

# How Google + You = Account Control

By Dan Baldwin, Telecom Association Founder & Executive Director



## **New Google-powered business applications "in-the-cloud" help telecom agents sell multilocation voice & data T1s (and regain account control)**

When Google launched its "Gmail" email service five years ago in April 2004, Google set in motion an opportunity for voice and data telecom agents to regain control of multilocation business accounts. Through the last half of the 1990's, as business email began to be seen as a required business application, information technology or "IT" consultants that sell and service in-house email servers that utilize Microsoft's proprietary (and expensive) "Outlook" email software had displaced the "telecom agent" as the most important consultant business owners would turn to when making technology decisions.

### **Video Intro**

To wrestle multilocation business account control back out of the hands of the Microsoft partners, Google is empowering distributors of voice and data wide area networks or "WANs" (the networks sold by telecom agents that connect multilocation accounts together as one) with an ever growing set of "cloud based" business applications like email that can augment and then ultimately replace the expensive and proprietary in-house Microsoft email servers and related equipment. Through accomplished companies like [NuVox](#) that are highly experienced at servicing and retaining multilocation business accounts, telecom agents can now deliver business applications like email and document sharing as easily as they can sell voice and data T1s - all through a single supplier and servicer.

Because Google has decided to seize its fair share of the business applications and services market from Microsoft utilizing telecom agents and companies like [NuVox](#), Google is [helping telecom agents](#) once again reposition themselves as

the primary consultant business owners turn to when making technology decisions.

### **The Old Account Control Problem**

At a [PAETEC](#) and [Allworx](#) sponsored cocktail party in San Diego a couple weeks ago, I ran into [Clive Harrison](#) a friend who is an accomplished telecom sales person who recently switched jobs from selling NEC phone systems (and network service) at [ATEL Communications](#) to selling IT managed services (and network service) at [CentrexIT](#). When I asked him how the new sales job was and why he made the job switch he spoke like a blind man who had recently regained his sight.

"Dan you have no idea how much better customers and prospects respond when you approach them with a full set of voice **and** Managed IT Services", Clive reported. "When you're the telecom provider you contact the customer once every year at best. As an IT service provider we're in contact with our customers at least every month. So I don't lose telecom deals to data VARs as before because I am the IT vendor my client turns to for advice on everything to do with their network. It's great. Seriously, Dan – take a look at this!"

I know exactly what Clive is talking about. The only reason I have not lost more telecom deals to IT consultants is that most IT consultants are quite loathe to take on and sell network services to their IT clients. While some IT consulting companies like [CentrexIT](#) have seen the light and hired Clive on to pick that voice money up off the table, most IT companies are happy to tell their customers to just "call your phone guy to order your voice and data circuits".

The advent of the IP-PBX is changing all this though. As more businesses and their IT consultants turn on to the idea of running their IP-PBX phone system over their existing data network they are both seeing that everything that makes up the voice solution are nothing more than generic "piece parts" that run over the data network. The question this realization then begs is, "Why do we need a separate voice consultant in here sopping up margin and possibly mucking up the deal?" Why indeed!?

### **How Business Multilocation Changes the Account Control Equation**

Business owners want their employees productive "anywhere and all the time" not just at their desks from nine to five.

1. **Return of the "Blame Game"** - When "IT" is only responsible for making one employee's business applications and data work on one computer at one location, a closed, local area network ("LAN") IT infrastructure is easy to control such that only "IT" can be blamed if a business application does not work right for one employee. But as soon as an employee wants or needs to access a business application away from their primary desk at the office, a wide area network ("WAN") is needed to connect the employee to the business application and their data. With a WAN comes another vendor and the return of the "blame game" when an employee can't access a business application or their data. (As

far as a business owner is concerned, the whole idea behind paying extra for an IT department or consultant was to have no one blaming anyone else.)

