

The Unified Communications Journey

How IT Is Responding To Increasing Demand For Mobile And Visual Collaboration

July 2012

Introduction

Today's IT managers have to navigate a considerable number of crosscurrents to arrive at the ideal set of unified communications (UC) capabilities for their users. Cloud computing, mobility, and the consumerization of IT make one wonder whether the new world is one of total anarchy. In the midst of this revolution, IT managers can react in a number of ways; the risk is high they will be viewed as an impediment to innovation instead of the leader. Business pressures to reduce costs, increase differentiation and competitiveness, and globalize push the user community to seek excellent, easy-to-use UC tools.

UC tools are different from transactional systems, like enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management (CRM) that support distinct business processes; these tools represent an uncertain area in the IT service catalog. Users employ transactional systems to complete specific tasks, whereas UC is much more of a discretionary choice. The challenge is to move users beyond basic capabilities like making simple voice calls, as they did on their legacy systems to more advanced collaborative capabilities like webconferencing. One sign of success for a UC deployment is when a significant number of users adopt ad hoc voice and webconferencing to work on documents and speed up decision-making.

Today, enterprises categorize updating traditional PBX systems to VoIP as "infrastructure," whereas web collaboration software fits more readily into the mix of collaboration tools. As UC brings together real-time voice, video, instant messaging, conferencing, and web collaboration, how do enterprises make effective decisions about business value so they know where, when, and how much to invest and deploy? If they don't move quickly, the anarchy of consumerization of IT will lead users to go out on their own to the cloud in order to connect both internally and with external partners. The bring-your-own-device (BYOD) movement is a testimonial to the increasing influence end users have to force IT to design, develop, and deploy a flexible set of UC capabilities. This profile will explore the priorities today's IT managers have regarding investment in UC, how they engage the rest of the enterprise to shape those priorities, and how users' needs for expanded mobility and video influences the process.

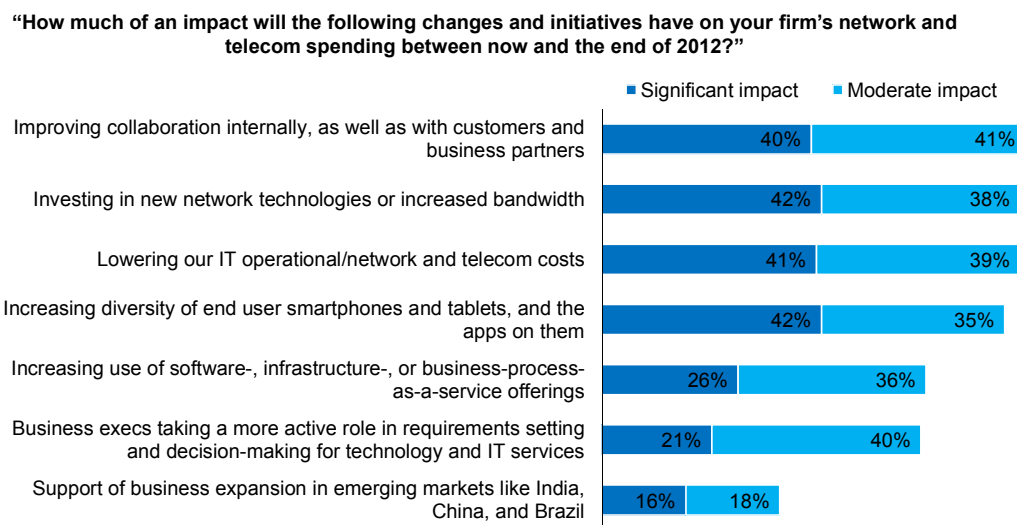
Improving Collaboration Is A Priority — But The Pressure To Reduce Costs Is Also High

The good news is that IT managers largely get it when it comes to collaboration and unified communications. They acknowledge that upgrading their networks, deploying collaboration for both internal and external users, and the BYOD movement will all have significant impact on their network and telecom spending in 2012 (see Figure 1). At the same time, reducing operational IT and telecom costs are just as important.

For IT managers struggling with what appear to be conflicting priorities of reducing costs and expanding capabilities, the best practice is to organize UC projects so they drive both hard and soft dollar savings. For example, moving to VoIP has a number of hard dollar savings elements, such as reducing carrier service charges and consolidating PBX hardware and software. Some enterprises are able to drive actual travel expense reduction by using videoconferencing. UC projects can also include the deployment of instant messaging, presence, and webconferencing, all of which drive soft dollar productivity gains.

