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Cloud Fax. It's What We Do.

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International Presence Launches CloudFax/400

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by Alex Woodie (ITJungle.com)

International Presence, the original developers of the TeleFax/400 software sold by IBM for many years, recently launched CloudFax/400. The new hosted fax offering enables IBM i customers to get rid of in-house fax servers and nests of telephone lines, and instead access the vendor's fax services over the Internet, without any programming on the IBM i server. The vendor also launched IMPScloud, a pure cloud fax offering for customers not afraid to re-program their fax-to-ERP integration.

Fax is in the midst of a major transition away from reliance on analog phone lines and toward digital fax delivery using IP. The adoption of new fax over IP (FoIP) solutions is being driven by the transition to new unified communication (UC) capabilities, the most visible of which is voice over IP (VoIP). And as organizations install the latest UC-enabled switches from Avaya, Cisco, and Nortel, they find the analog T.30 fax protocol isn't even supported anymore, providing further incentive to switch to FoIP and its T.38 protocol.

The U.K.-based International Presence and its Florida-based subsidiary, American Presence, have several solutions for organizations looking to adopt FoIP and cloud-hosted faxing. The most readily adopted new fax solution for its 1050 customers--marquee blue-chip accounts such as JP Morgan Chase, Target, Costco, McDonald's, Pfizer, Wal-Mart, Sanyo, HSBC, Volvo, and GlaxoSmithKline--is CloudFax/400.

CloudFax/400

CloudFax/400 is designed to provide IBM i customers with easy access to the fax servers hosted by International Presence in its U.K. and U.S. data centers. This allows the IBM i customers to get rid of their fax servers, which are typically Intel-based PCs or servers loaded with Dialogic fax cards and the vendor's Windows-based fax software, called IMPS (Integrated Messaging Platform Service), as well as the phone lines that lead out of those fax cards and into the public switched telephone network (PSTN).
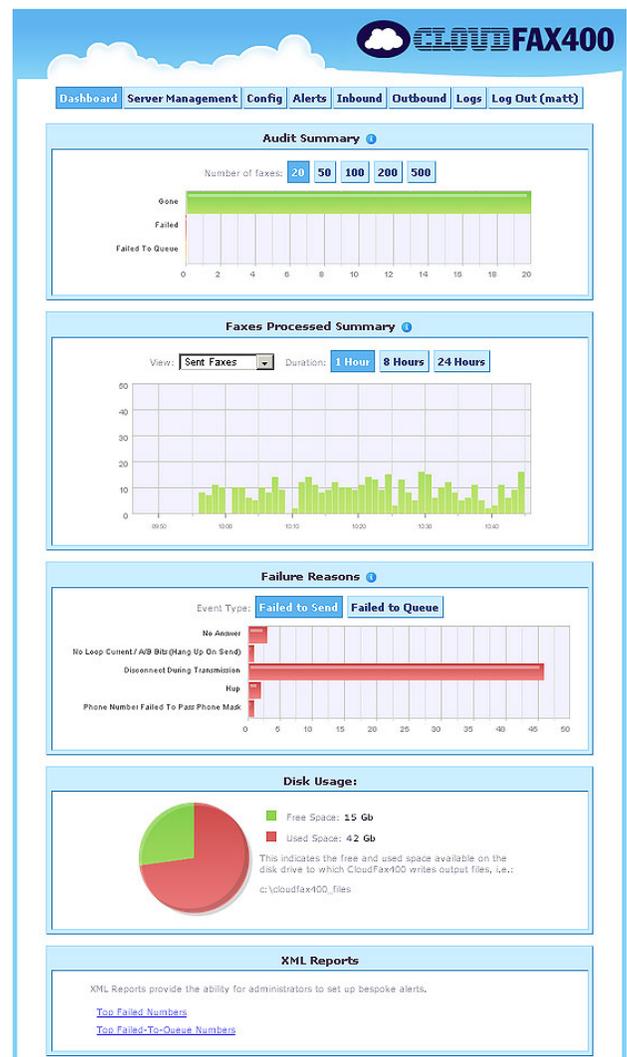
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This reduction in hardware, software, and phone lines can easily save customers thousands of dollars a month. Customers instead get a subscription to use International Presence's fax solutions, and move to a pay-per-use model. Fees typically are on the order of $.06 per page.

