



# INTERNET TELEPHONY®

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The IP Communications Authority Since 1998™

## Feature Story

# Review of the Enterprise Interaction Center® (EIC) 3.0 from Interactive Intelligence

By Tom Keating



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**Price:** Enterprise Interaction Center® is priced per user or station. Average pricing is between \$500 and \$1,500 per business user/station, depending on functionality and system size. Pricing includes installation and hardware.

### RATINGS (0 — 5)

<b>Installation: 5</b>	<b>GUI: 5</b>
<b>Documentation: 5</b>	<b>Value: 4.5</b>
<b>Features: 5</b>	<b>Overall: A+</b>

Founded in 1994, Interactive Intelligence was at the forefront of the PC-PBX revolution offering a Windows-based phone system that the traditional PBX manufacturers said wasn't reliable since it ran on Windows. But Interactive Intelligence was the first PC-PBX vendor to prove them wrong. Additionally, Interactive Intelligence added unparalleled flexibility and integration with business applications since the PC-PBX sat on the local area network (LAN) negating the need for complex CTI (computer telephony integration). In fact, their platform pre-dated the next evolution from simply a PC-PBX to a full-fledged IP PBX that completed the convergence of the phone network with the data network. Thus evolved their "all-in-one" IP communications software suite using industry standards such as SIP, all on a single-platform architecture that can handle multi-channel communications. They were also the first to offer a 100 percent software-based IP PBX. It is with this historical background in mind that TMC Labs decided to take another look at one of Interactive Intelligence's solutions to see just how far they had come since the last time we reviewed them.



Figure 1. Powerful Operator Console

We decided to check out EIC 3.0, which targets mid-size businesses with between 100 and 1,500 users. We should mention that their higher-end Customer Interaction Center® (CIC) product targets mid-size to large organizations with up to 15,000 users and more, and has the same features as the EIC, along with some additional features such as its Interaction Designer® tool for full customizability, along with outbound/blended dialing, workforce management and knowledge management.

### Installation

Interactive Intelligence came to TMC Labs to set up EIC 3.0 along with a few IP phones and one softphone client called Interaction Client® running on a laptop. We watched the installation process soup-nuts and it was very straightforward, including the configuration

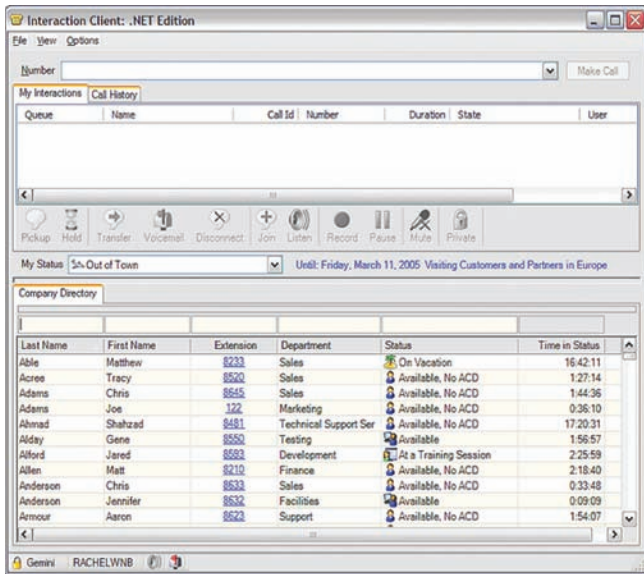


Figure 2. .NET-based and SIP-based desktop client.

of the IP phones, which does support auto-provisioning. For such a comprehensive product we were surprised at how easy it was to install and configure.

## Documentation

The documentation for Interactive Intelligence was stellar. The user and administration guides were very easy to follow. There's also a nice small pocket guide that can fit in your wallet. There's also a mini-guide called Interaction Mail User Guide which is very handy for new users to become familiar with voice-mail, fax, and messaging. The manuals are often color-coded and have colored screenshots making it much easier to read and navigate.

## Operational Testing

Part of our testing involved playing with the Windows-based administrative interface to determine how easy the system would be to maintain on a day-to-day basis, including adds/moves/changes of users, reconfiguring the IVR/auto-attendant, etc. The fact that it's Windows-based vs. browser-based is actually an advantage. The Interaction Administrator® is a single administrative interface to configure local and remote users, lines, stations, IP networks, SIP device and digital phone connections, security access, make moves/ adds/ changes (MACs), etc.

Overall, we were very pleased with the administrative user interface, which has been tweaked and improved over the years. Certainly, TMC Labs felt the TCO for this platform was excellent in no small part due to its superb Windows-based user-friendly admin interface.

Relatedly, the Interaction Attendant® lets admins and call center managers easily configure call routing for users and workgroups. You can also create and update on-hold messages, greetings, menus, etc. From here you can define DID/ DNIS call routing for specific menus or queues, prompts for a caller's PIN, etc.

