

Lucent Technologies and Ascend Communications announce voice over IP interoperability



FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY JUNE 02, 1999

Lucent, Ascend Also Expand Support for Billing, Settlement and Clearinghouse and Exchange Carriers Using Industry Guidelines and Standards

MURRAY HILL, N.J./ALAMEDA, Calif. - Lucent Technologies (NYSE: LU) and Ascend Communications (NASDAQ: ASND), two of the leading providers of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) solutions, today announced a commitment to ensure interoperability between Lucent's PacketStar™ Internet Telephony System (ITS) and Ascend's MultiVoice™ VoIP solution, which is based on the market-leading MAX™ family of remote access concentrators and the carrier-class MAX TNT™ WAN access switch.

With Lucent and Ascend VoIP products, clearinghouses, billing and settlement companies and exchange carriers will be able to create interoperable, multizone IP telephony networks and increase their overall VoIP traffic and footprint using VoIP interoperability guidelines and standards such as the iNOW!™ (interoperability NOW!) Profile and Open Settlement Protocol (OSP).

Lucent was a co-founder of the iNOW! Profile with ITXC Corp and VocalTec Communications and has led the industry in developing products that conform to the iNOW! Profile. Since iNOW! was established last fall at the Voice on the Net show, Lucent, ITXC and VocalTec have broadened support for iNOW! with up to 31 different companies, including Ascend, building products that will conform to the standard.

GRIC Communications, Inc., and 3Com Corp., Ascend Communications, Cisco Systems Inc., iPASS, Lucent, Siemens, and TransNexus, have been promoting OSP as an IP telephony standard. OSP, approved by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) as an ETSI-TIPHON technical specification in December 1998, allows the exchange of authorization, service location, and usage information between service provider domains.

Lucent and Ascend also announced today broad support for existing clearinghouse and settlement partners, including GRIC Communications, ISPTel and TransNexus, exchange carriers including ITXC Corp, billing partners, including Lucent's Kenan Systems, MIND CTI Ltd. and Rodopi, and fax over IP partners including TGI Technologies Ltd.

"This announcement between Lucent and Ascend signals to IP telephony service providers and carriers around the world that Lucent and Ascend are focused on building multivendor, IP telephony networks integrated with a variety of billing, settlement and clearinghouse solutions," said Chris Schoettle, vice president of IP Communications at Lucent. "This will give billing, settlement, clearinghouse and exchange carrier customers the means to terminate minutes across a variety of networks using the industry's leading VoIP solutions."

"We are pleased to be achieving interoperability with Lucent's PacketStar ITS VoIP gateway and the Ascend MAX 6000 and the carrier-class MAX TNT VoIP gateways," said Jose Garcia, Managing Director of the Ascend MultiVoice IP Product Line. "Interoperability between gateway vendors is a must to create truly global IP voice networks. This will give carrier and service provider customers greater flexibility in the development of their next-generation networks."

In the fourth quarter this year, Lucent and Ascend will ensure gateway-to-gateway interoperability between Lucent's PacketStar ITS and Ascend's MAX 6000 and MAX TNT VoIP platforms, using the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) H.323 version 2.0 standard.

In addition, the Ascend MultiVoice Access Manager (MVAM), an H.323-based gatekeeper, will provide gatekeeper and multizone routing capabilities for Lucent's PacketStar ITS gateway, as well as Ascend's MAX 6000 and MAX TNT Gateway products.

Support for the iNOW! Profile

Early next year, Lucent and Ascend plan to support the iNOW! Profile, which is based on the ITU H.323 version 2.0 Annex G standard and ensures gatekeeper-to-gatekeeper interoperability. Lucent and Ascend are committed to support further multivendor interoperability with other vendors' products that adhere to the iNOW! Profile.

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"We are delighted that the Lucent and Ascend product lines will interoperate under iNOW! and applaud Lucent for its work on iNOW! interoperability," said Tom Evslin, Chairman of ITXC. "ITXC and its 80 affiliates worldwide benefit by being able to choose the appropriate products without sacrificing interoperability. In fact, the entire industry benefits."

Support for OSP

In the fourth quarter this year, Ascend will support an OSP module. The OSP module will be layered on top of the MVAM Applications Programming Interface (API) and will provide an interface to OSP-based clearinghouse and settlement providers. This standard OSP-based interface will work in a hybrid VoIP network environment consisting of Lucent's PacketStar ITS and Ascend's MAX 6000 and MAX TNT Gateways.

Ascend's MVAM API will continue to provide the low-level interface for the billing vendors. This existing interface provides a scaleable and high performance interface between Ascend's MVAM and billing partners. The billing partners will provide an OSP interface into the OSP-based clearinghouse and settlement providers.

