

Microsoft Debuts The Missing "Lync" in Unified Communications

Written by Bob Snyder
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Microsoft believes it can quickly reach \$1 billion in annual sales to corporates (such as Royal Dutch Shell , Nikon, Boeing and France Telecom et al) by pushing a "re-re-re-vamped" UC software that handles web-based calling and videoconferencing. (Microsoft already does \$1 billion annually with **SharePoint**, a family of software products for collaboration, file sharing as well as web publishing.)



The software, called **Lync**, wants its share of the \$50 billion market for products that help companies replace traditional phones with IP systems.

Lync is *the third try* of Microsoft software for web-based calling and teleconferencing. Bill Gates himself first introduced a version in 2003. But third-time lucky is often the case for Microsoft in a new product category.

Lync puts internet messages, video chats and phone calls on the same platform -- classic "unified communications." Besides linking up with Office software, this program can be embedded in other applications. For example, Schlumberger integrates the software with its oil-rig monitoring software so it can call staff to attend immediately an affected rig if a problem develops.

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HP Services division helps customers install Lync and it has orders to deploy Lync to more than 300,000 workers at Fortune 500 companies, Microsoft says. So it's a big business but not an uncontested one: any Microsoft bid for customers will compete directly with Cisco, Avaya and others.

Cisco's unified-communications business, with more than 1000 customers, includes Internet phones and call-center products, as well as social-networking tools and mobile applications grew 45% last quarter Y-to-Y. Cisco just sold its 30 millionth internet phone last month to HSBC Holdings Plc. That just confirms this is a trend you can bank on.

Go Bill Gates May Be Retired But He's Here Pushing Microsoft Lync as His Own Vision