

# Centile: Quelle Surprise!

*Bob Emmerson went to Cannes to check out the wireless action at the GSM World Conference. The W3C consortium was hosting a modest event across the road where a tired correspondent discovered Centile, an innovative IP telephony outfit.*



Cisco and Nortel held a 'presidential-style debate' at VoiceCon and the audience of 2,500 presumably intelligent, high-tech individuals 'hooted, howled and applauded loudly in response to positions taken by each side.' And somehow a reference to Janet Jackson's 'wardrobe malfunction' found its way into this 'debate'.

Ridiculing each other in public in this way is not only childish it's also stupid. It only serves to confuse the market and thereby delay purchasing decisions! OK. Cisco doesn't deliver all the functionality of a yesterday PBX, but we'd still be in yesterday if this company had not recognised the potential of VoIP. And if you trash the market leader then you trash the concept. Would somebody from Nortel care to comment? I guess not, so let's move on.

IP telephony has been categorised by these two data- or voice-centric camps. But recently a number of smaller vendors such as SpliceCom have entered the fray and these guys do not carry legacy baggage.

Centile is also a relatively small outfit, but it has been in the IP telephony business from the very beginning and the company is successful. It's therefore refreshing to discover an under-hyped outfit even though it does mean confessing to one's ignorance.

## LOOKING FOR CHANNEL PARTNERS

Centile is based in Sophia Antipolis, a high-tech centre on the Cote d'Azur. The company is interested in UK channel partners but this is not an outfit that is getting desperate. Centile's activities are currently restricted to Europe and service providers in Finland, France and Sweden have implemented their hosted iPBX service. Finland is a particularly knowledgeable IP marketplace and there is some excellent local competition, so this particular reference is significant.

The core technology is integrated server software that runs on enterprise and carrier-class hardware. The company has developed a complete set of PBX features as well as a wide range of CTI applications. IVR functionality is also provided and all mainstream protocols are supported (e.g. MGCP, SCCP, SIP and H.323).

The enterprise solution is basically a fully functional IP PBX telephone system that accommodates up to 500 extensions in a single server configuration. Expansion is enabled via additional servers and the architecture would seem to be ideal for distributed organisations.

Centile's IP credentials show up in the solution that allows network operators to deliver hosted PBX services, e.g. IP Centrex. The hardware is a single cluster of five carrier-grade servers (either Sun Solaris or Linux-based). A nice feature is the ability to support hundreds of separate virtual PBXs, each of which can be dedicated to different customers having widely different extension needs, e.g. ten or so for small businesses going all the way up to tens of thousands of extensions for large enterprises. In addition, different services (PBX, CTI, IVR) can be dedicated to different customers.

## ALL SOLUTIONS ARE OPEN ...

But some are more open than others. Centile did not need to protect any legacy hardware so the solution could be designed with a truly open architecture. This enables the use of third-party terminals, open APIs, plus support for LDAP and SNMP.

Visit the site ([www.centile.com](http://www.centile.com)) for details and check out the library section.

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*Two examples of Centile applications. One represents MSN Messenger, employed here as an audio/video SIP client plugged into the hosted iPBX solution. The other is a Web-enabled communications centre that gives subscribers better control of their phone, e.g. click to call, add party to conference, send to voicemail, etc. This app also allows network operators to brand the look and feel of their service offer.*