GRIC Communications, with over 450 ISP affiliates worldwide, the largest customer of Lucent's PacketStar ITS, is also pleased to partner with Lucent and Ascend to provide customers prepaid billing solutions worldwide using the OSP protocol.

"Lucent's PacketStar ITS and Ascend's MAX TNT and MAX 6000 will enable us to broaden the number of options our customers have to connect to multiple VoIP networks around the world," said John Jacquay, GRIC's President and COO. "We want to leverage our efforts with Lucent and Ascend using the OSP protocol to dynamically expand the reach of service providers' presence worldwide with integrated offerings such as GRICprepaid™ VoIP phone card network and settlement system."

TransNexus, an Ascend partner, is anxious to deploy interoperable VoIP solutions based on OSP using Ascend's MVAM gatekeeper.

"We offer standards-based, private label clearinghouse solutions for wholesale IP network operators," said Stephen Thomas, Chief Technical Officer of TransNexus. "Our customers seek intercarrier billing solutions based on open standards and Ascend has been an early supporter of OSP. We are pleased that Lucent and Ascend have joined to provide interoperable VoIP solutions."

TGI Technologies Ltd., an Ascend and TransNexus partner and developer of IP messaging software, is currently deploying a global IP fax service in partnership with POPstar Global Communications.

"POPstar customers take advantage of the OSP, TransNexus Clearinghouse, and Ascend MultiVoice platform to carry secure billable IP fax traffic between independent carriers," said Russ McDermott, Marketing Director of TGI Technologies Ltd. "We are a supporter of OSP, and are pleased that Lucent and Ascend are promising interoperable VoIP solutions. This will enable us to continue to provide POPstar and its ISP partners new integrated services, in addition to fax over IP services, on a worldwide basis."

ISPTel Corporation, with IP telephony partners in over 25 countries, representing the world's largest IP telephony network based on the Ascend MultiVoice platform, hailed today's announcement as a major step forward for the entire IP telephony industry.

"Interoperability between Ascend and Lucent will enable ISPTel to accelerate our strategic position in the burgeoning market for enhanced IP telephony services for the ISP, corporate and telco sectors," said Paul McGovern, CEO of ISPTel. "I'm particularly excited about the positive impact this announcement will have on billing and settlement solutions, which are critical not only to the success of ISPTel's partners, but to the VOIP industry at large."

MIND CTI Ltd., a billing provider for Lucent and Ascend, also is pleased to see Lucent and Ascend promising interoperable VoIP solutions.

"We welcome the interoperability development on the part of Lucent and Ascend that will give all providers the opportunity to expand their VoIP networking opportunities," said Monica Eisinger, MIND's President and CEO. "Because the MIND-iPhonEX™ VoIP Billing solution is already integrated and installed with both Lucent's PacketStar ITS and Ascend's MAX TNT, IP telephony providers have one real-time billing solution that works concurrently with both products."

Rodopi Billing and Management Software is also pleased with the commitment of Lucent and Ascend to provide interoperability in their VoIP solutions and support of the OSP standard.

"We think interoperability of VoIP equipment and the ability to bill for VoIP services is the key to prolific deployment of this technology," said Art Ekroos, Rodopi's Vice President of Business Development. "Rodopi is installed in almost 300 service providers today and currently supports VoIP in both pre- and post-paid billing scenarios. Interoperability of Lucent's PacketStar ITS and Ascend's MAX TNT and MAX 6000 is an exciting step forward for VoIP and will offer Rodopi users another option for VoIP solutions."

About the Companies

As previously announced in January and subject to customary closing conditions including Ascend shareholder

private networks, communications systems and software, data networking systems, business telephone systems and microelectronics components. Bell Labs is the research and development arm for the company. Additional information about Lucent is available on the company's Web site at <http://www.lucent.com>.

Ascend Communications, Inc. develops, manufactures, sells and services wide area networking solutions for telecommunications carriers, Internet service providers and corporate customers worldwide.

For more information about Ascend and its products, please visit the Ascend Web site at <http://www.ascend.com>, or send e-mail to info@ascend.com. For Investor Relations, please call our communications hotline at 800-648-3059 or 760-704-4423 (outside the U.S. & Canada). Additional investor information can also be accessed on our Web site at: <http://www.ascend.com/662.html>. Ascend is headquartered at One Ascend Plaza, 1701 Harbor Bay Parkway, Alameda, Calif. 94502; phone is 800/ASCEND4 and fax is 510-814-2300.

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INOW! and WWeXchange are trademarks and service marks of ITXC Corp. GRICprepaid is a trademark of GRIC Communications. iPhonEX is a trademark of MIND CTI Ltd.

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