

Review of the Vonexus Enterprise Interaction Center (EIC) 3.0 from Interactive Intelligence

By Tom Keating



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Price: Vonexus EIC is priced per user or station. Average pricing is between \$500 and \$1,500 per business user/station, depending on functionality and system size. Pricing includes installation and hardware.

RATINGS (0 — 5)

Installation: 5	GUI: 5
Documentation: 5	Value: 4.5
Features: 5	Overall: A+

Founded in 1994, Interactive Intelligence was at the forefront of the PC-PBX revolution offering a Windows-based phone system that the traditional PBX manufacturers said wasn't reliable since it ran on Windows. But Interactive Intelligence was the first PC-PBX vendor to prove them wrong. Additionally, Interactive Intelligence added unparalleled flexibility and integration with business applications since the PC-PBX sat on the local area network (LAN) negating the need for complex CTI (computer telephony integration). In fact, their platform pre-dated the next evolution from simply a PC-PBX to a full-fledged IP-PBX that completed the convergence of the phone network with the data network. Thus evolved their "all-in-one" IP communications software suite using industry standards such as SIP, all on a single-platform architecture that can handle multi-channel communications. They were also the first to offer a 100 percent software-based IP-PBX. It is with this historical background in mind that TMC Labs decided to take another look at one of Interactive Intelligence's solutions to see just how far they had come since the last time we reviewed them.

We decided to check out Vonexus Enterprise Interaction Center (Vonexus EIC) 3.0, which targets mid-size businesses with between 100 and 1,500 users. We should mention that their higher-end Customer Interaction Center (CIC) product targets mid-size to large organizations with up to 15,000 users and more, and has the same features as the Vonexus EIC, along with some additional features such as its Interaction Designer tool for full customizability, along with outbound/blended dialing, workforce management and knowledge management.

Installation

Interactive Intelligence came to TMC Labs to set up Vonexus Enterprise Interaction Center (EIC) 3.0 along with a few IP phones and one softphone client called Interaction Client running on a laptop. We watched the installation process soup-to-nuts and it was very

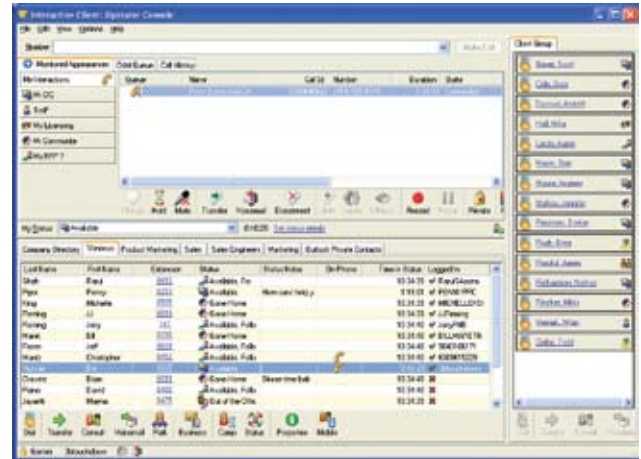


Figure 1. Powerful Operator Console

straightforward, including the configuration of the IP phones, which does support auto-provisioning. For such a comprehensive product we were surprised at how easy it was to install and configure.

Documentation

The documentation for Interactive Intelligence was stellar. The user and administration guides were very easy to follow. There's also a nice small pocket guide that can fit in your wallet. There's also a mini-guide called Interaction Mail User Guide which is very handy for new users to become familiar with voicemail, fax, and messaging. The manuals are often color-coded and have colored screenshots making it much easier to read and navigate.

Operational Testing

Part of our testing involved playing with the Windows-based administrative interface to determine how easy the system would be to maintain on a day-to-day basis, including adds/moves/changes of users, reconfiguring the IVR/auto-attendant, etc. The fact that it's Windows-based vs. browser-based is actually an advantage. The Interaction Administrator is a single administrative interface to configure local and remote users, lines, stations, IP networks, SIP device and digital phone connections, security access, make moves/ adds/ changes (MACs), etc.

Overall, we were very pleased with the administrative user interface, which has been tweaked and improved over the years. Certainly, TMC Labs felt the TCO for this platform was excellent in no small part due to its superb Windows-based user-friendly admin interface.

Relatedly, the Interaction Attendant lets admins and call center managers easily configure call routing for users and workgroups. You can also create and update on-hold messages, greetings, menus, etc. From here you can define DID/ DNIS call routing for specific menus or queues, prompts for a caller's PIN, etc.

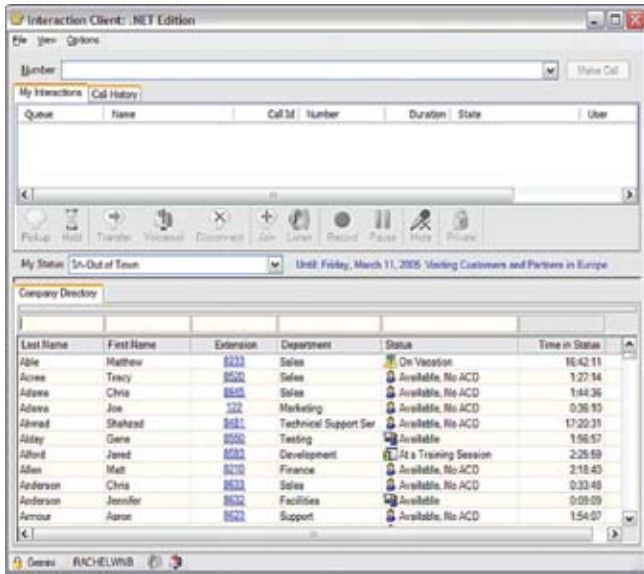


Figure 2. .NET-based and SIP-based desktop client.

