's annoying and wastes time that many people can't afford to lose.

But with programs like Microsoft's Office Communications Server 2007, coupled with a voice over Internet protocol, or VoIP, phone system that synchronizes with a company's computer network, colleagues and contacts alike can reduce or even eliminate that back and forth messaging.

Terry Gold, chief executive officer of Boulder-based Gold Systems Inc., said his company, which is a Microsoft partner, incorporates the server software into incoming and outgoing calls, and it saves him time and money.

The system acts like a common instant messaging application but is tied to a phone, too.

If Gold picks up his phone, an away message shows his contacts that he's on the phone. If he has an appointment scheduled in his Microsoft Outlook scheduler for 1 p.m. on a given day, an away message will show that he's in a meeting.

It also displays whether or not he is available, idle for more than 15 minutes or he can manually set it to what he wants - including to "do not disturb" mode.

"It saves a lot of back and forth," Gold said.

Gold said he can easily instant message co-workers in other states, and, if needed, click a button and turn it into a voice call or videoconference.

Microsoft's software, which is installed on one or more company servers, can also manage conference calls and save companies money in the long run.

In connection with VoIP, Office Communications Server replaces a traditional private branch exchange (telephone exchange) and manages calls over the Internet instead of paying for each conference call participant.

Gold said his conferencing bills went from about \$3,000 per month to \$700 per month by using Microsoft's suite. Earlier this month he cancelled his landline and anticipates his conference-calling bill to soon be nothing.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software company plans to launch the next version of Communications Server in February and will be available for \$21 or \$97 per user depending on the number of features the company wants, according to a Microsoft spokeswoman.