Cloud-Based Unified Communications

How Unified-Communications-as-a-Service (UCaaS) Can Transform Your Business

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Finding the right enterprise communications solution has always been complicated. Now, our society's methods of communication have proliferated in the form of instant messaging apps, video conferencing, and even virtualized desktops. How can businesses keep up with the growing demand for cross-platform, multi-device accessibility? No matter their size or industry, all businesses are essentially technology companies and have to stay ahead of the curve to remain competitive.

Luckily, the right communications framework doesn't have to be costly and complex. The concept of unified communications (UC) has revolutionized the communications industry, making it easier than ever to communicate and collaborate. Offered in a complete package as a cloud-based service, unified communications can radically simplify operations and transform your business.

The Evolution of Enterprise Communications

Over the past decade, the number of communications channels has exploded. Deployment methods are expanding as well. In addition to classic premises-based hardware, businesses now have the option of hosted communications, public cloud or private cloud options. As technology evolves at a breakneck speed, IT leaders often find it difficult to gather the necessary expertise to make strategic decisions for their business. Examining the evolution of the communications industry can be an illuminating place to begin.

New Technologies

With the introduction of technologies like voice over IP (VoIP), IT professionals began to look beyond the POTS (plain old telephone system) as the final word on communications. The popularity of VoIP is a driving factor in the evolution of enterprise communications. According to the VoIP Report[1], VoIP users are expected to break one billion and will continue to rise 10% each year until 2021. Meanwhile, 700,000 landlines are cancelled every month. The trend is irrefutable, but VoIP technology alone may no longer be enough to solve the communication challenges of the modern enterprise.

New Channels

Communications channels have expanded beyond the traditional context to include texting, social applications, video conferencing, remote desktops and productivity apps. In the past several years, we've seen an almost 400% increase in mobile time spent in messaging and social apps,[2] affirming that social networks are here to stay.

New Workflows

The sheer volume of communications channels is not the only challenge modern businesses face in designing their communications infrastructure. More and more businesses now recognize the value of offering flexible remote and mobile work options to employees. This trend necessitates new collaboration tools. According to a recent Gallup poll[3], the number of employees who reported that they spend some time working remotely rose from an average of 37% to 43% from 2012 to 2016 across all industries. Employees who reported spending 60-80% of their time offsite even reported feeling the most engaged at work. It's no mystery why businesses increasingly look towards UC to help their employees communicate efficiently.

The Objective of Unified Communications

UC is a complete package containing all the communications tools that businesses use every day. This will undoubtedly include voice and telephony, and perhaps mobile support for companies with a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy. It may also include email and voicemail, key system emulation, audio and video conferencing solutions, presence and instant messaging, or even desktop and thin browser clients. A UC platform will likely also incorporate communications applications, such as integrated contact centers and workstream collaboration tools. All of this is highly customizable and scalable to meet the needs of each individual business.

What is the ultimate goal of UC? With UC, a company's employees and customers receive a consistent user experience across any device, at any location. UC offers increased productivity and ease of collaboration in an efficient and flexible package.

Why Cloud? The Value of UC "as-a-Service"

It's easy to grasp the benefits of a unified communications solution, but why make the move to the cloud? The cloud-based or "as-a-service" model offers innumerable benefits.

Scalable User Model

In an "as-a-service" model it's easy to scale the number of users as a business expands. Unlike premises-based communications systems, where additions or changes were often laborious, UCaaS uses a multi-tenant model, which can easily add more users
to existing software in a matter of moments.

Cost Effective

Unlike premises-based solutions, UCaaS does not require an upfront capital investment (or CAPEX). UCaaS is an operating expense (OPEX) that can ultimately reduce other inefficient operational expenditures. Per-user and per-device carrier models are usually more cost-effective and allow billing to be streamlined across all locations globally. This reduces dependency on admin staff to sort out billing complexities.

Maximum Security

Cloud-based technology is located offsite in secure facilities, which minimizes risk to the business itself. Even if the company's local system is compromised, cloud-based data will be protected, assuring business continuity.

