



### VoIP & Gadgets Blog

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#### About Me (Full Bio)



**VoIP & Gadgets Blog:**  
 Tom Keating: CTO, VP, Founder  
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## Microsoft OCS Call Recording

Last week, I wrote how [Microsoft is making inroads](#) in the enterprise with their Office Communications Server 2007 R2 platform and how they are looking to achieve five 9s of reliability. Well, one other critical feature needed for an enterprise phone system is decent **call recording**. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be a lot of options for call recording on OCS 2007. One of the problems is that not all calls go through a PBX.

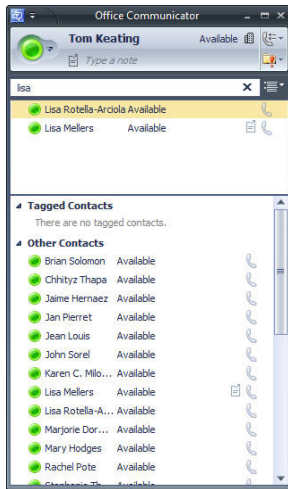
For instance, you can use the [Microsoft Communicator](#) client to call a co-worker who is also using Communicator. The call is a peer-to-peer SIP session that doesn't go through a PBX, so the PBX can't leverage its call recording capabilities to record the call.

So what are your options?

1) You can go the "cheap" route and download the **FREE** open-source [Wireshark](#) packet sniffer program. [Wireshark](#) can decode VoIP packets, including the RTP audio stream and save it as an .au file (you can convert to .WAV if you need to). All you need to do next is "mirror" a port on your switch that sees all the VoIP traffic and then hookup a PC to monitor and record the traffic.

2) Another similar option is [Cain and Abel](#). Cain & Abel was designed as a "network administrator security tool" to pinpoint security holes. I put that it quotes, since it can also be used as a hacker's tool. Essentially, this "security" software product can record your SIP-based VoIP applications. Cain's sniffer can now extract audio conversations based on SIP/RTP protocols and save them into WAV files. The following codecs are supported: G711 uLaw, G711 aLaw, GSM, MS-GSM, ADPCM, DVI, LPC, L16, G729, Speex, iLBC.

3) You can go the "professional" route and install a 3rd party SIP-recording platform that monitors ALL SIP VoIP traffic.



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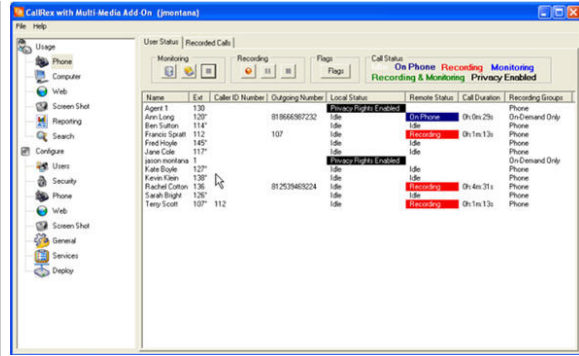
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Update: I should mention that although many of the above solutions can capture the SIP traffic - including the RTP stream - you might have problems *playing* the audio back since Microsoft uses their packet loss concealment RTAudio adaptive codec within Communicator. Not sure if Microsoft Media Player can play this codec or not. Hmmm, might have to do some packet captures and see if this works!

**The Future of Recording in OCS...**

It's certainly possible that a future release of OCS could feature a decent call recording feature built-in that is 100% software. It would be nice if you could simply click a record button from within Communicator and it records the call as a .wav file directly to your PC. Microsoft no doubt is working on a future OCS release that is 100% software without the need for a PBX, so they'll need a 100% software-based recording solution as well. Maybe it won't be a fully-featured call recorder that puts recordings on a centralized server for call center managers, admins, etc. with fully reporting capabilities -- but certainly OCS's Communicator client should act at least as a "personal" recorder.

I should mention that while Microsoft OCS 2007 R2 did not quite herald the death of the IP-PBX, most experts, myself included, predict a future release of OCS that doesn't require a PBX. Who knows - maybe OCS 2010, OCS 2011, or a later release will be PBX-free? Probably sooner rather than later, that day is coming.

A 100% Microsoft UC solution without the need for a PBX/IP-PBX at all could be a game changer. Of course, the current version, Microsoft OCS 2007 R2, does have some *limited* support for SIP IP phones, so you could throw out your existing PBX today if you wanted to. Any future release of OCS will have to support SIP phones from popular SIP phone players such as Aastra, Polycom, and snom. Also, most businesses aren't ready to toss desktop hard phones for a 100% software-based softphone solution, i.e. Microsoft Communicator. Additionally, any future OCS release will have to include all the advanced call center functionality you get from Nortel, Avaya, Mitel, or even some low-cost Asterisk-based PBXs, if they plan on completely eliminating the need for a PBX. A 100% software-based IP-PBX with unified communications capabilities, advanced call center functionality, and call recording would certainly be a compelling choice for many businesses.

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Jan

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