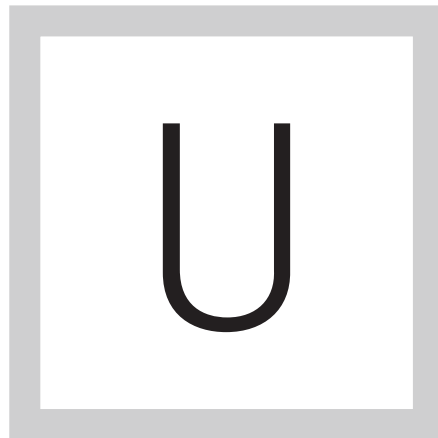


▶ *E-Guide*

# UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS TRENDS: WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2014?

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**UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS IS** poised for rapid change that will be driven by a perfect storm of mobilized workers, innovative technologies and a changing vendor landscape. This expert E-Guide highlights the top 5 trends changing the game for UC. Additionally, hear from an industry analyst as he weighs in on what collaboration technology trends enterprises can expect in 2014.

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## FIVE UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS TRENDS THAT CHANGE THE COLLABORATION GAME

Unified Communications is poised for rapid change that will be driven by a perfect storm of mobilized workers, innovative technologies and a changing vendor landscape.

On the vendor front, Microsoft Lync is challenging Avaya and Cisco for market dominance, while new cloud-based providers promise to allow IT to scrap its own servers, disband centralized technology budgets and assign spending to specific lines-of-business.

Meanwhile UC technologies are evolving to enable new kinds of communication through a wider variety of endpoints. WebRTC offers the power to democratize UC by extending features like voice and video into any desktop or mobile web browser. Additionally, UC vendors are integrating wired and wireless worlds to better serve the growing base of unwired workers who spend more time on tablets or smartphones than at desks. Finally, video isn't just for conferencing anymore, as consumer services such as YouTube and Vine drive enterprise video collaboration and content sharing in the enterprise.

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The following five trends are changing UC with the potential to forever alter how companies deploy technology and how business professionals communicate:

### **CLOUD-BASED UC: HOW SAAS WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE SPEND**

More than 90% of companies now use Software as a service (SaaS) applications, according to the Nemertes 2013-14 Enterprise Technology Benchmark.

Enterprises are turning to SaaS partially because they lack in-house expertise and need speedier deployment. But even more important, SaaS allows enterprises to be flexible with IT resources and spending.

Specifically, buying cloud-based UC applications allows IT to eliminate capital spending and move to an operational cost model in which companies only pay for what they need, when they need it. What's more, SaaS allows IT teams to push service costs directly out to specific lines-of-business.

Cloud UC isn't for everyone, however. The larger the user base, the more likely it is that cloud services will be more expensive than on-premises UC, according to Nemertes Research. The tipping point for IP telephony, for example, is about 2,500 users. Moreover, cloud services don't allow for the customization that some organizations require, and the cloud may not be acceptable if

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security regulations dictate that companies must store all data on premise.

The solution may be in deploying a mix of cloud and on-premises applications, but that requires integration using middleware from vendors such as Esna and NextPlane to allow presence federation between applications. That means additional cost and complexity. But integrating services from multiple cloud providers (e.g., one vendor's Web conferencing with another's video), is even more problematic.

Despite the challenges, most companies will take cloud services into consideration as they evaluate UC technology.

### **MOBILE UC: ENTERPRISES MUST DELIVER UC TO A MULTITUDE OF DEVICES**

Enterprises have learned quickly that the BYOD trend can benefit them if personal and enterprise-issued devices are used to improve worker productivity. So they're moving to support mobile workers across a wide range of devices and mobile operating systems, and enable mobile UC applications.

Employees demand capabilities, like single-number reachability and the same set of UC features on their tablets or smartphones that they have on their desktop. For IT, supporting mobile workers entails a new set of challenges, including guaranteeing real-time application performance on crowded wireless

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networks, tracking user location for 911 response, securing applications and data on employee-owned devices and managing UC performance on mobile devices outside of IT's control.

In tackling these issues, companies will continue to embrace mobile device management and mobile application management tools from vendors including AirWatch, Good and Mobile Iron. Or they turn to mobile carriers such as AT&T and Verizon for hosted mobile device management services.

Meanwhile, most UC vendors have delivered fully functional mobile clients for personal and enterprise devices that support their applications and features. Mixed-vendor shops, however, face a larger problem because it's generally not possible to enable a seamless end-user experience across many disparate UC applications and features on one mobile device. Often this challenge leads UC architects to consolidate UC vendors around a single strategic partner that can deliver a fully integrated set of applications on desktops and mobile devices alike.

## VIDEO: NOT JUST FOR CONFERENCING ANYMORE

Video is an increasingly central part of collaboration technology, becoming a more universal conferencing tool while simultaneously transforming into a

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medium for enterprise content sharing.

On the video conferencing front, new codecs like H.264 high profile and H.264 Scalable Video Coding (SVC) are reducing the network impact of video, even enabling high-definition video across the Internet or public 3G/4G wireless networks. H.265 is on the horizon, offering the same benefits but in a standard protocol that should allow interoperability among various video vendors. Cloud services such as Blue Jeans Network and Vidtel provide the ability to hold conferences among a mix of room and desktop endpoints, mobile users and consumer services (like Skype) -- all without the capital cost of buying an multipoint conference unit.