EIC features several excellent call control applications, including an

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operator console (See Figure 1). Their enhanced .NET SIP-based desktop client (See Figure 2) features presence management, call recording, multi-party conferencing up to 96 parties, company directories, speed dials, drag-and-drop transfers, and more. As seen in Figure 2, on an inbound call you will see a Toast icon in the lower right allowing you to see the CallerID and either pick up the call or send to voice-mail. Interactive Intelligence told TMC Labs that their new .NET client is less “chatty” on the network than their older Win32 softphone application.

In addition to their SIP client that runs on a PC, EIC also sports an Interaction Client® Mobile Edition for Windows Mobile 5.0 & 6.0 devices for truly mobile access. It not only supports the traditional call control functions from the desktop IP telephone itself (hold, transfer, record, conference, mute, etc.), but also presence management, extension dialing, and personal contacts integration.

EIC also features call control integration with Microsoft Outlook (See Figure 3) and Microsoft Dynamics CRM and GP, as well as desktop integration with Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007. Further, you can even use their Interaction Client® Web Edition for call control (see Figure 4), which is perfect for when you are using someone else's PC and don't want to install the Windows client. EIC has the most softphone and call control options we've seen on any IP PBX platform.

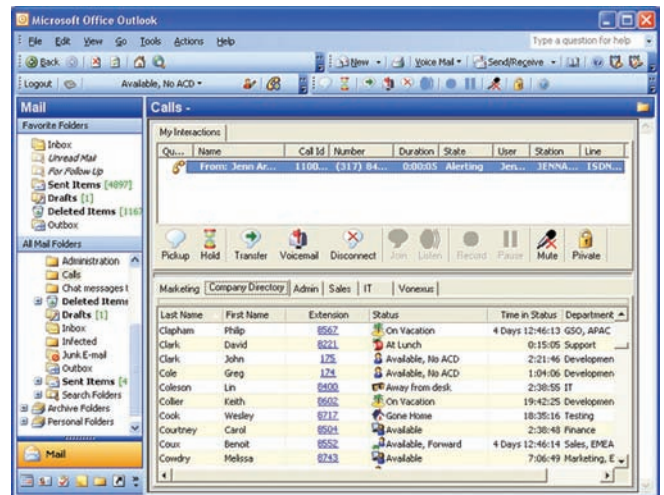


Figure 3. Outlook integration with EIC

Importantly, it supports increased security by supporting Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP) and Transport Layer Security (TLS) to encrypt audio and call control info. Interactive Intelligence claims that they are the only IP PBX that secures the entire VoIP communications — not just extension-to-extension calls. It even encrypts (SRTP) the touch-tone digits pressed in the IVR/ACD, which both Cisco and Avaya do not. In Cisco's case, the gateway to the Cisco CallManager is over the open network and can be captured with a packet sniffer.

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One problem with pushing updates to Windows-based PCs is you often have to be an administrator to install software, which can be a bit hairy if an administrator has to manually log on to hundreds of workstations. EIC solves this problem using an auto-provisioning service with admin rights to automatically push out software updates. One of the most powerful features of EIC is the ability to set personal rules, which is very similar to how you define Outlook rules. You can set rules based on current presence, CallerID, etc. This gives the user a lot of flexibility in how, when, and where they are contacted.

Importantly, EIC supports T.38 fax with up to 96 ports of fax as well as desktop faxing. Another important feature is their speech-rec-enabled Interaction Mobile Office®. This allows you to retrieve messages, calendar items, etc. simply using your voice in the speech-enabled IVR. Another important mobility component is the one-number find-me/follow-me feature.

The call center features are superb in EIC. Supervisors using Interaction Supervisor™ can, for instance, set alerts such as on-hold > 3 min < 4 min and IM agents in queue automatically. Supervisors can pick up, join, listen, coach (whisper), or record the call. The reverse is also possible allowing an agent to request help. The “assisted response” feature lets an agent IM a supervisor queue. The first supervisor that accepts the request is then taken immediately to an interface where the call is displayed and they can then pick up, join, etc. Recording is another important feature for most call centers. EIC offers built-in call recording and canned reports. Its optional Interaction Recorder® module adds multi-channel recording for calls, Web chats, e-mails and faxes; rules-based recording; archive management; innovative scoring for quality measurement; recording encryption; script adherence; and more.

One nifty ACD queue feature is the ability for a caller to leave the queue and then automatically get a call-back based on the ANI or the caller’s specified number. Also, the EIC queue supports inbound voice call queues, e-mail queues, and Web chat queues. Thus, customers have many options available to them to contact your business.