### 2. Multilocation IT Economics Force "Off-Site" or "Cloud" Computing

**Consideration** - It's one thing to budget for and pay for a complete set of business applications, backed-up data sets and a bullet-proof LAN in one location but to then duplicate and pay for complete replications of applications, data and infrastructure in multiple locations is economically unviable for most businesses. "Can't I host it on one location and then access from all other locations?" becomes the obvious question from business owners allocating scarce dollars.

3. **Cloud Computing is Proven to Work** - By 2009, everyone that needs to be convinced has been convinced that cloud computing works in a reasonably secure manner. Chief Information Officers ("CIO's") from the largest businesses down to owners of the smallest businesses have all likely a) purchased something from the Internet with a credit card, b) created and used a web-based email account like Gmail or Hotmail, and, c) watched a remotely hosted video on YouTube or Yahoo.

### **The New Account Control Opportunity**

The economic realities of providing computerized business applications to multilocation businesses require a re-consideration of "cloud computing". When the creation and control of a LAN is no longer considered the primary business tech requirement, the IT department or consultant no longer has primary influence over technology purchase decisions. The WANs required to allow employees access to their business applications and data suddenly put savvy telecom agents (who sell the WANs) back into the position of being the primary controller of the business account - especially if they are also sell the business applications the businesses employees are using.

While the necessity of WANs to access an app may put the WAN consultant in the primary tech consultant role in the short run, in the long run, "He who controls the app controls the deal." Not all apps are equal though and some apps require "added value". Understanding "app inequality" and being able to add value to apps provides savvy telecom agents and companies like [NuVox](#) an opportunity for competitive advantage.

### **It's "All About the Apps"**

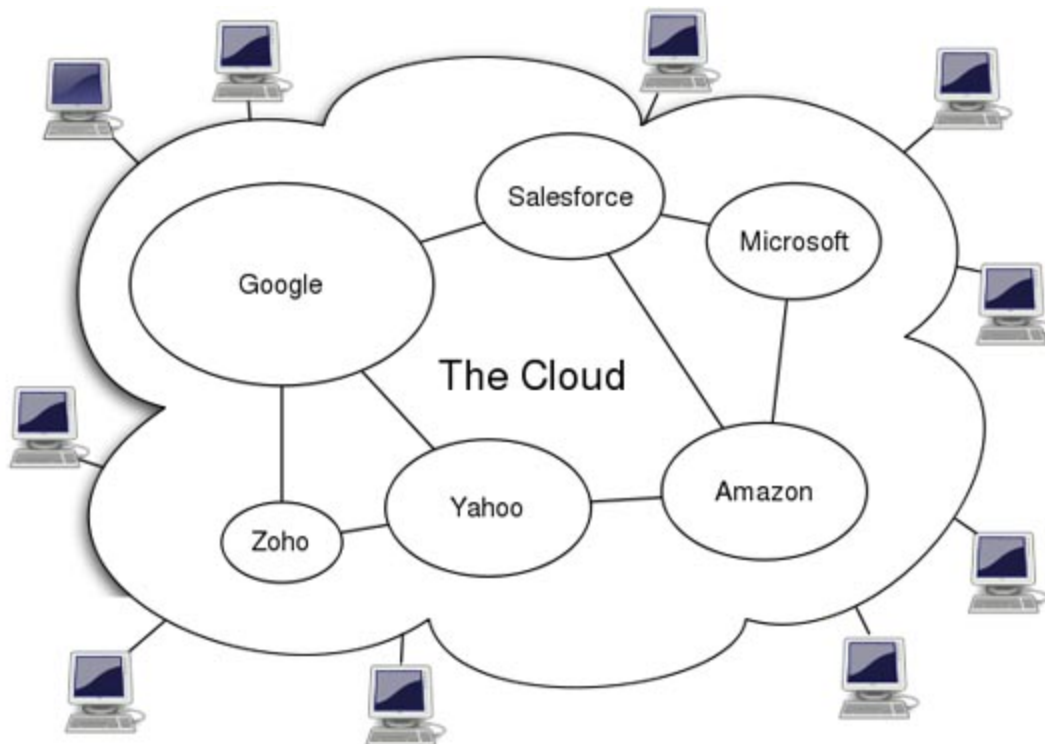
Just as telecom agents can help businesses mix and match multiple telecom services together so too can a "business applications agent" help a business mix and match the best business applications.