Scalable Service Model

It's also easy to scale available services. To add or remove service components in a premises-based UC system, it can require specialized hardware and hours of complicated reconfiguration. With UCaaS, the software package is a collection of applications that work in tandem – scaling this can be as simple as checking a box. This functionality also allows you to stay on the cutting edge of new technology and up to date with existing applications.

Dedicated Support

Because UCaaS is hosted in the cloud, that also means it comes with an independent support staff to help solve any IT issue. For a global business, this can be an immense support for employees in opposite time zones. This also frees up on-site IT staff to support other critical and strategic business needs.

Disaster Recovery

With UCaaS, you aren't in danger of losing mission-critical data in the event your building is affected by a disaster or outage. With built-in redundancies and remote accessibility, UCaaS assures that a business will experience less downtime. DRaaS, or Disaster-Recovery-as-a-Service, can be a perfect complement to a UCaaS solution. It ensures that the process of restoring data goes as smoothly as the process of backing it up.

The Payoffs of UCaaS

UC simplifies and streamlines communications and the "as-a-service" model transforms the way a business operates. What specific payoffs can you expect from making the shift to UCaaS?

Fluid Collaboration

Collaboration is the bread and butter of any effective organization. This becomes a challenge when businesses operate globally, with offices in different time zones and cultures. Communication tools shouldn't be on the list of those challenges. UCaaS has changed the workplace, making employees more accessible for collaboration than ever via video and audio conferencing solutions, desktop sharing, and more. Effective collaboration tools also make a business a magnet for top talent. Motivated and engaged employees seek out opportunities to learn from leaders and collaborators in the workplace. This is even more important in attracting top-notch millennial talent: According to research from PwC[4], "millennials relish the opportunity to engage, interact, and learn from senior management."

Maximum Mobility

The modern workforce has spoken: they require the option of mobility to make their highest level of contribution. UCaaS gives mobile employees a seamless, consumer-grade experience whether they are on the road or working from home. UCaaS can also support a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policy, which has been rising in popularity. UC offers mobile support and provides a simple way for IT to deploy applications in a common environment. Mobile options don't just benefit the user; businesses profit from this strategy as well. For example, travel time could lead to downtime and loss of productivity, which would negatively impact a company's bottom line. With UCaaS, a business can maximize mobility, efficiency and productivity.

Real-Time Presence Technology

UC enables real-time presence across an organization, providing instant information on the availability of other users. Presence notifies other users of an employee's ability to communicate, as well as the best way to reach them. Why is presence technology such a valuable tool? It allows employees to select the best form of communication for the task, thus increasing productivity and efficiency for all. With bundled features like SMS and instant messaging, collaboration is possible whenever and wherever users are online.

Revolutionized Customer Experience

Over 50% of consumers agree with the statement, "a business should respond to me 24 hours a day, seven days a week."[5] Modern businesses often turn to UCaaS to help them rise to the occasion. Auto attendant functionality and call center integration are several of the many communications tools that can revolutionize customer experience. Traditional call centers no longer suffice on their own in today's landscape: the modern consumer uses a myriad of communications channels to get in touch with businesses. On top of this, recent data from a study from AT&T confirms that 85% of consumers prefer to receive a text rather than a voice call or email.[6] UCaaS can elevate the contact center experience by integrating customer contact across multiple channels. This allows a business to better see and analyze the customer journey, ensuring customer satisfaction and reducing churn.

Advanced Data Analytics

Actionable information is key to optimizing a company's performance. UCaaS offers data analytics of communications tools that enable businesses to increase efficiency by revealing areas in their workflows that need improvement. Anytime access to insights around employee activity and communication patterns gives a business the flexibility to make strategic decisions quickly, rather than waiting for monthly or quarterly reporting. This level of transparency can help a business optimize spending, scale tools appropriately, and learn to leverage the right channels to support their employees and customers.

Who Benefits from UCaaS?

In an "as-a-service" model it's easy to scale the number of users as a business expands. Unlike premises-based communications systems, where additions or changes were often laborious, UCaaS uses a multi-tenant model, which can easily add more users to existing software in a matter of moments.

