

## Nortel Targets SMBs With New VoIP Wares

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By Andrew R. Hickey

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Nortel Networks on Tuesday again proved it's placing a strong focus on small- and mid-size businesses with the release of a string of new SMB-targeted VoIP products that VARs say can ease the transition to [VoIP](#) for smaller companies.

According to the Toronto-based vendor, the latest releases are designed and custom built to work with Nortel customers' existing telephony investments. Products released Tuesday include a new feature set for the Business Communication Manger (BCM) 50, Nortel's flagship converged telephony platform for SMBs; a new line of SMB-centric IP phones; a paging and text-messaging application suite; and a cordless digital phone.

The BCM 50 updates, release 3.0, require a software upgrade and offer new features like [SIP](#) trunking, advanced conferencing and new reporting capabilities, such as on-box call metrics. Additionally, it offers better platform integration with Microsoft Windows Vista and Nortel's Network Configuration Manager and improved applications like Intelligent Contact Center and unified messaging, said Chris Nantes, marketing manager for Nortel's global [SMB](#) portfolio.

Nantes said customers already using Nortel's digital Norstar key systems can extend up to 70 percent of their current investment by reusing the equipment they already have as they grow into [IP telephony](#) and converged communications with BCM 50.

On the phone side, Nortel released its IP Phone 1200 Series, a series of devices that come pre-programmed with the most common IPT features used by SMBs, including autodial, conference and messaging. Used with the BCM 50, the phones can also be customized to access more than 400 BCM features. Along with the new IP phone suite, the Business Series Terminal T7406E is a new cordless digital phone -- a "portable phone on steroids," as Nantes called it -- for Norstar and BCM users. The cordless phone offers a range of up to 1,000 feet.

Lastly, the Advanced Paging Productivity (APP) Pack, offers a suite of software applications for BCM giving SMBs access to overhead paging and text-messaging. Best used in retail, AAP Pack gives mobile workforces the ability to stay connected while offering streamlined customer service and a common in-store experience within a retail site or across several locations.

Nantes said VARs and partners have had success in offering the BCM, which has sold more than 75,000 units since its May 2005 debut. Integrating the APP Pack with BCM 50 can help VARs target not only retail customers, but also those in education, manufacturing or any industry that requires one-button paging, text-messaging and pre-recorded announcements.

"We're getting tremendous traction from our partner community and VARs as well," Nantes said. VARs can also offer the line of SMB VoIP products bundled with Nortel's SMB data solutions, which can all be managed using the Business Element Manager. That combination, and the ability to sell an IP upgrade path to customers still using Norstar, will be a big hit for the VAR community, Nantes indicated.

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Optivor Technologies, a Nortel partner, said the vendor's new SMB VoIP roundup eliminates a lot of the growing pains SMBs face with phone systems and voice applications and squashes the traditional rip-and-replace model. Allowing the installed base of Norstar users to upgrade to BCM but still utilize their digital handsets offers cost savings and can act as a catalyst to upgrade to VoIP.

For existing BCM 50 users, Chandler said, it lets them upgrade to more SIP capabilities as they grow from previous BCM releases.

"That's huge," he said. "It solves the immediate and future needs. I don't want to buy a solution and paint myself into a corner knowing in two years I'm going to toss it out and get another one."

Chandler added that he can sell a three-person office Nortel equipment and maintain that customer relationship throughout its growth to a 300-person company because of BCM 50's scalability and integration with new applications.

"It makes it a lot easier to sell," he said. "You can sell a customer something that's going to allow them to grow. As a VAR, you can't make a lot of money going out banging on doors selling one at a time. This ensures customers will be with you forever."

The latest releases fall in line with Nortel's shift over the past year and a half to better serve the SMB market, considered by many to be ignored by most powerhouse vendors, especially in the VoIP arena. In the last 18 months, Nortel has released [a series of data networking and VoIP products specifically targeted at the SMB](#).

Nantes said the new products solidify Nortel's place in the SMB market.

"We're in the SMB market," he said. "We're in it to win and we're in it to win big."

Chandler agreed.

"Nortel is addressing what the market needs," he said. "Some of Nortel's VARs sell in mass volume to the SMB space and I've made significant investments in the SMB space with customers. It's the right move for Nortel, moving the focus to helping the business manager."

Harry Finer, strategic alliance manager for the Nortel product line with Westcon Group said Nortel's releases are a "clear indication that Nortel understands the SMB market."

Finer said many SMBs are trying to figure out how best to grow their business, and need access to the features and functions that were once strongly enterprise focused.

Westcon Group, a multi-national distributor in Tarrytown, N.Y., has even put together a program for resellers to help them with their Norstar to BCM migrations.

Overall, Finer said, it's a win for the SMB and VARs.

"I can see resellers getting more deals," he said. "The resellers' value proposition is 'I can implement and manage this and become your IT shop.'"