



Case Study: ProVu Enters SME Market with New Offering Based on PIKA WARP Appliance

Customer: ProVu is a specialist in VoIP (Voice over IP) hardware distribution, providing a wide range of systems and phones to various channels and resellers throughout the United Kingdom.

Challenge: Offer an IP-PBX phone system that would be affordable for small businesses while still providing ProVu-standard reliability, security, feature sets and ease of use.

Solution: PIKA WARP Appliance.

Benefits: ProVu is able to enter the SME market with a highly differentiated IP-PBX that is attractive to resellers, ITSPs and ISPs.

In addition to being the principal distributors for many leading brands of IP phones and other products in the United Kingdom, ProVu Communications is also the creator and sole distributor of the ProTalk range of IP telephone systems, which feature the company's renowned SARK PBX software.

ProVu's software provides its channel partners with the ability to automate and centralize the provisioning services for IP phones, as well as centralized remote support for deployed systems. While ProVu plays in high-end markets – including developing solutions for large call centers and campuses – the company identified a burgeoning opportunity in the <20-line market. The

company recently chose the PIKA WARP Appliance to deliver its value to small and midsize enterprises (SME).

Ian Godfrey, Sales Director at ProVu explains, "The systems for sub-10 or sub-20 extensions that were available were costly and difficult to produce for the U.K. market. With the PIKA WARP Appliance, we saw that we could create a very strong proposition for small businesses here."

UK-Compatible Signaling

Jeff Stokoe, ProVu's Head of Development for SARK software, explains, "Many of the competitive products we looked at are developed for the Bell telephone system in North America, but they are clunky to deploy in the U.K. because signaling systems here are different." In order to provide an IP-PBX at a cost that would rival Panasonic and Samsung systems for the SME market, ProVu needed a different approach.

Stokoe considered three platforms before choosing the WARP Appliance for its new ProTalk SARK 500 PBX. "PIKA was the best developed," he says. "What puts PIKA ahead of everyone else in this space is that they are telephony people, while the other guys just make small computers. PIKA has delivered a true telephony solution for the SME market."

ProVu also found the WARP Appliance to be built with a truly international backbone. Godfrey points out that, "U.K. lines are quite peculiar and the existing hardware that interfaces with those lines don't work very well. These problems are overcome with the PIKA appliance – it works with analog and ISDN lines so we have a very strong proposition for small business that we did not have before."

Offering Substantial Cost Savings

“PIKA went the extra mile in creating this solution and we can offer it with a strong SIP capability, which gives us a highly differentiated offering,” Stokoe explains. “Adding SIP to the other traditional phone systems on the market is very expensive – we can do it for 60% less than the competition.”

The PIKA WARP Appliance also enables the SARK 500 product to provide significant savings in two other ways. First is the significant savings on land-to-mobile calls, thanks to the WARP Appliance’s GSM modules. Second, ProVu can offer flexibility with the WARP Appliance’s analog and ISDN interfaces. “Many SMEs here want to use standard analog or ISDN lines,” Godfrey says. “The ability to interface with whatever a customer has is key – we don’t have to force them to make any investments they don’t want to make.”

Solid-State Platform Advantages

Both Godfrey and Stokoe expect that the new PIKA-based PBX will soon displace its ProTalk SARK 650 platform. “The 650 is built on standard PC hardware and we can deliver the same capabilities at a lower cost with the PIKA appliance,” Godfrey explains.

Stokoe adds that the PIKA WARP Appliance provides other advantages as well: “It’s a solid-state telephony platform with no moving parts. It’s a nice looking unit with a display and it can be wall mounted. It’s been really well thought through and has many advantages over a PC solution.”

Transferring the SARK switching engine to the PIKA WARP Appliance was simple, with very few changes required to the C code base. “95% of the code is the same,” Stokoe reports. SARK 500 delivers the same rapid switching that ProVu’s large-scale systems provide to call centers and post-secondary education campuses. “All ProVu systems can handle high and unpredictable caller idle volumes.”

