



## Introduction

AVST CallXpress is a voicemail and unified messaging system made by AVST, an independent, privately held, VC-backed company focused exclusively on the voice messaging and IVR markets. AVST was formed in 2003 with the divestment of AVT, a division of Captaris, to Sound Advantage. Today, the company is backed primarily by two venture capital firms, Ignition Partners and Dolphin Equity Partners, though Captaris retains a minority stake.

CallXpress integrates with numerous call management systems, including Cisco® Unified Communications Manager. Like Cisco Unity®, CallXpress can integrate with legacy PBX systems, and is available as a voicemail, integrated messaging, or unified messaging deployment. As a pure-play voice messaging company, AVST earns revenue almost exclusively through the sale of voice messaging deals.

## Opportunity/Threat

AVST CallXpress is a direct competitor to Cisco Unity. As customers consider a replacement for aging or end-of-life voicemail systems, or consider a new voicemail system to complement a Cisco Unified Communications Manager deployment, CallXpress and Cisco Unity are often both evaluated as candidates for such a system.

## Understanding Terminology Differences

AVST uses slightly different terminology than Cisco to describe their deployment topologies. This section gives a quick translation for AVST's nomenclature for their four deployment models:

- **Server-Based UM:** This is what Cisco refers to as unified messaging, where all messages go into the corporate Microsoft Exchange or Lotus Domino environment.

- **Client-Based UM:** This is what Cisco calls integrated messaging, where there are separate message stores but the client, for example Microsoft Outlook, displays both e-mail and voicemail.
- **Simplified UM:** This is a voicemail-only deployment where the voicemail server forwards the message as an e-mail to the Microsoft Exchange/Lotus Domino environment. Cisco Unity is able to support this, but this is rarely done because a message marked as read in e-mail would not automatically be marked as read over the Telephone User Interface (TUI) and vice-versa. In this situation, users often have to listen to the same message twice, which lowers productivity.
- **Secure UM:** This is a voicemail-only deployment with a Web client, similar to Cisco Personal Communications Assistant. It is not secure in the same way that Cisco Unity offers secure messaging, as discussed in the next section.

## Secure Messaging and Regulatory Compliance

Many customers have strong concerns over security and regulatory compliance, further heightened by new compliance legislation. With Cisco Unity secure messaging, messages can be encrypted such that they cannot be read by, at the customer's option, either anyone outside the organization or anyone except the intended recipient. The encryption key can also expire after a set period of time; if the message is copied by the user or caught by a journaling utility, the record will still expire. These secure messages can be accessed using the TUI, Microsoft Outlook, the Cisco Personal Communications Assistant (Web) client, and BlackBerries. Additional client support, for example, for the Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, is forthcoming.

AVST claims to have secure messaging. However, AVST's "Secure Unified Messaging" deployment does not actually encrypt the message; instead, it simply turns off certain access methods. Users must use their Web client and cannot use any other client, including Microsoft Outlook or smart phones. This greatly reduces the utility of a unified messaging deployment.

## Cisco Unity: Optimized for Mobile Worker Productivity

When compared to Cisco Unity, AVST CallXpress has a weak feature set for mobile workers. The RIM BlackBerry is one of the most popular smart phone devices on the market today; many customers have deployed these devices for their most influential users. Cisco Unity has a highly optimized BlackBerry solution that strips out message content (which can be large) and sends a notification to the BlackBerry with a URL that, when clicked, initiates a call between Cisco Unity and the device. This gives BlackBerry users instant notification of messages without the data fees and battery drain that result from large data transfers. In contrast, CallXpress would push the file over the mobile network, incurring such costs. Furthermore, CallXpress only supports this feature in a unified messaging deployment whereas Cisco Unity offers this feature in an integrated messaging or even voicemail-only deployment.

Cisco Unity has additional capabilities that appeal to mobile users, even those using "dumb phones." These include interrupted session recovery, alternate extensions, and remote message monitor—features lacked in CallXpress. All in all, Cisco Unity is a stronger solution for today's mobile workforce.



# Cisco Unity vs. AVST CallXpress

## Quick Reference Guide

### Cisco Unity: Highly Reliable

Cisco Unity provides a much more robust level of reliability than CallXpress can offer. Cisco Unity has a comparably more fault tolerant architecture, including failover capabilities that allow a redundant server to take over message processing and retrieval in the event of a server failure. In the case of site-level disaster, the standby redundancy features of Cisco Unity allow for a secondary data center to quickly be brought online to replace the destroyed Cisco Unity server. AVST CallXpress does not appear to have any similar capabilities to handle either server or site failure<sup>1</sup>. Given the importance of voicemail systems and the occurrence of numerous catastrophic events in recent years, this should give customers some pause when considering CallXpress as an enterprise messaging solution.

### Better Integration with Other Cisco Products

While some customers of CallXpress and Cisco Unity integrate with legacy PBX equipment, many integrate with (or are planning to integrate with) Cisco Unified Communications Manager. In this case, Cisco Unity offers some very compelling capabilities. Cisco Unity integrates nearly seamlessly with other Cisco products ranging from Cisco Unified Communications Manager to Cisco Unified IP Phones and the Cisco Unified Personal Communicator. For example, Cisco Unity can present visual voicemail on Cisco Unified IP Phones, letting users triage their messages and jump to the most important ones right away. When working with Cisco Unified IP Phones, Cisco Unity users can screen their calls using the Message Monitor capabilities.

In short, Cisco Unity is an integral part of the Cisco Unified Communications solution. CallXpress is simply a point solution for voicemail that lacks seamless integration with other pieces of a complete unified communications solution.

### Company Stability

As mentioned previously, AVST is a pure-play voicemail company backed by venture capital firms. Voice messaging is a mission-critical application that many customers, particularly enterprise customers, may not wish to entrust to a VC-funded company with questionable stability.

Cisco is an established firm with a solid record of award-winning support. It is worth reminding customers that they can feel secure in their investment with Cisco.

1. <http://www.avst.com/products/callxpressMessaging/features.asp>