CloudFax/400 gives customers access to all the fax features they previously used with its on-premise fax servers, including: advanced fax routing; support for barcodes and OCR; integration with Microsoft and Lotus email environments; integration with Active Directory; support for single sign-on; integration with Microsoft SharePoint for archiving; and the capability to deliver faxes as searchable TIFFs or PDFs. Faxes sent over the Internet are protected with 128-bit SSL encryption, and there is enough redundancy and auditing built into the system to ensure compliance with regulations like HIPAA, SOX, and PCI, the company says.

Besides axing the customer's investment in fax infrastructure, the other big benefit of CloudFax/400 is that IBM i customers don't have to reprogram the fax integration with ERP systems. As purchase orders, invoices, or other business documents are spooled from the ERP system, they're automatically sent to International Presence's fax servers running in the cloud. The one caveat is that CloudFax/400 customers must continue to run Fax/400 software on the IBM i server, since this product handles the connection to MAPICS, BPCS, JD Edwards, and other ERP systems that International Presence has worked with over its 25-year history in the midrange.

Jay Wadhia, group sales director in International Presence's U.K. office, says CloudFax/400 provides a seamless move from the hassle of maintaining fax hardware and software, and toward the benefits of cloud faxing.

"A lot of customers have an ERP system, and they don't want to write Web services or use cloud application APIs," Wadhia tells IT Jungle. *"They just want to plug and go as they always have done on the AS/400 with ready-made, standard connectors. Cloud Fax/400 enables them to go to cloud without re-programming their line of business apps."*

IMPSCloud.com

The company's other new offering, called IMPSCloud.com, is a "pure" cloud faxing solution. IMPSCloud.com, which was launched in February, requires customers be comfortable with cloud service API programming, but eliminates the need for Fax/400 or any other software to sit next to the ERP systems.

The benefits of IMPSCloud.com are similar to those of CloudFax/400. Both solutions provide insight into their fax activity through a Web-based dashboard interface, and customers are billed according to how many faxes they send and receive. IMPSCloud.com offers the additional advantage of supporting cloud-to-cloud fax delivery, Wadhia says.

Both fax solutions--FaxCloud/400 and IMPSCloud.com--are served from banks of Windows servers hosted in International Presence's two data centers. The solutions support all major carriers, including AT&T, Biscom, BT, EasyLink, eFax, Global Crossing, Level 3, and Verizon, the vendor says.

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International Presence continues to sell IMPS, which can support traditional analog faxing as well as newer FoIP environments. For FoIP, customers must install an additional gateway that bundles the faxes into the T.38 protocol that the newer VoIP-enabled switches are using today.

The future of fax is clearly FoIP and, to a lesser extent, cloud faxing, although some customers are clearly uncomfortable with putting critical data in somebody else's hands. Others have found cloud-based faxing as a good backup to supplement on-site fax solutions for disaster recovery purposes. Still others have jumped on the opportunity to use FoIP to centralize fax servers that are used to serve specific platforms.

But it's early, and only about 15 to 20 percent of International Presence customers have made the move to FoIP, Wadhia says. That leaves a lot of growth potential, but change can be challenging, especially for the notoriously conservative and cautious AS/400 shops.

"From a mathematics point of view, it's a no brainer" to move to FoIP and cloud faxing, he says. *"But the vast majority of companies are not really confident to jump into cloud faxing, hence a move to FoIP has been the logical step forward."*

About The International Presence Group

International Presence is a privately held company that has been developing enterprise message delivery, document management and business process improvement solutions for over 26 years. Specializing in high-volume, transaction processing for business critical applications, International Presence Customers send and receive millions of pages a month through their solutions. They operate out of two fully owned subsidiaries, American Presence Inc. in Florida and European Presence Ltd in the United Kingdom.

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