

# Delivering tomorrow's ICT edge to SMEs today

By Christopher Tan

Having the right information technology and communications (ICT) systems and applications is essential in today's competitive and fast-paced businesses environment. While the corporate sector of multinational corporations and larger organisations has made ICT part of their operations, the country's small- and medium sized enterprise segment is still lagging behind.

"Many SME owners claim they have already got their required computers and communication tools such as desktop computers, telephones and fax machines in place and that they are already sufficiently ICT-enabled.

"But do these devices communicate effectively with each other and offer their personnel the ability to access and share information amongst themselves?" queried NetAxis Sdn Bhd managing director Guan Swee Teng.

This is where unified communications comes into play as it involves the combination of data, video, voice and other media onto a single platform. This would enable SMEs to mimic larger enterprises in their interactions with customers and partners while increasing the effectiveness of their own workflow.

Guan added that another problem faced by many SMEs is that they do not have dedicated IT staff to manage their IT requirements. As such, many networks in the SMEs are not well planned or designed to cater for present and future business requirements, resulting in users facing various problems such as a 'slow response', the high cost of network ownership, compatibility and interoperability issues, network security issues, and difficulties in network expansion.

"Malaysian SMEs should not just simply invest in computers and applications, but also need to understand the value of network technology. Having good computer networking can enable staff in SMEs to work on the move, and take work home much more efficiently than has ever been possible before," he said.

NetAxis has been a specialised network system integrator working with SMEs for more than nine years in Malaysia. Its services include the design and installation of network infrastructure, setting up of interconnectivities for networks for branches in multiple locations, unified communication solutions for data, voice, fax and video, implementation of network security and network maintenance services.

Part of the reason why their name has been steadily growing within the SME sector is because of their continued focus over the last decade on this business segment. Of its more than 300 customers to date, 70% comprises SMEs particularly from the manufacturing, retail, trading and service sectors.

"Our network solutions are tailored



Jazine Tan (left) and Guan Swee Teng

to SMEs' specific needs. We take them through a step-by-step needs analysis followed by a detailed, customised proposal that is relevant and cost-effective in meeting their exact requirements," stated Guan while highlighting the qualifications of his team of certified Cisco, 3Com, Fortinet, Juniper, Motorola and Microsoft systems engineers.

The latest offering by NetAxis in collaboration with Critical Links — an internationally acclaimed global provider of unified voice, data, security and IT solutions for enterprises — is another example of how they are always seeking out the best solutions for SMEs.

The edgeBox provides a full business phone system (IP-PBX) plus email, web, fax, security, calendar, contact directory, and much more in the form of a single appliance that can be managed remotely through an easy-to-use interface.

"The award-winning edgeBox offers comprehensive voice, data, security and IT solutions in a single appliance (office-in-a-box) to SMEs," said Guan, adding that NetAxis is the sole distributor for edgeBox in Malaysia.

As SMEs are generally price-conscious, he added that the unique edgeBox solution will reduce initial costs of a SME network setup to less than half while helping SMEs achieve cost savings of up to RM30,000 per premises setup.

NetAxis business development manager Jazine Tan further explained: "It al-



In a growing world of 'all-in-one' packages and business solutions, the edgeBox easily stands out as the ultimate unified communication device for SMEs



## edgeBox business benefits:

- Simplified phone system and data network deployment and management — The edgeBox can be remotely managed via a secure web-based unified management interface that is extremely easy to use and can be effectively configured by non-IT experts.

- Business VoIP phone system with sophisticated features and call savings — The full-featured IP-PBX offers interactive voice menus, voicemail, call queuing and many other features that only larger enterprises could afford. It is able to connect to any incoming phone lines (analogue, basic or primary rate digital), to interface with legacy PBX systems, phones and fax machines.

- Significant cost savings both upfront (capex) and ongoing (opex) — With edgeBox, there are fewer products to purchase and maintain, and maintenance is extremely simple through its intuitive interface. Therefore costs can be reduced in average by 80%. The IP voice system allows for the elimination of call costs between offices and the overall reduction of outbound call costs.

- Simple but secure enterprise-level security — Data and applications accessible through edgeBox, either via physical links or VPNs, are protected by enterprise-grade firewall software, guarding your network from suspicious data packets and denial of service attacks.

- Improved collaboration and productivity of staff — It provides SMEs' staff with a full set of online collaboration tools, ensuring the maximum return on investment from the network you have installed. Company website can be hosted on edgeBox and an intranet can be deployed.

- Safe storage with automated backup for critical business data — Files can be stored and shared on edgeBox in Windows, Linux and Mac compatible formats with data security ensured through automated backup and restore functions, including backup to external physical or network drives at scheduled times.

lows for huge cost savings in the typical SME both in terms of upfront purchase costs (capex) and ongoing management costs (opex). Upfront costs start from under RM10,000 or as low as RM200 per user (without including phones)."

The company also has a pay-as-you-go payment option to allow SMEs to further reduce the initial investment to RM5,500 and spread payment over 12 to 24 months, thereby reducing on-going costs by almost 60%.

Tan added that this package also eradicates many of SMEs existing IT challenges including the need for multiple devices from various vendors, exposure to security vulnerabilities, expensive IT support and the high cost of ownership.

Finally, edgeBox is also a 'green' product because the consolidation of several devices into one allows for significantly reduced power and space consumption, and smaller carbon footprint that would ultimately result in significant energy cost savings.

"The edgeBox is perfect for SMEs looking to upgrade their communica-

tion devices, those in need of enhanced mobility, and businesses requiring centralised data and integrated communication across multiple branches," stated Tan.

With an increasing number of SMEs facing up to globalised competition, NetAxis believes that it has the experience to connect SMEs with the most cost-effective, top-performing methods of connectivity available on the market today.

"We know that SMEs are built to grow and will likely undergo business and operational changes along the way. Our solutions will offer the flexibility of having the right network and communication solutions that will grow along with an SME's journey," asserted Guan.