Meanwhile, a revolution is taking place as companies embrace user-generated video, bringing the capabilities of consumer services like YouTube into the enterprise. From recording video conferences for future playback to distance learning, video is quickly emerging as a way for individuals and groups to share content internally and externally from a multitude of sources. As a result, IT leaders are evaluating and deploying multipurpose video platforms from vendors including Kaltura, Kontiki and Qumu. They're also looking at integrated options from video-conferencing vendors like LifeSize and Polycom. Even service providers like Verizon are getting into the mix, delivering content

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management and sharing as a hosted service.

## WEBRTC: VOICE AND VIDEO FOR ALL

WebRTC enables Web browsers to function as voice and video endpoints without the need for a separate app or browser plug-in. This means users can “click-to-call” from within a webpage or mobile app without ever having to pick up the phone. Ultimately, WebRTC aims to provide UC apps like telephony and video conferencing to literally anyone.

Because WebRTC is implemented using JavaScript, Web developers can use the technology to add voice, video and screen sharing to their own applications. This means they can enable peer-to-peer communications without using a UC platform, which raises some concerns that Web developers will create rich media applications without the knowledge of the network team.

Despite all the hype, WebRTC is still in its infancy. Chrome’s and Firefox’s implementations aren’t supported by Internet Explorer or Safari. Video codec standards aren’t universally defined and common telephony features like compressed voice codecs aren’t yet supported. Still, WebRTC represents one of the more exciting and potentially transformative areas in UC.



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## LYNC: TRANSFORMING THE VENDOR LANDSCAPE

Ever since Microsoft introduced "VoIP As You Are" in 2007, Microsoft has gradually challenged the incumbent VoIP vendors including Avaya, Cisco, Mitel, NEC, Siemens and ShoreTel. Its efforts recently accelerated with the launch of Lync and Lync 2013, positioning Microsoft as a full-fledged, fully featured alternative to competing telephony platforms with one major advantage -- the company's applications already dominate the desktop.

Microsoft is convincing a growing number of its IM and Web conferencing customers to embrace Lync for telephony. As a result, the company is gaining market share and establishing credibility as an IP telephony and video conferencing vendor. It's also challenging organizational models that present telephony as a networking application. For Microsoft, telephony lives in the application and messaging domains.

Microsoft still has a long way to go to equal the installed base of its larger competitors, but it continues to press for a larger piece of the UC pie.

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## UC PREDICTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR: COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

Efficient employee collaboration requires tightly integrated unified communications and content-sharing tools that are readily available to users wherever they are. Until recently, integrated collaboration capabilities have been more of an exception than the rule.

The impending ratification of WebRTC could enable flexible collaboration deployment options -- such as easy-to-launch browser-based tools. With cloud and browser-based platforms and services drawing interest from business users, traditional, hardware-based collaboration tools -- such as desk phones and video-conferencing equipment -- are being edged out. Tim Banting, principal analyst of collaboration and communication for Washington, D.C.-based Current Analysis Inc., shared his insights into what collaboration technology

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trends enterprises can expect in 2014 as part of SearchUnifiedCommunications' series of UC predictions for the New Year.

## COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY TRENDS: WILL 2014 BE THE YEAR OF THE CLOUD?

Many enterprises give employees access to multiple modes of communication and collaboration, but many of those tools go unused. Employees will use collaboration tools more effectively if they are conveniently located in one place.

Users want their collaboration tools -- like voice, instant messaging and file sharing -- to be more closely integrated in 2014. Collaboration as a Service offerings -- such as Microsoft Office 365 and Google Hangouts -- offer that integration right through the browser. These services are becoming more appealing because they don't require businesses to invest in hardware, and IT won't have to maintain the applications, Banting said.

Interest will grow in 2014 for cloud-based collaboration services, especially for businesses with temporary staff. "For enterprises with a contingent staff, they are noticing it's much easier to pay \$20 per person, per month, to get a new employee on board without having to buy them a PC, desk phone or mobile device," he said.

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Cloud-based services also offer disaster recovery benefits. "Employees don't have to deal with a potentially risky commute to come into the office and sit by a dusty desk phone -- they can work just as effectively from home via collaboration tools that can be accessed anywhere," Banting said.

With many try-before-you-buy cloud collaboration services to choose from, enterprises will be evaluating and starting pilot deployments in 2014. These collaboration technologies present a lower financial risk because IT managers can spin services up and down according to business needs, Banting said.

While interest in cloud-based collaboration technology is growing, enterprises remain wary of the security of these services, Banting said. "There will still be some customers who will want to know their data is secure -- especially those with legal and compliance concerns, he said. "The providers and vendors that can prove their clouds are secure will be the winners."

### CLOUD, SAAS PROVIDERS FULFILLING ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION NEEDS

Project Ansible from Unify, formally Siemens, enjoyed the limelight in 2013 with its combination of real-time and asynchronous communication and collaboration tools. Ansible offers email, instant messaging and voice, as well as

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social media conversations and activity streams within a clientless platform that users can launch within a browser.

Other vendors will adopt this melding of UC tools and communication methods this year, Banting said. While Unify may have gotten a head start with Ansible, cloud and Software as a Service providers -- such as Salesforce.com -- will also offer enterprises the deeper integration they crave from their collaboration tools.

"Having everything together in the browser without having to download tools like Skype or Jabber ... is an exciting proposition for users and will have a very interesting implication for the collaboration market in 2014 -- especially once WebRTC becomes ratified," he said.

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