The three most important thing to know about business applications are

A) while a business might have three "critical apps" one can be 90% more "critical" than the other two,

B) an "indispensible app" might sometimes be significantly improved by a third party "adding value", and

C) some apps need to "play nice" with other apps or they are useless.



To better understand the inequality of critical apps, as the reader of this article, take a moment to write down the top "business applications" you consider critical to your own job. For me they are:

1. Internet web browser (Google Chrome)
2. Email software (Google Gmail)
3. Operating system (Microsoft Windows XP)
4. Web site editor (Microsoft Frontpage 2003)
5. CRM/Sales funnel (Google Docs - spreadsheet)
6. Photo editor (Adobe Elements)
7. Business social network (LinkedIn.com)
8. Prospecting service (Salesforce.com, GoLeads.com, JigSaw.com)

While the web browser is the app I use 90% of my time, and I like Chrome the best, I can just as easily switch back and use FireFox or Internet Explorer - especially if I had to start paying to use Chrome.

My absolute critical application is email. I switched to Gmail over three years ago from MS Outlook and could not be happier. No amount of money could cause me to switch back and I'd pay almost any price to keep Gmail. (Effortless searching and "always there with me never having to backup" is why I love Gmail.)

The only problem with Gmail is there is no live customer or user support from Google. I'd be happy to pay Google for support but I'm sure there's no amount of money I could pay them to make it worth their while to speak to me about my support issues on there end.

So again, here is an opportunity for savvy telecom agents and companies like [NuVox](#) an to seize a competitive advantage - provide added value to my Gmail experience that Google can't or won't provide for me. (Even if Google was motivated to provide their own support it would probably be from a bunch of "propeller heads" when I'd rather talk to a normal person like myself who understands what I want Gmail to do. Enter [NuVox](#) and their business customer support and retention experts.)

To understand the critical importance of apps "playing nice together" consider the "invisible app" or the operating system of my computer - Windows XP. I refuse to upgrade to Vista because everyone I know has problems with it so I just stay with XP. Therefore all my applications have to work with Vista. Similarly, since Gmail now has over three years of archived emails, any contact management ("CRM") software that I switch too would need to be able to interact with Gmail so i don't need to duplicate or "cut and paste" data (more than I already do managing my sales funnel on a Google Docs spreadsheet).

## **The Telecom Agent's Top 10 Business Apps Call to Action**

Business owners want business applications their employees can access from anywhere at anytime. In the past it was assumed that they'd have to pay for an expensive, in-house IT infrastructure as the foundation that their necessary business applications would rest on. As we can now see, an in-house IT infrastructure is no longer a requirement to access many if not most business applications.

Where as IT consultants have always had the opportunity to sell network services as an "add-on" sale, now WAN consultants (telecom agents) have the opportunity to sell business applications and remote managed services as add-on sales as they grow their expertise in what business owners really want access too - a business applications broker/consultant.

Following are the actions telecom agents can take now to get and keep control of their business accounts and prospects:

1. **Sign up for a personal [Gmail](#) account** - Having a Gmail account is the first step to having a free "Google account" and everything that comes with it like [document](#) collaboration, text and video [chat](#), and multiperson [calendaring](#), and a bunch of other reasonably integrated FREE [stuff](#). This is an important step because even if you "hate Google", as a business apps consultant you need to understand Google's view of the world of online productivity apps as it's become the understood standard.

2. **Sign up for a free [Google Apps](#) account** - Invest \$10 at [GoDaddy](#) in a [www.MYbusiness.com](#) URL and then go to [Google Apps](#) and register that business URL onto a free [Google Apps](#) account. Take special notice of the

differences between the free personal Gmail/ Google account and the free business Google Apps account.

