

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

to Make Your Unified Communications
Deployment a Success





The adoption of unified communication (UC) is accelerating as businesses recognize its value by bringing together VoIP telephony, instant messaging, video conferencing, mobility, presence, and collaboration capabilities into a seamless business environment.

The benefits of hosted telephony for organizations, including; low cost of communications and increased productivity as a result of improved collaboration and streamlined business processes are all key reasons why successful implementation of unified communications solutions is vital from the off. According to the new study, global market penetration of UC will grow sixfold over the next five years. However, this will be driven largely by the mid market and small business segments, with penetration in large enterprises only expected to triple in the same period. This slower uptake of UC solutions means big businesses are at risk of missing out on the myriad benefits that such technologies offer in terms of increased efficiency, productivity and mobility at work.

As more businesses consider moving to UC, there are numerous considerations that can markedly impact the level of success an organization achieves with its UC deployment. To assist CIOs and other IT decision makers achieve successful UC deployment, here are five considerations to take into account.





1

IDENTIFY NECESSARY COMMUNICATIONS FEATURES

Before any investment is made in procuring new hardware/software and prior to any installation work, there are a number of conditions that should be met. IT managers should ensure prospective UC solutions meets low- cost requirements, makes it easier to accomplish regular business tasks for employees, and simplifies corporate network management.

During this initial evaluation phase, C-level executives should examine baseline call routing, management and collaboration features of a prospective solution.

Basic calling capability is essential at any business, regardless of whether a company utilizes traditional telephone service or IP-based phone. More businesses are adopting IP-PBX phone solutions, as these typically offer numerous call processing advantages over legacy systems. However, even while some organizations are asking themselves “Why hosted VoIP?” even more are finding themselves unable to resist the lure of a voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) system.





At the end of the day it is best to select a system that supports both legacy analog phones and VoIP desk phones. Additionally, such systems provide a number of basic (but necessary) communications features, such as an instant messaging platform and integrated voice mail system.

A provider should offer integrated directory capability, which can go a long way toward streamlining communications and business operations. It is also important to consider a system's management and collaboration features. Management features should be considered from both an end-user's and administrator's perspective, and CIOs should look at the specific controls the system has in place. Collaboration is a powerful driving force for enhanced business productivity, innovation and overall success, so tools and features that facilitate optimal internal communication are especially valuable in UC solutions. Features that boost collaborative efforts include video conferencing, document sharing, presentation tools, presence and click-to-call or click-to-conference.



2

EVALUATE CURRENT NETWORK CAPABILITIES AND PLAN UPGRADING

In order to deploy the many communication tools comprised under the UC umbrella, the corporate network of the prospective buyer needs to be able to support them. Performing an initial network evaluation is paramount to developing a deployment plan that accounts for necessary network upgrades and additional capacity investments. Additionally, when a network is readied prior to deployment, the UC system is more reliable, which can mean big benefits for the business. This is because a UC system will have certain requirements of the network in order to support the applications and traffic.

When these considerations are made in advance, administrators can better ensure the UC system is best supported. Organizations can hire third-party consultants to evaluate the network or do so itself with its own in-house IT team. Even if a company has not yet decided on the specific provider for the UC solution, the voice and data networks can still be assessed at this stage.





3

RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION/ TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS AND EXPLORE IT SECURITY PRACTICES

While an initial evaluation of the network is essential prior to moving forward with deployment, this is also a good stage to map out a plan for future upgrades. While the network may already be capable of supporting the UC system, the business will constantly evolve moving forward so both the UC system and the network will need to be upgraded eventually. By planning for these upgrades now, businesses will put themselves in a better position for continued growth, minimizing potential disruptions that regularly emerge as IT infrastructure is altered down the line.

Another essential step in successful UC deployment will be to thoroughly research any and all implementation and technology partners that will be assisting in the process.





“Today, enterprises demand information to flow across software products and devices,” Semmler wrote. “Building a bigger and more efficient network through UC is an advantage when it comes to managing workflows. Unfortunately, when multiple systems are tied together, the impact of any type of security breach or attack can be major. Security features and solutions need to be a mandatory part of the UC deployment process. Understanding compliance and corporate governance, limiting potential exposures to security risks and business resiliency all need to be addressed in UC security planning.”