Figure 1

Collaboration Is Viewed As A Top Network And Telecom Priority



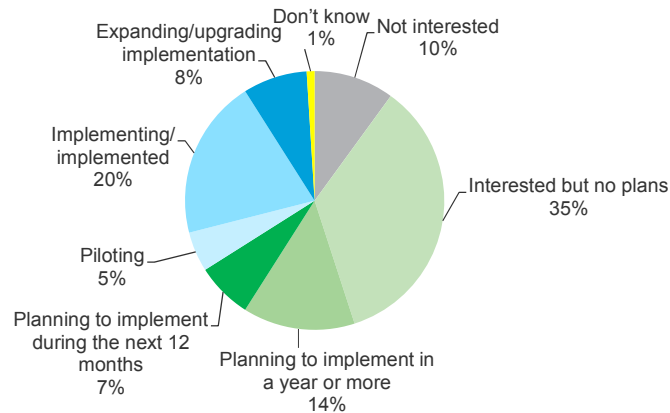
Base: 1,043 North American and European enterprise telecom decision-makers
(multiple responses accepted)

Source: Forrsights Networks And Telecommunications Survey, Q1 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

When one drills further into enterprise plans to support unified communications, there is firm evidence that the technology is taking hold (see Figure 2). The majority of IT buyers have some type of plan to adopt UC (54%), but a significant minority still either has doubts or lacks plans. The evidence is very strong on the supply side of the market, where vendors have consolidated the components of UC into more integrated suites. For example, all traditional PBX vendors have evolved their products to become SIP session managers supporting voice, video, instant messaging, and conferencing. It would be very hard today for an enterprise buyer to buy a system that only supported voice communications.

Figure 2
The State Of UC Deployments

“At what stage is your firm in adopting unified communications?”



Base: 1,304 North American and European enterprise telecom decision-makers

Source: Forrsights Networks And Telecommunications Survey, Q1 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

Support For Mobility Is Linked To The Drive To Simplify And Consolidate UC

The explosion of BYOD onto the enterprise scene has truly challenged IT managers to move away from exerting the level of control over hardware purchases that helped them dictate standards as well as control the costs of both procurement and support. The BYOD phenomenon has moved so quickly that IT organizations have to shift from this historical position to one of designing a more flexible UC infrastructure and support policies. Providing mobile capabilities for their own users, external partners, and customers is a critical or high priority for 68% of enterprise buyers (see Figure 3). Many IT organizations respond by using the classic strategy of vendor and service provider consolidation to simplify their UC infrastructure. The interesting dichotomy here is that, in order to support a broader range of endpoints, the solution has to reduce the back-end infrastructure and software for UC.

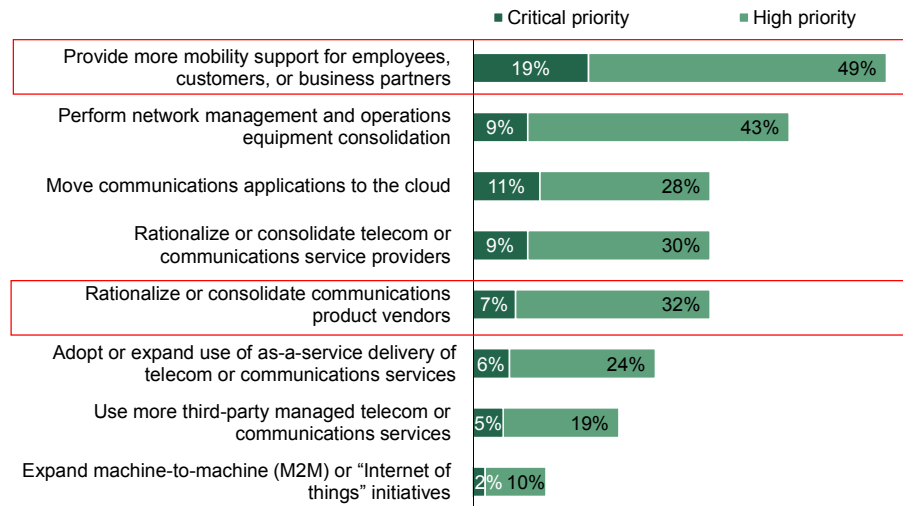
Mobile Unified Communications Helps Recognize Business Value From BYOD

Enterprise plans for mobile UC applications support is high, with only 3% saying they have no interest (see Figure 4). This is a clear statement about how enterprises are looking to UC to leverage the capabilities of smartphones to further drive collaboration. Where most discussions about BYOD indicate it is a struggle for IT to manage here the data shows they are taking steps to integrate UC capabilities and drive enterprise business value.

Figure 3

Mobile Support Is A Top Priority; Many Users Look To Consolidate Suppliers

“Which of the following initiatives are likely to be your firm’s top strategic telecom or mobility priorities over the next 12 months?”