3. (Optional for show-offs only) Become a [Google Apps Authorized Reseller](#). Even if you don't go through the motions of becoming a Google Apps reseller yourself it's good to see what's involved so you can better understand the next step.

4. Sign up to distribute [NuVox Business Apps \(Powered by Google\)](#) - If you looked at number three above you'll have a better understanding for the NuVox Business Apps offering. Instead of paying \$100 per seat up front for the service and installation and then another \$60 up front for a year of support your customers get to pay nothing up front and just \$10 per month per seat which includes installation assistance and support.



[Click here](#) to download MP3 of the recording

(Click the icon above to listen to an actual 10-minute phone call of me calling into a Google Apps Authorized Reseller to get information about the non-NuVox installation and support option).

[Click here to view a PDF copy](#) of NuVox's presentation for agents detailing marketing & sales tips.

5. Sign-up for a [Zoho Business account](#) - Zoho is a much smaller company than Google and has a somewhat comparable SaaS (web based) product to Google Apps. Some say Zoho's better and other's say Google's better. Everyone says Google will likely stay in business longer. ([Click here to read a letter](#) from a web app company that "went away".)

6. Review Yahoo's [Zimbra](#), Sun's [StarOffice](#) and [OpenOffice](#) - All three are integrated office productivity applications like Microsoft Office but they are not SaaS where you access them on the web via a browser in that you have to download the software and run it from your hard drive like Office.

7. Call every IT integrator and consultant in your geographic area - Let them know that you're a network service expert in setting up WANs for their multilocation customers, integrated T1s for their single location customers as well as a SaaS business applications broker. Tell them you're happy to work with them or compete against them - let them choose. (Contact TA if you need a cheap list of IT shops in your area.)

8. Call every multilocation business in your area - Tell them the same thing you told the IT shops in number seven above but also add that you are an IT broker and can put them in touch with the right IT shop if they want their IT needs shopped around for better service or pricing. When telling them you're a business applications broker, inquire as to what business applications are critical to their business and if they plan to make any business changes in the near future that would require changes to the way they access their critical business apps.

9. **Become knowledgeable in all apps critical to your prospects** - Unlike being an equipment installer, it's easier to become knowledgeable enough to broker business applications without becoming certified. Your customers and prospects won't expect you to train their people how to use individual modules of complex software applications like QuickBooks for business but they will expect that you'll know which applications compete with QuickBooks and be able to put them in touch with "certified" applications specialists.

10. **Do this in your marketplace now before someone else does** - This is really happening. Someone will be the recognized business applications agent or broker in your geographic marketplace two years from now. That person will likely be calling the shots for their multilocation clients who need to build out their LANs and WANs to accommodate the needed business apps. Why not make that person you?

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*"We looked at it. Highly functional but not business-grade, IMHO. Security issues abound. Zimbra (Yahoo) seems a lot more solid. Zimbra allows the user to select a choice of Gmail or "Outlook" themes, but it does not have the G-apps Office-like suite of products."*

[Greg Ottensmeyer](#), Co-founder at [TelephoNET Corp.](#) 4/9/9

*"Have no experience with Google Apps, except that when Google took over Postini, they ruined it by gutting internal support – so we don't sell it anymore, preferring MX Logic which costs a bit more, but has actual people there to deal with situations, users who messed up their control panel and are freaked out about losing important msg, etc."*

Google – good for simple stuff, but ...

*We also had really bad experiences with Google AdWords (\$11K fraudulent clicks in 2 days) and in the 3-4 months we worked to clear this up with them, NEVER would they give more than a first name via email, never would they get on a phone call. They are in some sort of once-removed denial about the need for real human contact to solve problems or provide support on stuff that becomes important or mission critical to users .. and as long as that is their business model, I think it will keep them out of serious contention for clients like law firms, hedge funds, law enforcement, etc where instant support is absolutely required! [Ben Stiegler](#), CEO, [Synertel](#) 4/12/9*

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