Automated Provisioning for Plug-and-Play Deployment

An added value that ProVu provides its channel partners is a common software and management console across all its systems, delivering the same plug-and-play provisioning experience across all of its products.

A ProVu reseller simply plugs in the WARP Appliance at a customer site and connects the phones. Because the system is fully pre-provisioned the phones call home and get their profile information. “That’s the goal,” Stokoe adds. “The customer orders the box, tells us the IP addresses, how many phones they need, and we ship it preloaded. It plugs in and it works.”

Godfrey is also excited about the chance to bring a new SME product to ITSPs, ISPs and other large providers of telephony services: “Now we can offer a small-end PBX that can be provisioned centrally. This is the true unique selling proposition of the product. In a retail scenario, for example, it will be very easy to centrally provision systems across 200 stores.”

Stokoe concludes, “The PIKA WARP Appliance has allowed us to do something we didn’t think we could do: take our sophisticated IP PBX capabilities – including a high level of telephony functionality, security and reliability – and deliver these to the SME market.”

Main Menu of SARK 500 PBX

The screenshot displays the 'TDM/VoIP Softswitch - Globals' configuration page. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with items like Home, Extensions, Trunks, Routes, Call Groups, IVR Menus, Custom Apps, Call Back, Day/Night Timers, Class of Service, Agents, Queues, Greetings, IP Devices, Asterisk File Edit, Syslogs, Firewall, Change Password, Backup/Repress, and Global Settings. The main content area has tabs for General, Services, Call-Control, and Admin. Under the General tab, various settings are visible: External IP Address (text input), Voicemail Instructions (YES), Late Termination (NO), Conference Type (simple), Extension Length (5), Extension Start Number (401), Agent Start (1001), System Operator (default 0), Call Recording System Default (None), and Operator Real Extension (400). On the right, a 'Sysinfo' box shows details like Serial # (568558), Release # (3.1.0-81), Web Server (lighttpd), Browser (Firefox), Network (hostname: sark, domain: aeimbra.com, LAN IP: 192.168.1.148, Netmask: 255.255.255.0), Hardware (System Media: flash, Disk Usage: 88%, RAM Size: 256208, RAM Free: 72688), and Status (PBX Status: RUNNING). Copyright information at the bottom reads 'Copyright CoCoSoft 2008-2010. All rights reserved.'

Settings Interface of SARK 500 PBX

The screenshot shows the 'PTT_DiD_Group/446641 Settings' page. The left sidebar is identical to the main menu. The main content area has tabs for Routing and Line. Under the Line tab, settings include Active? (YES), Tenant (Default), Fax detect (NO), and Switch on CLIP (NO). An 'Open' dropdown menu is expanded, showing a list of options: Default IVR, QUEUES, EXTENSIONS (400), CALL GROUPS, DISA, DISA CALLBACK, GET VOICEMAIL (Retrieve Voicemail), LEAVE VOICEMAIL (100), Siblings, Trunks (PIKABRI, PIKAFIX), Custom Apps, and Conferences (300). Copyright information at the bottom reads 'Copyright CoCoSoft 2008-2010. All rights reserved.'

About PIKA Technologies

PIKA Technologies for over two decades has been providing developers with the tools they need to build advanced voice and fax applications like IP PBX, fax broadcast and self-service IVR. As the technology landscape has changed, so too has PIKA, building out its product offering so its customers can choose the right tool set for their applications.

In addition to its traditional line of hardware and software solutions, PIKA now offers a family of appliances and applications that provide top-quality performance out of the box. PIKA sells these products directly and also makes them available through its growing network of resellers and distributors. Known for its exceptional customer service, PIKA's customers can expect the same high level of personalized, fast support that the company has always delivered. Headquartered in Ottawa, Canada, the company has ranked in The Branham 300, an authoritative ranking of successful Canadian high tech firms, for nine consecutive years.

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