



Vobal GSM reduces the cost of voice communications at sea

A new application that significantly reduces the cost of voice communications for seafarers and shipping companies is being demonstrated at Inmarsat's Solutions Labs.

The Vobal GSM solution allows VoIP calls to be made and received - or SMS texts sent and received -over FleetBroadband by up to seven users simultaneously.

"The clever part of this solution is that no data is sent unless someone is talking or texting," said Inmarsat solutions manager Christian Cordoba.

Reduced bandwidth

"Vobal GSM uses a bandwidth of 6 kilobits (6kb) each way per call – but both parties have to be talking at the same time for the total of 12 kbps to be charged," he said.

"In most conversations each person waits for the other person to finish talking before they start to speak.

"When one party stops talking the system automatically stops sending data, so a standard call will only use a total of 6kb at any time – even though both parties are connected."

Simple set-up

Christian added: "A key feature of Vobal GSM is that unlike other GSM applications, it does not require an 8kb streaming connection per call."

Ronnie Raviv, Vobal's chief operating officer, explained: "By abandoning standard 'landline-based' GSM technologies in favour of VoIP, the solution reduces the 'per call' bandwidth – as well as the idle bandwidth used – to just a fraction of other GSM solutions.

"That's because it utilises FleetBroadband's more cost-effective Standard IP channel rather than its Streaming IP channel, which isn't even available on the popular FB150 terminals.

"It is currently the only solution on the market designed to operate this way."

To reduce the bandwidth required even further, Vobal has also integrated technology that allows the application to filter out all background noise and compress the human voice.

GSM compatible

Vobal GSM requires the simple set-up of an S3 Vobal base station server onboard ship, which has a range designed to reach all parts of the crew area of a typical vessel.

The server is connected to the Vobal Network, which is compatible with most GSM phones so there's no need for crew members to change SIM cards.

Even mobile phones locked into their own SIM cards should automatically connect to the server.

“Not only is bandwidth significantly reduced compared to other GSM solutions, but our billing system's flexibility allows GSM calling to either be subsidised by the ship for crew morale or to be a profit centre for the company,” said John Nix, chief executive officer and founder of Vobal Technologies.

Solutions labs: inmarsat.com

<<http://www.inmarsat.com/Partners/Solutions/default.aspx>>

Vobal Technologies: www.vobal.com

