

Defining the Value of Unified Communications

Unified Communications Strategies defines Unified Communications (UC) as "communications integrated to optimize business processes."¹ But underlying that rather mild description is a robust productivity driver for any size organization.

Unified Communications Demonstrating Strong Growth

A study performed by Commfusion and UC Strategies projects that the "True" UC market will reach \$2.43 billion by 2012².

Unified Communications is the ability for an employee to communicate in real-time with anyone inside or outside their organization, regardless of their location and regardless of the end-user technology that they have access to (cell phone, laptop, etc.). Unified Communications is a combination of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Auto Attendant, Text-to-Speech (TTS) and other technologies in a format tailored to how a company does business. It is all designed to drive fluid communications, and maximize productivity, customer service and overall workflow within a business.

The central philosophy of Unified Communications is focused on a concept known as "Presence Management." Presence Management is the ability for employees to define how they want to be reached in real time. Here's an example of both UC and Presence Management in action: A salesperson needs to check in with the VP of Sales from the road. The VP has already defined their current availability right through a smart phone. When the salesperson dials in, instead of receiving a voicemail, that person listens to an automated message that details the executive's current status, where that person is located, and whether the call can be taken. If the executive is available, the call is routed to wherever that person may be (through the office extension, cell phone or other number specified).

If this same VP needs to have a quick conference with all of the sales staff, the executive can access a secure online interface that details that status of all employees. The VP simply schedules a meeting time, and everyone is contacted by whichever method that they specified. The meeting goes off with a minimal interruption in workflow — and no one is going from office to office trying to hunt down the entire team.

Unified Communications: Easy to Implement

Unified Communications is more affordable than ever before. Ten years ago, deploying a UC platform would have been a \$100,000 investment, accessible only by the largest organizations. Today, you can deploy such a system for as little as \$8,000-\$12,000. Unified Communications is definitely within the grasp of small-to-medium businesses. And the bottom line is that your people are the most valuable capital asset that you have. By investing in their productivity, you are investing in the future growth of your business.



102 Timbertrace Ct.
Columbia, SC 29212
1-866-IDEACOM (433-2266)
www.ideacom.org

Unified Communications software can currently be downloaded directly to the latest smart phones, including:

- Apple® iPhone®
- Google™ Droid™
- Blackberry®
- Windows® Smart Phones

By enabling employees to define their presence status on their personal devices, you can eliminate the cost of provisioning every employee with a mobile phone.

Unified Communications: Tangible Productivity

In addition to individual employee productivity benefits, Unified Communications delivers solid improvements to business process, including:

- The ability to facilitate access to clients, partners and associates
- The customer service advantages of directing an inbound call to the right skilled, authorized person or team to resolve customer issues
- Seamless access for mobile employees-inbound callers never need to know if employees are on the road

Consider this scenario as an example of the business process benefits of Unified Communications: A customer sends an urgent email to a trusted contact at a vendor that a service call is needed. The employee who receives the email is away on vacation. Normally, this could end in hard feelings for the customer. But the employee accesses his or her email right on a smart phone. Following the prompts, the employee uses the speech dialing feature and speaks the name of another representative within the company. Using a feature known as "find me/follow me," the system locates the second employee and dials that person at their current location. There is a question about the service call, so the employee uses IM to contact a tech manager who is in a meeting. The manager approves the service call over IM, allowing the truck to roll.

The first employee is notified by the smart phone that the customer's concern is addressed. The employee records a message to their client that support is on the way. This recording is converted into a WAV file. This file is attached to the original email and sent back to the customer as a reply. From the customer's perspective, they never knew that the employee was on vacation.

This is just a small sample of the benefits that Unified Communications can deliver. Discuss with your vendor the potential that UC can bring to your own unique industry and business. You might be surprised at the different ways this technology can yield substantial productivity gains for your enterprise.

¹ "What is Unified Communications?" Unified Communications Strategies, <http://www.ucstrategies.com/what-is-unified-communications.aspx>

² "Unified Communications Market 2007-2012," Unified Communications Strategies, <http://www.ucstrategies.com/unified-communications-analysis/commfusion-and-ucstrategies-releases-a-landmark-study-on-unified-communications-where-it-is-and-where-its-going.aspx>



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