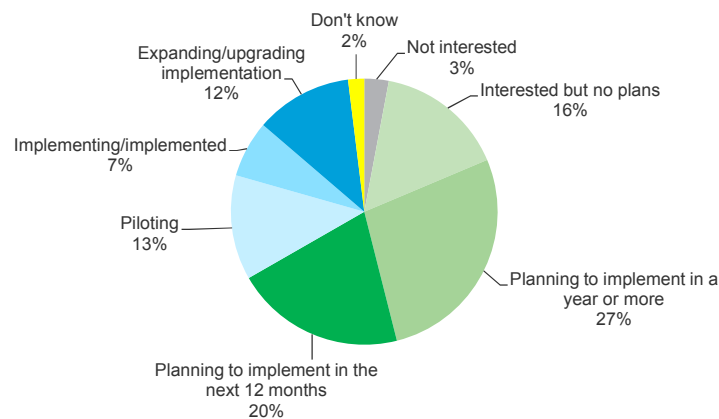
Base: 1,043 North American and European enterprise telecom decision-makers
(multiple responses accepted)

Source: Forrsights Networks And Telecommunications Survey, Q1 2012, Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 4

Enterprise Plans For Mobile UC Deployment

“What are your company’s plans to deploy some or all of the following UC capabilities (softphone, conferencing, video, IM, presence, and location services) on mobile devices?”



Base: 120 North American and European enterprise telecom decision-makers

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cisco Systems, June 2012

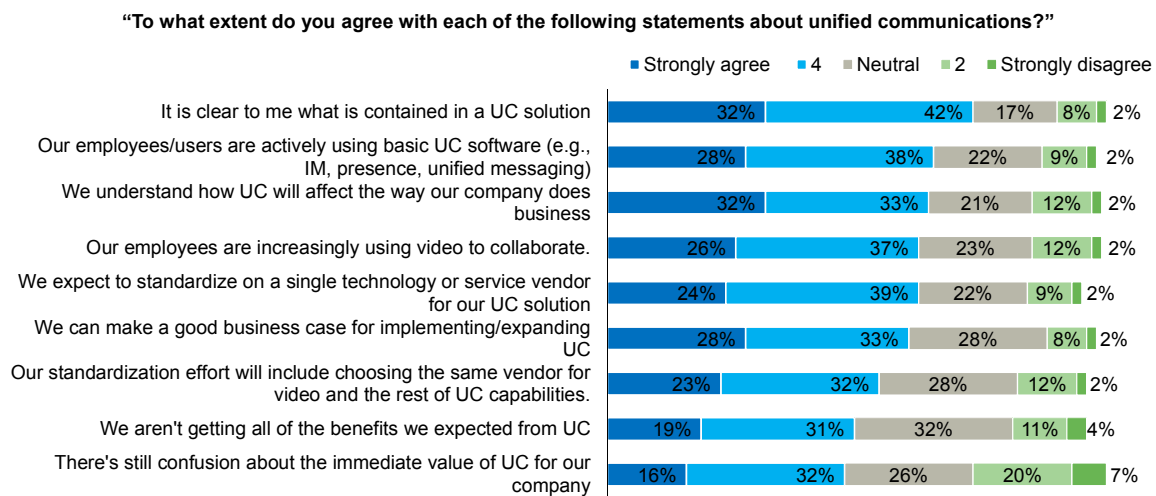
Unified Communication Standardization Extends To Video

Visual communications can add to better collaboration outcomes — although the high costs associated with upgrading networks and endpoints and constructing specialized videoconferencing rooms have previously proved difficult for many enterprises to justify. But costs for video endpoints are now dropping — and UC software suites are doing a better job of integrating these endpoints so that individual users can join more formal conferences that they would have been excluded from in the past. For this reason, enterprise IT managers view video as another UC capability that could benefit from vendor consolidation and standardization (see Figure 5).

A number of elements are helping drive this movement to more tightly integrate video with the rest of UC. More users are demanding desktop video and scenarios where individual users can easily participate in more formal, conference room-based interactions when they are unable to be in the meeting or video room. This requires a common approach to session management, endpoint protocol, and codec support, and a unified user experience for web-, video-, and audioconferencing. This is harder to achieve if desktop video and conferencing operates on completely different protocols and software than that which participants in conference rooms are using.

