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INSIDE:

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

CUTTING THROUGH THE HYPE

UC enables people to connect, communicate and collaborate seamlessly to improve business agility and results.

EDITED BY LEIGHA CARDWELL

1.

What UC Is and Isn't

LET'S START WITH the basics—what is unified communications? The term unified communications means different things to different people, depending on what part of the market they represent—e.g., switch vendors have a view of unified communications (UC) different from that of application or conferencing vendors. UCStrategies.com has defined UC as:

Communications integrated to optimize business processes.

By **Blair Pleasant**
President and principal analyst, COMMfusion LLC and CoFounder, UCStrategies.com

UC integrates real-time and non-real-time communications with business processes and requirements based on presence capabilities, presenting a consistent unified user interface and user experience across multiple devices and media types. UC supports the enterprise to manage various types of communications across multiple devices and applications, and across geographies, with personalized rules and policies, while integrating with back-office applications, systems and business processes.

UC enables people to connect, communicate and collaborate seamlessly to improve business agility and results. These results include better user and group productivity, dynamic collaboration and simplified business processes, with the goal of increasing revenues, decreasing costs and improving customer service.

Now let's talk about what UC is not. UC is not a single product but rather a solution made up of a variety of communication tools and components. Some people use the terms "unified messaging" and "unified communications" interchangeably, but—as you'll see—unified messaging is simply one element of a UC solution. Similarly, the term UC is sometimes expanded to encompass the next generation of IP communications. Again, call control or IP communications is one element of a UC solution, but it is not UC in and of itself.

UC is a comprehensive solution that ties several components together with presence capabilities and a consistent user interface to provide a seamless

user experience. UC components include:

- Call control and multimodal communications
- Presence
- Instant messaging
- Unified messaging
- Speech access and personal assistant
- Conferencing—audio, Web and video
- Collaboration tools
- Mobility
- Business process integration (BPI)
- Software to enable business process integration

For the highest ROI results, these UC tools are tied into business processes and applications, making the integrated solution exponentially more useful to businesses and workers.

One key part of UC is called presence. Presence enables you (or software applications) to determine whether someone is available to communicate—either by telephone, instant message, Web sharing or even mobile phone. This makes communications much more efficient and greatly reduces "telephone tag." A typical UC session might start with an instant message between two parties that escalates to a phone call or Web conference through a click of a button on the PC screen. That click connects the parties via audio, and another turns the call into video, if desired. If other people need to be added to the conversation, a look at the presence status of people on your buddy list lets you simply click-to-conference to bring them into the call. In addition, the more advanced presence tools can find a person based on role, skill or knowledge and can also present differing "presence" indications to different audiences (available to team or client, but busy to others)—simple and efficient.

Presence is the cornerstone of a UC solution. ... [It] will be "the dial tone of the future."

UC ELEMENTS AND COMPONENTS

Unified communications is not a single product—it is a solution made up of various components, including (but not limited to) the following:

Call control/IP PBXs: While several vendors consider the switch or IP PBX to be the main element of a UC solution, and some consider UC to be merely an extension of Internet telephony, we view the IP PBX as a UC enabler—no more, no less. The PBX/IP PBX provides the plumbing needed for a UC solution. The IP PBX market is in a state of change, as vendors move toward software approaches and away from hardware-centric products. Service-oriented architecture (SOA) and Web services are playing an important role in UC solutions, and most switch vendors have announced plans to provide call control capabilities via software rather than hardware.

CLICK FOR MORE ON UC APPS

+ Instant messaging (IM) and presence
+ Collaboration

Presence: Presence is the cornerstone of a UC solution. As the fundamental enabler for UC, presence will be "the dial tone of the future." Presence provides real-time notification of users' current availability and ability to communicate. Presence servers gather presence information from various sources and provide unified presence information to end users or applications. In a UC world, when we discuss presence, we are going beyond simple instant message presence (i.e., knowing if a buddy is online and available for an instant messaging session) to presence enabling all communications, including telephony. Most switch vendors today either offer their own presence server and capabilities or integrate with presence capabilities from IBM and/or Microsoft. The biggest challenge today is the lack of federation, or the ability of these presence systems to work together to allow users on one presence system to see the presence status of a partner or customer on another system.