YoY Increase in Adoption of UCaaS[7]
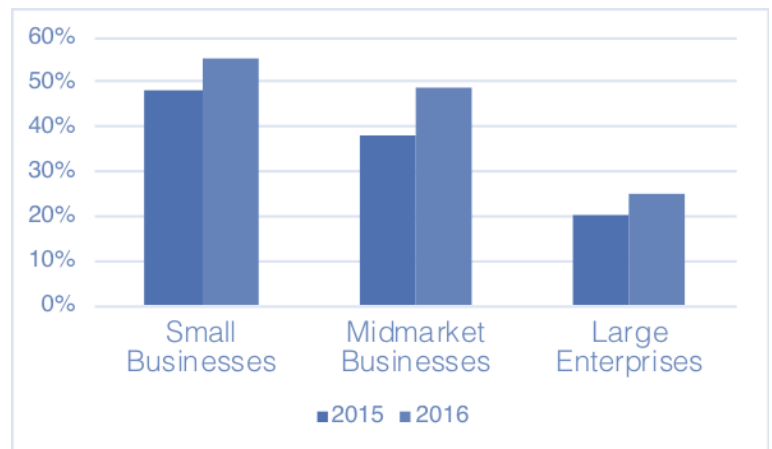
Small and Mid-Market Businesses

UCaaS gives small businesses an avenue to stay lean while providing a best-in-class user experience for their employees and customers. Cloud-based services scale economically for small groups and can even eliminate the need for IT support staff. For mid-market businesses, UCaaS offers them the flexibility they need as they grow and can free up IT staff to focus on revenue-driving projects.

Large Enterprises

Enterprise communications historically presented the biggest challenges, but with UCaaS a large business can unify global operations and maximize collaboration across all branches. Large businesses also benefit from the adoption of an OPEX model, of which eliminates the risk of a CAPEX investment. Many businesses invest capital and feel locked into a certain communications framework. UCaaS allows a business to easily migrate to the cloud without locking them into a single model for the future. Per-user pricing guarantees significant cost savings. Moreover, it removes the billing headache of managing multiple vendors, some even using different currencies, freeing up finance and admin staff to focus on business initiatives.

Growing or Seasonal Businesses

Businesses for whom the number of users fluctuates seasonally can benefit from UCaaS because it is flexible and easily scalable. For a rapidly growing business, the same is true. UCaaS can be an invaluable part of these businesses' strategies. User numbers, service levels, and costs can all be adjusted to reflect the needs of the business in a given moment. Adding new tools or adjusting service levels is painless with a UCaaS solution and can easily help a business optimize to meet seasonal demands.

Businesses with Amortized Infrastructure

For many businesses, hardware-based communications solutions continue to meet their needs and help them excel. Unfortunately, in some cases that infrastructure becomes amortized; i.e., it would cost more to upgrade existing technologies than to replace them. For businesses in this position, UCaaS can be the right solution because it does not require a significant, upfront investment of capital. This aside, the disruption and downtime a business may experience from implementing a new premises-based infrastructure could be detrimental to their operations. UCaaS solutions can often be deployed in a very short timeframe. This feature is also an invaluable asset for businesses opening new branch offices or locations. A UCaaS solution will get communications tools up and running fast and offer the flexibility to scale for the future.

Conclusion

In the new age of communication, businesses of all sizes face unprecedented challenges. Customers demand a diverse, accessible array of channels with a seamless user experience. Employees do their best work in a UC environment. UCaaS is the right solution to meet these challenges for many businesses. It offers flexible, scalable communications tools in a cloud-based package. UCaaS eliminates the costly patchwork of communications tools and offers efficient communication, collaboration, and mobility even for stratified global enterprises.

By driving efficiency, productivity and cost savings, UC provides businesses with a competitive advantage in their marketplace. The "as-a-service" model guarantees lower CAPEX investment and reduces the burden on IT and admin staff.

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CNP Technologies designs and delivers UCaaS solutions that help organizations execute strategic goals and give our customers a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Every business has a unique set of needs and challenges. We begin with a simple conversation to make sure we meet and exceed those needs every time.

Call us today to learn if a UCaaS solution is right for your business.

Call: 888.973.3737 or email info@cnp.net
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