

Beep, buzz, ring or hum - a company gets the message out

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Companies have more ways to reach employees than ever before. But with each new miracle of the communication age comes new headaches, complications and excuses.

Telephones. Faxes. Voice mail. Wireless phones. Short Messaging Service. Pagers. E-mail. Instant messages. Wireless handheld computers. BlackBerry, Raspberry; a confection of communications confusion.

Mir3, a Carmel Valley startup, says it has developed a solution to all these messaging nightmares: INlogic, a line of customizable software that lets companies and employers reach one another however they want to be reached, wherever they are.

To independent-minded types, Mir3's products might sound like an electronic ball and chain. No more getting out into the field, away from meetings and micro-managing bosses. You might as well remain in the office.

But Amir Moussavian, Mir3's chief executive, said that's not the way his "intelligent notification" technology works. It's designed, he says, to help save time for both the bosses in the office and the employees on the road. He says the goal is to make two-way communications easier and less of a distraction at the same time.

An employee in the field, Moussavian continues, can quickly push a few buttons on a cell phone to send one of several pre-loaded replies, then get back to work. A boss can likewise notify a sales team of a new client or an engineering team of an emergency, with just a few keystrokes.

Talk to me

The proliferation of new communications gadgets is confusing mainly because these devices don't talk to one another, Moussavian said. Mir3's software provides the glue.

This linking allows companies to include every electronic device into its notification system, customizing it for

their needs. For example, a sensor inside an oil pipeline could trigger a message that Mir3's software would automatically route to predetermined teams of engineers.

It's even possible to reach across the language barrier with INlogic, Moussavian said. Text or voice messages can be automatically translated to the language of the person to be reached, as long as the corresponding text and voice messages for that language have been entered.

Competitors also provide notification systems, but they're usually built around one provider's products, Moussavian said. Changing to a new provider could mean buying new equipment, making subscribers feel locked in.

But Mir3 is "agnostic" about what equipment is used. Any standard telephone, cell phone, pager or e-mail account is reachable.

Self-funded

Moussavian started Mir3 in 1999 after heading several local companies going back to 1986. These include AngelHawk Investments, a Del Mar-based venture capital firm; Contigo Software in San Diego; and HawkNet, a Carlsbad networking software developer since sold to BMC Software.

Prices for the software vary. The company's flagship product, INLogicNow, is provided as a service, rented for about \$1,000 a month for three months, \$900 a month for six months, and \$800 a month for one year.

So far, Mir3 is self-funded and has not sought venture capital investments. Moussavian said he expects the company to turn a profit this year.

Simplicity hiding complexity

Mir3's software hides its complexity behind the familiar form of a Web browser. Each employee's contact information is entered into a password-protected Web site. Employers likewise send information through a browser-based form, either to an individual employee or the entire group to which the employee belongs.

Push the button, and Mir3's software attempts to contact each person, starting with the most preferred method and continuing until an answer is received or all methods have been exhausted. By phone, the software delivers an automated call. The reply is sent by pushing a voice-prompted number. Likewise, pagers will get a text message.

Too much control?

Mir3 says workers won't be bombarded with more messages than they can handle. An electrical engineer up to the elbows in spaghetti wire can turn off the mass-notification feature and get the job done, for example.

"Individuals can decide if they want to receive that first-response confirmation," Moussavian said. "If you send too many notifications to too many people too many times, they start to ignore them. We're trying to make that life easy. That's why we give you the option to turn off if you don't want to get notification."

However, employers get tools to precisely track employee performance. Because all notification and response is

handled electronically, the software records who got a message and how long it took for a response. So employees who habitually fail to respond will be easily noticeable. Those who habitually lag in response may find themselves getting shunted lower on the priority list ---- especially bad news if you're paid by the project and not just on salary.

The electronic tether may have a long leash, but it's still there.

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