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Session Initiated Protocol:

What is it and what can it do for you?

Imagine owning an automobile and having the ability to shop for replacement parts from any automaker you choose. You could get the best price and best performing parts, but they could bolt right on your car without problems. That's the power that SIP, or Session Initiated Protocol, can deliver to your business.

SIP is an open-standards-based technology. What that means is it can interface with any phone system available from any vendor. This liberates you from being anchored to one specific vendor for every component of your phone network, allowing you to shop for the best price, features and functionality to meet your needs. Think of it this way: You may have 20 handsets on your network made by the same manufacturer. When you decide to add additional handsets, you may find that another manufacturer has a better price. With SIP, it's possible for both types of handsets to coexist on your network without compatibility problems. This makes SIP a great choice when flexibility is a key requirement in your phone platform.

But there is a drawback to deploying SIP across your entire network. SIP technology has a very limited feature set in most cases, with on-hold and call transfer often being the only options. While it's possible to configure SIP during the installation so that additional functionality is available, this is usually still restrictive. And it normally involves an extra step on the part of the user in order to access certain features. With a digital IP phone, a user may only have to press a single key to execute a command. With SIP, they may have to "hook flash" (quickly pressing the receiver hook) and then hit multiple keys in order to execute the same command.

SIP for You

Given SIP's advantages and disadvantages, there is a right and a wrong way to use SIP. With its limited feature set, we do not recommend SIP if you are a "power user"-someone who makes full use of the capabilities of your digital phone. If you hold multiple conference calls and use your handset to access many different technologies on your network, then SIP is not for you.

SIP is right for you if you handle a high volume of calls, but do not need any of the traditional "bells and whistles" of a digital phone. If you are a user that just needs to have straight one-on-one conversations, then SIP can offer you a variety of handsets and other equipment to choose from.



SIP also presents some unique capabilities that you may not be aware of, such as:

- SIP works great with wireless technology. You can use it in a mobile handset and stay connected no matter where you are in your office building, usually for no more cost than a traditional cell phone.
- SIP also delivers great flexibility with video technologies. You can integrate real-time video with your phone system without massive integration issues, giving you the long-distance conferencing abilities of Fortune 500 organizations.

SIP is a great enabler of communication between disparate handsets, networks and other equipment. It just needs to be applied properly in order to recognize the most benefit. Where you deploy it, and how you use it, will determine whether it enables the real Return on Investment that you're seeking.