Other features include the following:

- SLA (Shared Line Appearances)
- Call detail reporting — end-to-end reporting — ad-hoc custom reporting
- Multi-lingual support
- Remote and at-home users, mobile workers (Citrix)
- Informal contact center features
- ACD — multimedia queuing — e-mail routing
- Web chat
- Real-time system/agent/workgroup supervisory monitoring & alerts
- CRM integrations — screen pops, database lookups, embedded call controls
- Multi-channel interaction recording — on-demand, rules-based
- Knowledge management, e-mail/Web auto response
- Multi-site support
- Built-in IP audio conference server

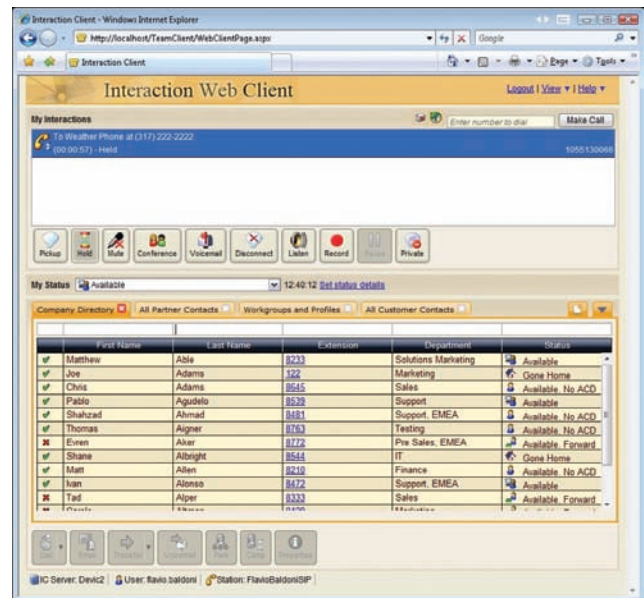


Figure 4. Web client for installation-less call control

Interactive Intelligence has also begun development of an automated customer satisfaction survey module that will be offered with EIC this year, along with support for Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007.

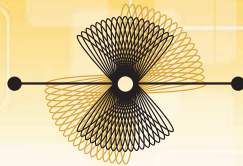
## Room For Improvement

There wasn’t much to harp on when it came to this system. EIC features a plethora of communications methods, including voice, e-mail queuing, and chat. The only obvious missing communications method is video calling, but video calling hasn’t yet hit prime time in the B2B or B2C markets. Though the OCS 2007 integration could provide the missing link since it offers video calling and video conferencing.

## Conclusion

Interactive Intelligence’s EIC 3.0 is without a doubt the most powerful and comprehensive IP PBX that runs on the Windows operating system. It may in fact be the most comprehensive IP PBX running on any operating system! When you combine all the features that it provides and compare it to other solutions that require kludging several products together, the EIC’s TCO and price per station (\$500-\$1500) is a bargain. TMC Labs would highly recommend the EIC 3.0 IP PBX to any SMBs that require powerful call center functionality or that require multimedia forms of communications (voice, e-mail, chat) with their customers. **IT**

*Tom Keating is TMC’s Vice President, CTO, Executive Technology Editor and SEO Director.*



## INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE®

Deliberately Innovative

### What do customers say about Enterprise Interaction Center® (EIC)?

**“EIC has enabled us to provide the variety of customer service options typically only offered by large companies, along with the customized, hands-on touch of a small company – really, it’s given us, and our customers, the best of both worlds.”**

- Aiphone, Bellevue, Washington



**“Interactive Intelligence had clearly built something from the ground up to uniquely process multi-channel interactions versus vendors that just tacked on ‘boxes’ in order to provide additional functionality.”**

- Broyles Kight & Ricafort, Indianapolis, Indiana



**“It became clear that EIC was the best solution for our needs. That came as a surprise, since Nortel and Avaya have been in the business a long time. However, despite their incorporation of IP, these players still brought with them the legacy of hardware-based, proprietary architectures, while Interactive Intelligence offered an IP PBX built from the ground up on an all-software, standards-based platform.”**

- Independent Purchasing Cooperative (IPC), Miami, Florida



**“It’s a great thing to be able to completely replace a company’s communications system with something so much more feature-rich and sophisticated, yet not have to add a single additional IT person to manage it.”**

- Dupaco Community Credit Union, Dubuque, Iowa



**“The beauty of EIC is that it’s built as a separate applications layer so we can take advantage of IP without re-writing applications. EIC has future-proofed VIZIO so we can effectively serve our customers no matter how large our company becomes.”**

- VIZIO, Irvine, California



**“We’re a small business so we can’t afford to invest in technology that doesn’t have a long shelf life. EIC’s open, software-based architecture safeguards our investment and enables us to grow our services incrementally as business demands. That gives us huge peace of mind and makes EIC a truly integral part of our business.”**

- Server Products, Richfield, Wisconsin



## INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE®

Interactive Intelligence Inc. (Nasdaq: ININ) is a global provider of unified business communications solutions for contact center automation, enterprise IP telephony, and enterprise messaging. The company’s innovative standards-based, all-in-one communications software suite was designed to eliminate the cost and complexity introduced by multi-point vendors. Founded in 1994 and backed by more than 3,000 customers worldwide, Interactive Intelligence is an experienced leader delivering maximum customer value through its comprehensive solution-set comprised of premise-based and hosted offerings, including software, hardware, consulting, support, education and implementation.

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