Vonexus EIC features several excellent call control applications, including an operator console (See Figure 1). Their enhanced .NET SIP-based desktop client (See Figure 2) features presence management, call recording, multi-party conferencing up to 96 parties, company directories, speed dials, drag-and-drop transfers, and more. As seen in Figure 2, on an inbound call you will see a Toast icon in the lower right allowing you to see the CallerID and either pickup the call or send to voicemail. Interactive Intelligence told TMC Labs that their new .NET client is less “chatty” on the network than their older Win32 softphone application.

In addition to their SIP client that runs on a PC, Vonexus EIC also sports an Interaction Client, Mobile Edition for Windows Mobile 5.0 & 6.0 devices for truly mobile access. Of course, it supports the traditional call control functions from the desktop IP telephone itself, including hold, transfer, conference, mute pick-up, , etc., plus the ability to record calls.

Vonexus EIC also features embedded call control integrations into Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, Outlook (See Figure 3), and Microsoft Dynamics GP and CRM. Further, you can even use their mobile Interaction Client, Web Edition for call control (see Figure 4), which is perfect for when you are using someone else’s PC and don’t want to install the Windows client. Vonexus EIC has the most soft-phone and call control options we’ve seen on any IP-PBX platform.

Importantly, it supports increased security by supporting Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) and Transport Layer Security (TLS) to encrypt audio and call control info. Interactive Intelligence claims that they are the only IP-PBX that secures the entire VoIP communications — not just extension-to-extension calls. It even encrypts (SRTP) the touch tone digits pressed in the IVR/ACD, which both Cisco and Avaya do not. In Cisco’s case, the gateway to the Cisco Call Manager is over the open network and can be captured with a packet sniffer.

One problem with pushing updates to Windows-based PCs is you often have to be an administrator to install software, which can be a bit hairy if an administrator has to manually log on to hundreds of workstations. Vonexus EIC solves this problem using an auto-provisioning service with admin rights to automatically push out software updates.

One of the most powerful features of Vonexus EIC is the ability to set personal rules, which is very similar to how you define Outlook rules. You can set rules based on current presence, CallerID, etc. This gives the user a lot of flexibility in how, when, and where they are contacted.

Importantly, Vonexus EIC supports T.38 fax with up to 96 ports of fax as well as desktop faxing. Another important feature is their speech re-enabled Interaction Mobile Office. This allows you to retrieve messages, calendar items, etc. simply using your voice in the speech-enabled IVR. Another important mobility component is the one-number find-me/follow-me feature.

The call center features are superb in Vonexus EIC. Supervisors using Interaction Supervisor can, for instance, set alerts such as on-hold > 3 min < 4 min and IM agents in queue automatically. Supervisors can pick up, join, listen, coach (whisper), or record the call. The reverse is also possible allowing an agent to request help. The “assisted response” feature lets an agent IM a supervisor queue. The first supervisor that accepts the request is then taken immediately to an interface where the call is displayed and they can then pick up, join, etc. Recording is another important feature for most call centers. Vonexus EIC offers built-in call recording and canned reports. Its optional Interaction Recorder module adds multi-channel recording for calls, web chats, e-mails and faxes; rules-based recording; archive management; innovative scoring for quality measurement; recording encryption; script adherence; and more.

One nifty ACD queue feature is the ability for a caller to leave the queue and then automatically get a call-back based on the ANI or the caller’s specified number. Also, the Vonexus EIC queue supports inbound voice call queues, email queues, and web chat queues. Thus, customers have many options available to them to contact your business.



Figure 3. Outlook integration with EIC

Other features include the following:

- SLA (Shared Line Appearances)
- Call detail reporting — end-to-end reporting — ad-hoc custom reporting
- Multi-lingual support
- Remote and at-home users, mobile workers (Citrix)
- Informal contact center features
- ACD — multimedia queuing — e-mail routing
- Web chat



Figure 4. Web client for installation-less call control

- Real-time system/agent/workgroup supervisory monitoring & alerts
- CRM integrations — screen pops, database lookups, embedded call controls
- Multi-channel interaction recording — on-demand, rules-based
- Knowledge management, email/Web auto response
- Multi-site support

- Built-in IP audio conference server

Interactive Intelligence has also begun development for an automated customer satisfaction survey module that will be offered with Vonexus EIC this year, along with support for Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007.

Room For Improvement

There wasn't much to harp on when it came to this system. Vonexus EIC features a plethora of communications methods, including voice, email queuing, and chat. The only obvious missing communications method is video calling, but video calling hasn't yet hit prime time in the B2B or B2C markets. Though the OCS 2007 integration could provide the missing link since it offers video calling & video conferencing.

Conclusion

Interactive Intelligence's Vonexus EIC 3.0 is without a doubt the most powerful and comprehensive IP-PBX that runs on the Windows operating system. It may in fact be the most comprehensive IP-PBX running on any operating system! When you combine all the features that it provides and compare it to other solutions that require kludging several products together, the Vonexus EIC's TCO and price per station (\$500-\$1500) is a bargain. TMC Labs would highly recommend the Vonexus EIC 3.0 IP-PBX to any SMBs that require powerful call center functionality or that require multimedia forms of communications (voice, email, chat) with their customers. **IT**

Tom Keating is TMC's Vice President, CTO, Executive Technology Editor and SEO Director.

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