Instant messaging: Instant messaging (IM) is another critical component of a UC solution. In business environments, IM generally requires an enterprise-grade IM system, rather than a public IM service such as AOL or Yahoo. Enterprise IM systems offer security and privacy that public IM services cannot. As with presence servers, however, most enterprise IM systems do not interoperate with others.

Unified messaging: Unified messaging (UM) is the integration of voice, fax and email messages and message notification. UM allows users to access any of these messages, anywhere, anytime, from any terminal. Building on UM's store-and-forward capabilities, most UM products add a variety of advanced call and message management functions, including desktop call screening of inbound calls, find me/follow me, live reply or call return, and cross-media messaging. New presence capabilities mean that the need for UM systems to act as answering machines is being reduced, and the value of UM is moving toward enhanced, real-time connectivity with individuals.

Speech access and personal assistant: Using speech commands, personal assistants (or virtual assistants) allow users to access their inbox, calendar, directory and so on. Personal assistants provide intelligent screening and filtering of messages and let users navigate their schedule, calendar, contacts, outbound dialing and so on, in addition to their UM system.

Conferencing and collaboration: Conferencing and collaboration includes audio, video and Web conferencing, as well as collaborative capabilities such as shared workspaces, whiteboarding, file sharing and document sharing. The fastest-growing technology in the collaborative portfolio is Web conferencing, which brings collaboration to the desktop via a Web browser and an Internet connection, allowing participants to view presentations and other documents while participating in a real-time conference. Voice communications can take place over the Internet

or through a separate audio conferencing bridge. Another collaboration component is shared workspaces, which enable participants to view, share, edit and save documents and files.

Mobility: In the UC world, more and more voice and video communications will be launched from—and connected to—mobile wireless devices. Integrating the mobile users' voice and real-time communications services with core enterprise communications lets them do their jobs regardless of location. Enabling UC features like click-to-conference and IM for mobile users allows them to participate in conferences and access some of the same capabilities they can access in the office, improving their productivity when mobile.

Business process integration: An important element of a UC solution is integration with business processes and workflow applications. One of the key goals of business process integration is to eliminate "human latency"—a business process stalled by the need to wait for human input or communication. In many business processes today, work comes to a standstill until someone can provide information needed to proceed to the next step. UC can reduce this delay by contacting the next person in a sequence of steps, or by initiating an ad hoc meeting or conference call to settle an issue. By communication- or voice-enabling business processes and applications, communications can be initiated within the application, making it easier to notify and interact with others to resolve a problem.

The first applications to be communication-enabled are back-office applications such as CRM, ERP, sales force automation and supply-chain management. Order fulfillment and customer service readily lend themselves to simplification through presence and communications awareness.

An example of basic business process integration is a process that uses Microsoft Office applications. Someone who is reviewing a document or spreadsheet and needs additional information from the author can simply mouse-over the author's name, see his/her presence status, and click-to-call to initiate a real-time conversation. The same can be done within specialized applications. A manufacturing exception system, for example, can detect an issue and automatically notify the appropriate people (i.e., quality assurance specialist, engineer and supervisor) via any communications mode, be it mobile or desk phone, email or instant message. These people are brought into a conference call and can resolve the issue on the spot.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

We are at the early stages of unified communication deployments. Both vendors and enterprise customers are struggling to understand what this new world holds in store. But one thing is certain: The future is bright, and those companies that begin the move to UC implementation will have a competitive edge over those that delay. ■

RESOURCES FROM DELL

- **"Unified Communications Is Inevitable—Are You in the Lead or Dragging Your Feet? Simplify IT—Here's How"**
  This is the first webcast of a series that will assist you in developing your roadmap for implementation of UC and put you on the path to success.

- **"Rethink conferencing solutions—Dell and Microsoft Unified Communications Simplify IT—Here's How"**
  Attend this free webinar and see how you can integrate voice and video conferencing into your existing email infrastructure with Microsoft Unified Communications solutions from Dell.

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2.

How Enterprises Are Using UC Today

EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION IS key to successful operations. In enterprises today, problem resolution and business processes are not accomplished by a single person who already has all the necessary information. Real-time access to specific people and specific information at specific times is what today's business environment demands. UC technologies supplement or replace traditional methods of business communications to maximize efficiency and contact options—anywhere, anytime, and in any communication mode that users need to do their jobs.

