Sunday, December 30. 2018

PBX Price Crazyness

In some of my previous posts, I've shown examples and given recommendations for Grandstream UCM 62xx PBX's, as they are very reasonably priced and time proven with Grandstream having been around for a very long time. However at present, they concentrate on the smaller end of town - and there's nothing wrong with that, as small business makes up over 90% of all businesses, so there is indeed a huge market to be tapped into, and Grandstream are on a winner with their price, features and reliability, they beat the competition hands down.

But in the age of NBN where most POTS exchanges are being turned off (if you're lucky enough to be in an NBN Wireless footprint, you get to keep your POTS line), SIP trunking is growing exponentially, and larger businesses like Hotels, Motels, Resorts, Aged Care/Retirement Villages and others in the medium size market that are using standard POTS lines, are also going to need to move that way, and that's where thing's get price crazy for hardware, and I mean real crazy.

Some businesses in this medium sector will be needing phone systems with hundreds of lines, Grandstream's top line unit can handle 2000 registrations, but due to hardware limitations, the 65xx series maxes out at 200 concurrent calls, which although is still most suitable for many medium sized businesses, is out of the race for those top end medium and larger enterprise size businesses, this means alternatives have to come into play, the two that I would consider genuine contenders, and also long established in the VoIP world, are Xorcom and Sangoma (who as of 2018 own FreePBX), and this is where it gets crazy.

Take for example a system with a maximum of 1000 SIP registrations (be they pure VoIP phones, Analogue gateways or combination of both) and 300 concurrent calls...

Xorcoms match is their XR3000 which comes in at around 1700 US Dollars, the Sangoma equivalent, the PBXact UC1000, comes in well over 7000 US Dollars, the local Australian dealer lists them as being 3,600 AUD and 12,500 AUD respectively (the latter even more expensive than likes of Avaya whos digital systems are popular in Australia) - for doing pretty much the exact same thing, how can Sangoma justify that is... well... it's just mind boggling, how in fact can anyone, any business, justify that purchase, I've known network admins to be sacked for far less.

I made a tweet about this this morning, which prompted me to blog about it in greater detail, and as I was almost finished this blog post, about to publish, I received a tweet from someone attempting to justify the high cost by labelling Xorcom as outdated - sure, you wont get much of an argument of out me on that (unless they are more update than their literature alludes to), it's underlying software and OS might be a few years old, but it still works perfectly well and still does everything most businesses could dream of in a PBX. So to the tweet...

OK, so, is a new version of a free downloadable open source operating system (CentOS), and a newer version of a free downloadable copy of FreePBX (Software wise, PBXact and FreePBX are identical), another drive, and 12G ram worth the massive price indifference? Seriously? I've been told it's mostly hardware that dictates such high pricing, with another disk and 12G Ram for about 1500, that's obviously not the case here unless their Ram is pure gold, and as for twin disks, that is a great bonus, but your phone system should load from, not run from, disks, or it'll be mighty slow, and although SSD is faster than spinning disks, they are also far more prone to failures, I guess that's why they use two of them

Let us also not forgot many of today's existing phone systems, the traditional PABX's, the ones that run perfectly fine that nobody ever thinks about, runs on firmware that was released decades ago, there's a building in Stones Corner in Brisbane that's running a PABX that was installed and last touched in the late 70's still going strong.

When considering PBX systems, shop around, not just for device best price, but for long established competitors offerings that do the same things, or, at very least, tick all the boxes of your requirements, don't fixate on one thing just because it's the Internet's current hype or someone on twitter with 5mil followers says to.

I do however give Sangoma credit for their top end of Vega line of gateways though, so Sangoma do understand how to be competitive for the larger FXS port markets, though there are pros and cons with each companies offerings, I will look

at the Vega 3050g and Xorcom Astribank. The Astribank is about 1000 dollars cheaper, but the Vega does offer 18 more ports, and although lacks elsewhere, I consider the cost of the 18 extra ports to close enough balance out that 1000 difference, it's still over priced by a couple hundred, but I can accept it easier than their crazy PBX pricing.

If you are only needing short distance cable runs, you should look at the Grandstream GXW4248 48 port gateway, at around $AU1200 it's much more budget friendly, I don't look at it here because its recommended maximum cable run is only about 2km's, very much shorter than the 6 to 8km's of the XR3000 or V3050G.

Notes:
* If you only require a handful of FXS ports, look at Grandstream and Cisco.
* The Xorcom XR3000 can be purchased with internal FXS ports.

Sangoma Vega 3050g

Simple to use and configure, setup takes mere minutes
50 FXS ports
Two standard Telco 50 sockets
IP Based
No PoE.
Lacks RJ11 ports useful for testing
Lacks per port status lights, very useful for testing

Astribank XR0008

Plug and Play with any Asterisk based Server
Only maximum of 32 FXS ports
USB connectivity, (in rare cases can be a problem with multiple units and port assignments if changed out)
No PoE.
Has rear TCO socket - but is non standard and proprietary pin out and wiring code
Has front mounted RJ11's, can be used as main input, or as a test point, doesn't isolate TCO pair.
Has front mounted LED's for status and activity. Can be made to fast blink to locate a DAHDI port from PBX.

I'd like to see Sangoma become more competitive since they have a fantastic offering, but that means becoming much more competitive on PBX pricing (and I'd like to see the status port LED's on future Vega models too), The days of using price models of dying traditional POTS based PABX hardware is gone, I really hope Sangoma wakes up that their pricing model is so 1990's.

Interim solutions are Xorcom PBX with Sangoma Vega Gateways for larger fit outs that Grandstream is not suited to, until Sangoma realise their price structure is not feasible, especially at today's international exchange rates

*** It is most likely your existing PABX can be upgraded or made to work without total replacement, this post is for new installs, and those who actually really do need to replace their existing systems entirely for other reasons.

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Posted by NoelB at 11:14
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