Figure 5

IT Managers Plan To Choose A Single Vendor For Unified Communications — Including Video



Base: 120 North American and European enterprise telecom decision-makers

(percentages may not total 100 because of rounding, “Don’t know” responses now shown)

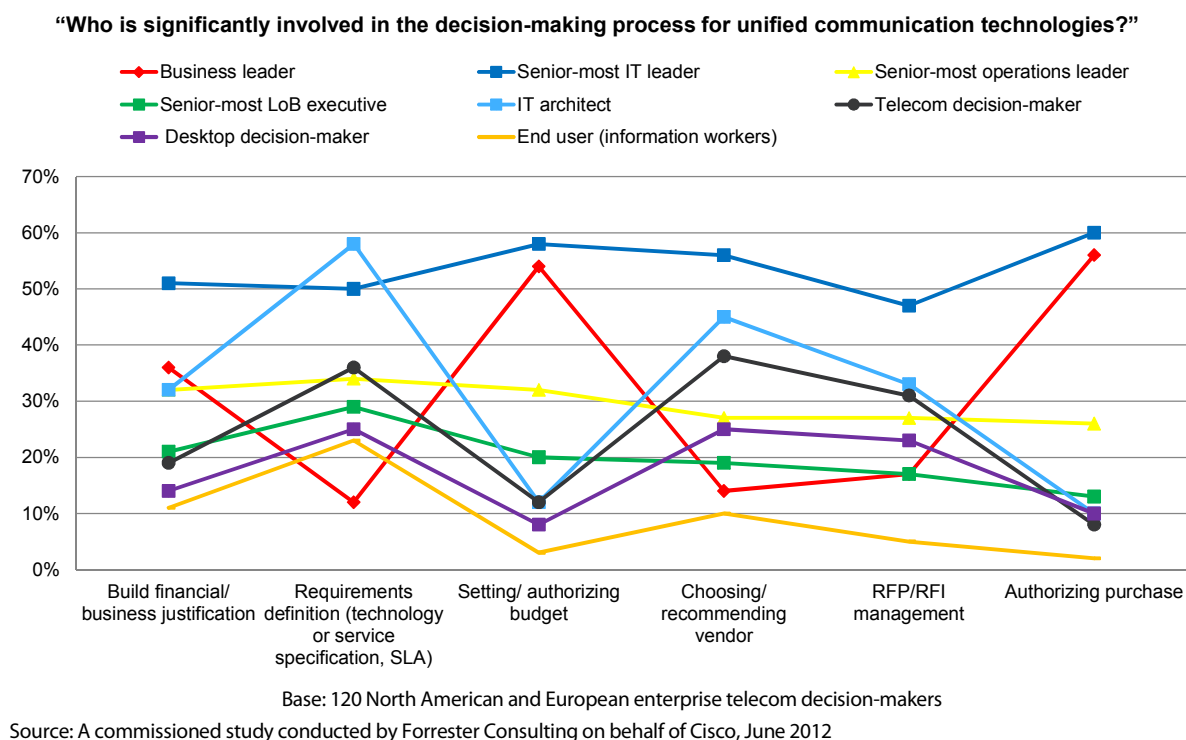
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cisco, June 2012

Enterprise Architects Are Given The Task Of Representing Users

How do enterprises move ahead with making decisions about unified communications to bring all this together? Are end users driving the decision-making? The survey results indicate pretty clearly that IT enterprise architects (almost 60% of them; see Figure 6) are defining the technical and service requirements for UC. This may work — but Forrester has still seen many IT organizations approach UC in a piecemeal fashion, splitting up voice, video, and web collaboration among different teams. As a best practice, the enterprise architect role needs to be the cornerstone of a joint team within IT to get the voice, video, network, and collaboration teams together. This

inclusive approach will allow the enterprise architect to better connect end user requirements to the solution design.

Figure 6
The Senior-Most IT Leader Is Still The Primary Decision-Maker For The Nontechnical Aspects Of UC Purchases



Conclusion

Enterprises are continuing to expand and refine their unified communications capabilities. At this stage of the market, it's not a question of *if* — it's a question of *how*. End user demands for extending UC to an increasing array of mobile and visual endpoints is a key design point for IT organizations to incorporate into their road maps.

- **BYOD is here to stay.** The shift in end user choice has been dramatic; use this as a critical design point for UC, including endpoints that are both mobile and visual.
- **IT vendor consolidation strategies can apply to UC.** IT sourcing and vendor management has usually recommended that firms carefully analyze how they can reduce the number of technologies and relationships that comprise their service catalog, and UC is no different. Vendors are increasingly evolving their offerings into more integrated suites, and companies should take advantage of that. However, don't decide to just completely rip and replace what you have without carefully looking at your current infrastructure and user preferences.
- **The enterprise architect is a key role to organize the UC road map.** UC now goes well beyond the classic divide between voice and data network teams created by VoIP. Make sure that you take desktop applications,

collaboration, and other IT teams into account in order to design a well-architected UC road map that supports end user needs.

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