By **Art Rosenberg**,
Principal Analyst,
The Unified View

UNDERSTANDING THE "WHY" OF UC

The business drivers behind the move to UC vary by industry and by the problems each business is trying to solve. Most businesses, regardless of industry, have common needs. One of these common needs is the ability of workers to seamlessly communicate and interact with co-workers, partners and suppliers, regardless of location.

"Collaboration" today means working cooperatively as a distributed, "virtual" team. The demand for meaningful collaboration is fueling the necessity for efficient communication and information-sharing capabilities from any location, over computerized networks that allow things to get done faster and better. UC enhances collaborative activities by making workers more efficient and providing the ability to make faster decisions through better access to key players, ultimately enabling companies to bring products and services to market more quickly.

One of the biggest drivers of UC is the need for efficient contacts in customer-facing activities, such as marketing, sales and customer service.

As both consumers and business users shift to new contact channels such as Web services, multimodal messaging communications, video and personalized mobile devices, enterprises are challenged to integrate those channels to maintain consistently high levels of service across multiple platforms.

We see traditional telephone call centers, for example, being forced to transition to more flexible and efficient multimodal contact operations in order to support "customer UC."

Outside the call center, the picture is much the same—sales, services, logistics and managerial personnel are all turning to UC to connect to customers and suppliers. When direct customer connection is not possible, these users look to UC to monitor communications, provide alerts or redirect the customer to another qualified, available team member.

CLICK FOR MORE ON BUSINESS PROCESS INTEGRATION

- Unified communications translates to intelligent communications
- Unified communications ROI

THE TWO REALMS OF UC BENEFITS

Business communications affect people both inside and outside the organization, which means that the benefits of UC will be realized both at the business process level (which involves operational workflow efficiencies between staff within the process) and at the individual personal productivity level.

BUSINESS PROCESS BENEFITS OF UC

UC-driven business process improvements fall into two main categories—operational improvements and business benefits. Operational results include helping companies fix/avoid business problems. Some of the ways in which UC can help enterprises improve business processes include:

- Enabling faster, more flexible access to people and information.
- Proactively delivering information to the right people at the right time.
- Improving individual user task performance by minimizing communication delays with others ("human latency").
- Improving "group" task performance, coordination and efficiency through shared workspaces.
- Maximizing personal communication efficiency.
- Optimizing operational staffing requirements.
- Maximizing the ability to attract and retain operational staff.

To achieve real business results—improving the bottom line—companies need to take the operating results identified above and redesign business processes to speed cycle time, reduce labor content, and improve customer-facing effectiveness or similar factors that can translate into bottom-line benefits. By tracking how process improvements are achieved through UC, companies can achieve a number of benefits, including:

- Improving competitive market position.
- Reducing costs of doing business.
- Minimizing technology investments and support costs.
- Increasing or speeding up revenue generation.
- Increasing profitability.
- Improving asset utilization.

Of course, solid implementation is key to realizing these benefits. Success depends on how well these UC technologies are deployed for specific business processes and how thoroughly they are adopted by different end user audiences.

PRODUCTIVITY BENEFITS: "DEADLINES" VS. "DEAD TIME"

The ROI spotlight for UC has shifted to business advantage and operational performance, rather than simply cost reduction. Productivity bottlenecks affect every step of the workflow process, and inefficiencies in business communications often slow things down. Wasted communication time can lead to missed critical deadlines, financial loss and missed business opportunities.

Consider these three different areas of communication-based productivity metrics in typical enterprise operations when evaluating overall UC benefits.

1. Personal productivity: Individual end-user communication efficiency: Individual users benefit from personal productivity gains through easy, flexible and efficient options for:

- Initiating business communication contacts
- Receiving contacts
- Responding to contacts

Mobile capability is an important part of the personal productivity picture, delivering significant improvements to users otherwise faced with non-productive "dead time," e.g., the inability to work efficiently while traveling.

The productivity benefits for such communication activities will, of course, vary based on the UC capabilities deployed and on individual user needs. Typical time savings claimed for current UC technologies, however, average roughly half an hour per day per user.