Common security objectives include: availability, confidentiality, integrity, accountability, use control and countermeasures to SIP threats. When a security incident occurs, availability can often suffer as services are disrupted. This highlights the need for prevention, meaning IT managers need to put appropriate security measures in place to protect the network against attacks like denial of service.

Common tactics for this include the employment of spoofing protection, audit and oversight measures. Regarding confidentiality, IT managers should apply user and device authentication in tandem with encryption to preserve confidentiality and privacy.



4

ACCOUNT FOR FUTURE NEEDS IN REGARD TO SCALABILITY, MOBILITY, BYOD AND WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION

As touched on previously, effective partnerships can be key to mitigating difficulties involved in scaling the UC solution according to the evolving needs of the business. The emergence and rapid uptake of mobility has had a profound impact on business operations, and the Bring Your Own Device trend has dramatically altered the corporate network environment. With BYOD enabling telecommuting, more organizations are witnessing the transformation of their workforce distribution, with employees increasingly dispersed and the traditional office environment a thing of the past

As such, mobility, BYOD, telecommuting and workforce distribution should all be considered and addressed as part of the UC deployment plan. For example, certain businesses will have a pressing need to include mobility solutions as part of their UC system because regular job duties require employees to be more actively mobile and out of the office setting. Many organizations are adopting BYOD policies to embrace employee use of personal devices. This is because they are increasingly becoming more cognizant of BYOD's benefits when it comes to operational costs, staff productivity and employee satisfaction.



5

INVESTIGATE HOW POWERFUL CLOUD TECHNOLOGY CAN BE LEVERAGED AS PART OF A UC SOLUTION AS WELL AS HOW TCO IS IMPACTED

Cloud communication solutions are commonly viewed as a disruptive force for enterprise IT, but its many business benefits also position cloud solutions as too good to pass up. In regard to UC, organizations can opt for premises-based solutions or cloud-based UC services.

The advantages of a hosted telephony solutions vs. a premise-based solution often boil down to whether or not the business wants to avoid the initial capital expense for a premise-based system, but a business case can be made for both options. For example, cloud services also offer an immediate cost-management advantage because they are maintained by a third party. If well engineered, a cloud-based UC service also offers increased reliability through features like geographic redundancy and secure, hardened data centres. On the flip side, a premise-based option may cost more in the short term but save money in the long term as the equipment is depreciated yet still fully useful.

Organizations should keep these points in mind when evaluating whether hosted business telephony or a premise-based UC solution is the best for its business. Most UC providers will offer both options, in addition to hybrid solutions that merge the two.



Such providers could be especially beneficial to partner with, as an on-premise UC system could be implemented at some key locations and cloud-based UC service leveraged for branch offices or to enable remote staff with access to the suite of robust communication tools that are available to central office staff.

It is also important to consider costs. While many businesses will attach more weight to total cost of ownership than any other factor, it is mentioned last here to highlight all the other considerations that are also important when preparing for UC deployment. This does not mean that costs should be neglected, only that they are one part of the bigger UC deployment puzzle.

Features are always a consideration, but once baseline requirements are met, the ultimate decision will come down to the total cost of ownership between two or more finalists. The business case for UC is complex, especially when factoring in (or not) the productivity savings that will be achieved from better collaboration and other efficiencies along with the savings on monthly telephone bills. Provided that features are equivalent from a variety of vendors, the cost side of the equation may be the determining factor.

If one business's corporate network needed extensive upgrades to ready it for UC deployment, cost considerations will be markedly different than those of a company that already had a network primed and ready to go. Because of this disparity, it is difficult to say how much total cost of ownership will factor into partner choices related to UC deployment. In addition, specific features selected for the UC system will affect the cost. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize how cost considerations are related to the choices that came before it.



FINAL THOUGHTS

By making the aforementioned considerations, an organization can better ensure that it is set up to achieve a successful UC deployment. While there are many factors that go into successful UC deployment, a common theme running throughout these considerations is that it is essential that businesses select optimal partners for implementation and technology procurement that are aligned under a common goal.

There is no one size fits all solution, which is something we at Wavenet recognise which is why we offer a number of different solutions to fit your business's needs. From small start ups, to large enterprises we offer a number of different UC options - to find out more why not head over to www.wavenetuk.com where we have an abundance of information, blogs, articles and other useful materials to get you started.

If you think you have heard all you need to, why not call us now on 0333 234 0011 and we can help you being your journey to unified communications

