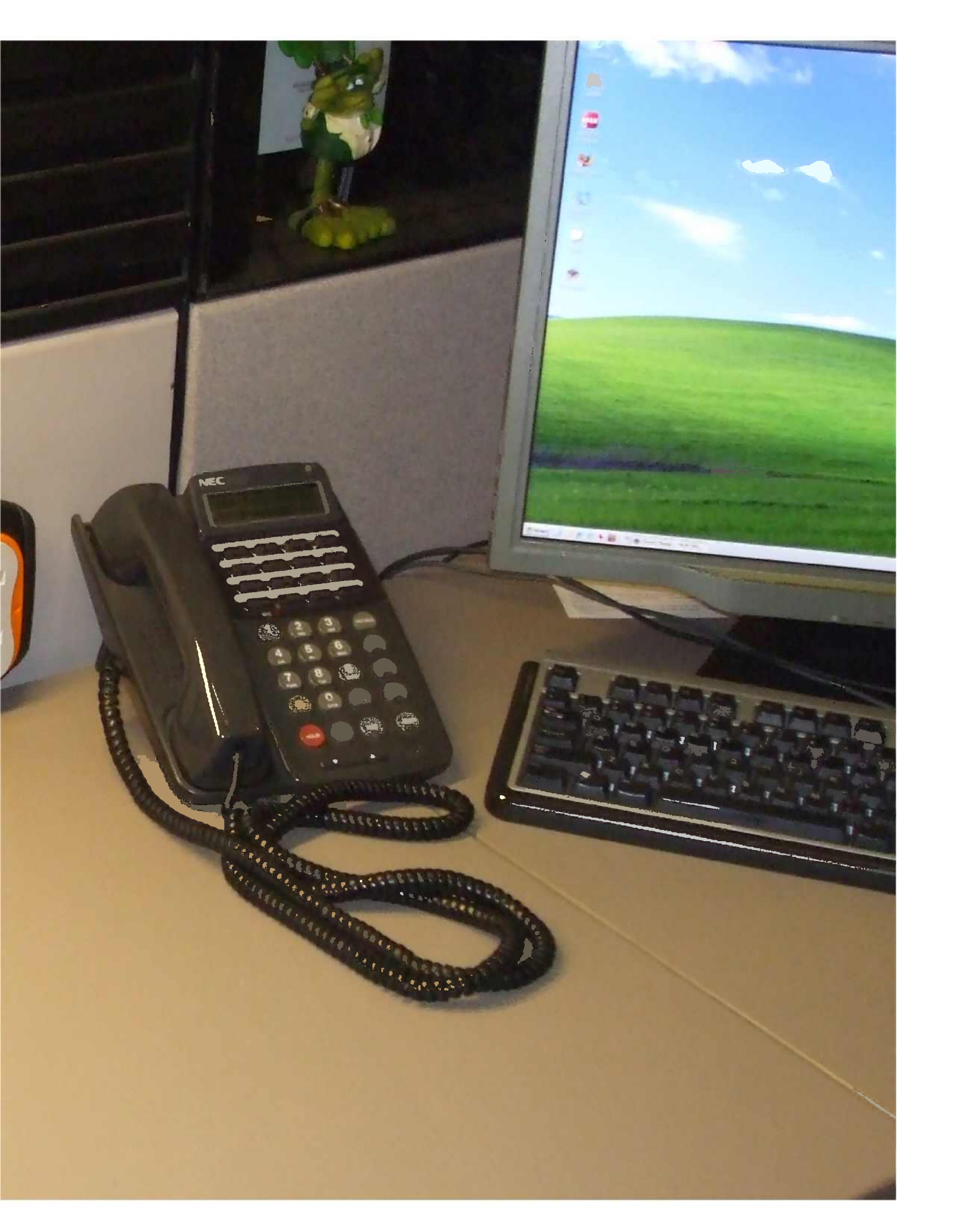


## Plugged in

Offices are filled with computers and gadgets that demand power. So why do we have to go crawling around on our hands and knees to plug stuff in under our desks?

**BY ROB KIRKBRIDE**



## Product Briefing

Offices are filled with computers and gadgets that demand power. So why do we have to go crawling around on our hands and knees to plug stuff in under our desks?

If you believe power should be at desk level, you are not alone. Communications Integrators Inc., a modular

power company based in Tempe, Ariz., might have the perfect product for you. The company has revamped its Stationlink product, a plug and play power and data strip that attaches to the surface of any desk or cubicle.

The old Stationlink was a square metal box that was ugly but highly

functional. The new Stationlink is a sleek looking cluster of outlets that can easily be taken apart and put back together like Legos, up to six circuits.

The Stationlink can connect to the power in a panel, raised floor or be wired directly into the electric system of a building. It works regardless of the brand of desk or cubicle you use. The centerpiece of the Stationlink glows slightly to let the user know the power is on and it is connected correctly.

"It is totally modular," said Vice President Jon Dumbauld. "The end cap pops off and there are female receptacles for power distribution. At the top and bottom, the blades can be removed. It is keyed so it's impossible to mix and match unrelated circuits. And it's easy to use. We can have voice, data and power hooked up on the same day."

The new Stationlink is just beginning to ship. It is being used for a large project at the National Security Administration.

The Stationlink can be used with any manufacturer's product, but Commu-



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nications Integrators is working with manufacturers on links that will make the connection even easier. Currently, the company is working with Herman Miller to integrate Stationlink to the company's proprietary connector at the raceway. Communications Integrators plans to work with all the major manufacturers to make compatibility easy.

"Systems furniture has been limited to five wires. We can do six circuits," Dumbauld said. "That means we can bring a lot more power to the work surfaces. It is a higher density solution and it works with standard flexible cabling."

The Stationlink connects to the panel with a custom T connector, which allows power to pass through the raceway. A splitter is used to connect with other systems.

Communications Integrators will display the Stationlink at NeoCon in a booth it shares with Tate Access Floors, a company it has long partnered with

on power for raised floor systems.

Communications Integrators has a long history. It was founded 20 years ago on the original Stationlink. In 2000, the company began to develop and sell modular power and voice data for raised flooring jobs through its alliance with Tate, York and Johnson Controls are also involved in the raised flooring solution.

The company relaunched Stationlink as a way to reinvigorate that part of its market. "We wanted to take that same (original Stationlink) concept and make more aesthetically pleasing," Dumbauld said. "We were criticized by designers for how the original Stationlink looked. They didn't like it in the workplace. Other thing we wanted to do is get people off the floor. When the power is above, access is so much easier. It really represents the next level of modularity."

While some panel systems do an adequate job of bringing power to the workstation, they sometimes fall short

of modern power needs. Power strips create an unsightly mess as wires hang under the desk and can be kicked around on the floor. "We wanted to create a change in the mind-set of the office," Dumbauld said.

In most cases, adding Stationlink is cheaper than adding power to a panel. Even in the most expensive cases, Dumbauld said the cost of Stationlink is equal to powering a panel. Depending on the configuration, Stationlink costs between \$85 and \$100 for the set up.

Communications Integrators hopes to partner with manufacturers and provide Stationlink as an OEM supplier, but as of now, the company is satisfied supplying the product aftermarket.

The company also is taking its modular power and data a step further. It recently released Guestlink for the hospital and hospitality industry. Guestlink allows hospital patients and hotel guests to plug their own electronic devices into in-room televisions. ▽



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