*\*\*This essay was submitted for BritWeek’s 2010 Innovation Awards competition. It won Ribbit the grand prize in its Service Provision category.\*\**

**Ribbit/BT: Accelerating Communications Innovation**

In the worlds of business and technology, “innovation” is a word you hear almost everyday. In fact, companies that don’t innovate—regularly introduce new software, products, or services that offer customers a new ways of doing things—don’t generally survive long. But true innovation is about more than introducing something new—it’s about making new experiences and even entire industries possible. Often, truly innovative technologies affect large numbers of people and serve as pathways to creativity.

The telephone, the Internet, and the mobile phone are all examples of true innovation. Each of these technologies made new ways to interact possible, affected people globally, and spawned entire new industries that continue to drive innovation and creativity today. Ribbit, while not as widely known, is likewise a truly innovative technology.

**Voice Apps Made Easy**

Ribbit is an open, cloud-based environment for communications innovation. Started by a group of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and now a subsidiary of BT, Ribbit makes it possible to easily add voice, SMS, and other rich forms of communication to virtually any Website or application—without any prior knowledge of telephony. Ribbit makes its carrier-grade SmartSwitch™ and communications-enabling platform services easily accessible to millions of developers through its open API set and freely downloadable software development kits.

The ramifications of this technology are huge. In the past voice and data existed in largely separate, "online" and "offline" worlds. Incompatible technologies and business models severely limited even basic Voice-over-IP (VoIP) services. Trying to bridge this communications gap required significant telephony expertise and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of telephony equipment, as well as months or even years of development time.

Ribbit breaks down the historical barriers separating telephony and the Internet, allowing voice and data to travel seamlessly across devices, networks, carriers, and protocols for the first time. In the future, it won’t matter what kind of phone you have or which carrier you use—it’s likely that your phone number won’t even be attached to a particular device but instead will function more like an email address. Clicking data objects (an advertisement, a photo, a widget, an icon) will connect you instantly to a live call. Voicemail and email will no longer be separate—you’ll search, save, and manage all your messages (voice, SMS, email) in one place. Real-time conversations will happen routinely online, without being limited to a particular service or environment. And these capabilities are only the beginning.

**New Experiences, Limitless Possibilities, Global Impact**

Ribbit invites both independent and corporate developers anywhere in the world to build radically new applications that have the potential to create entire markets, or communications-enable existing software applications to vastly improve business and personal productivity. Ribbit Mobile and Ribbit for CRM are two examples of commercially available applications built on the Ribbit Platform. Ribbit Mobile gives consumers and business professionals a 21st century solution for managing calls, messages, and phones all in one place. Ribbit for CRM extends the value of industry-leading CRM software (Salesforce, Oracle On Demand) by integrating mobile voice communications, SMS, email, and voice-to-text transcriptions with customer records.

We're already seeing third-party developers use Ribbit to create everything from communications-enabled widgets (Google) and unified messaging tools (Rocketvox) to voice commerce Websites, enterprise mashups, and creative call center solutions (Recall Solutions). Google, for example, is using Ribbit to enable real-time voice participation in its Google Wave collaboration tool. Rocketvox is using Ribbit to create a universal inbox for consumers who want to consolidate their social networking, instant messaging, and other online conversations. And Recall Solutions is using Ribbit to launch an affordable new service for the dental industry that personalizes and automates a vital task—confirming and scheduling patient appointments.

Other developers are using Ribbit to explore new frontiers in communications such as augmented reality (the combination of real-world and computer-generated realities) and contextual caller ID. Lucid Viewer is an example of an independently-developed, experimental app that uses Ribbit to enable interactive calling in immersive 3D environments. Telecommunications carriers are also evaluating how they can use Ribbit to transform outdated business models and offer high-value, application-driven services to their customers—with little to no investment in infrastructure or in-house development.

**A New Era of Communications**

Ultimately, Ribbit's goal is to bring new experiences, interactions, products, and business models to life for people all over the world. No other communications company is attempting to address such a broad audience: consumers, business users, independent software developers, global enterprises, telecommunications carriers. Yet we recognize that no single company could possibly innovate fast enough to take advantage of all the technical and business ideas on the horizon. We believe it's going to take thousands of developers, working thousands of hours, to satisfy the communication needs of the future.

Only through an open platform and robust API set will developers, ISVs, small businesses, and global enterprises be able to quickly and easily communications-enable web pages and applications using familiar programming tools. To that end, Ribbit supports development in Flash, Java, JavaScript, PHP, Silverlight, .NET, and REST. Backed by BT's global infrastructure, Ribbit is the only communications company that can offer developers carrier-grade reliability, security, and scalability.

The next revolution in real-time communications is already underway. Phones are becoming computers, and computers are becoming phones. Through this convergence of devices a new communications paradigm is emerging, one in which voice is no longer a standalone application but a communications medium that can be integrated into other applications. Literally all devices will one day be communications-enabled. As a platform for communications innovation, Ribbit is working to accelerate this future.