2. Efficiencies in group communication and collaboration on business process tasks: Getting the job done as well and as quickly as possible is a particular challenge for teams that need to coordinate efforts on a particular task or business process. The ability of group members to communicate efficiently allows tasks to be completed more quickly, with better coordination and less effort.

The biggest payoff, though, is in bottom-line business results. Real business benefit results from improvements in the ability to meet revenue-driving deadlines or to avoid delay penalties through better coordination with team members.

3. Business applications as contact initiators: UC technology can also be leveraged to automate processes and enable people to quickly respond to sensitive events and status changes. In addition to passive facilitation of user-initiated contacts, business process applications can act as "contact initiators" to notify and deliver time-sensitive information.

The benefit of automated monitoring of business process events and status changes is threefold:

- Problem detection will be faster, more accurate and more consistent—24/7.
- Automation removes the cost of monitoring from expensive labor pools and frees those resources for higher-value activities.

- Immediate proactive notification to the right people helps to avoid or minimize problems and to maximize opportunities for affected users (customers, support personnel, etc.) to interact.

Automated notifications rely on "reachability," however. Without UC, automated notification is as unreliable as manual "person-to-person" telephone contact attempts.

Communications-enabled business process (CEBP) is an automated business process application that integrates with UC applications to establish efficient and timely process-to-person contacts with specific people, solving the "reachability" problem.

CLICK FOR MORE ON BUSINESS PROCESS INTEGRATION

- Hybrid VoIP, unified communications improve patient care
- IP communications tools boost productivity, sales

WHAT IS UC LOOKING TO SOLVE? REDUCING "HUMAN COMMUNICATION LATENCY"

People are key to any business activity and are dependent on having the right information at the right time to make the right decisions and take the right actions. The person in need of information can't always access it directly and may need support from others. As business activities become more global, distributed and mobile, making timely contact with the people who have the information you need is increasingly complex, confusing and inefficient. Let's look at how UC can help.

Customer care: The key to customer satisfaction and retention is "first contact resolution." When problems are complex and need special expertise, contact center agents, field sales, or field support personnel can identify the availability of "experts" from a presence management display, initiate real-time contact while maintaining contact with the customer, and either conference the two for further discussion or get the expert's advice on resolving the issue.

Healthcare: The challenge is to enable a smooth, efficient flow of patients through the care-giving process, both to control the cost of service and to meet patient expectations. UC tools provide secure, instant delivery of care requests and supporting information to the right caregiver, whether that person is at a workstation or mobile within the clinical environment.

Financial services: Both financial advisers and their clients need immediate alerts on changing investment situations to buy and sell in a timely fashion. A communication-enabled business process (CEBP) application that monitors real-time events can quickly notify both advisers and their clients to changing conditions, giving each the opportunity to immediately connect, if needed. Time is money, and the value of such quick communications will be seen in more timely financial decisions.

SUMMARY

To improve the efficacy of business processes and leverage the value of real-time collaboration, businesses must extend beyond the enterprise and tie key people virtually with time-critical business processes. ■

RESOURCES FROM QUINTUM

- **Quintum's Tenor VoIP MultiPath Switches and Gateways are "The Perfect Fit" for VoIP Deployments**
- **Find out how Tenors are easily deployed with Unified Communications**
- **Ask Dr. Quintum a question about Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 deployments.**

ABOUT THE SPONSOR:

Quintum delivers VoIP solutions that bring the reliability and voice clarity of public telephone networks to Internet telephony. Quintum's intelligent VoIP access solutions integrate easily into existing PBX and IP infrastructures, making them the ideal choice for service providers and enterprises alike.

Quintum was awarded the Frost & Sullivan 2007 Global Product Differentiation Innovation Award in recognition of its ability to grow and strengthen its position in the enterprise media gateway market through intensive in-house product development. Quintum is also a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, a Nortel Developer Partner and an Avaya Developer Connection Partner.

Quintum sells its switches worldwide through its direct sales force and a network of resellers and distributors. For more information, call 1-877-SPEAK IP (1-877-773-2547), 1-732-460-9000 outside the US, or visit **http://www.quintum.com**.

3.

Evaluating Goals; Creating a Roadmap

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS IS "communications integrated to optimize business processes." Therefore, a unified communications (UC) plan will focus on business processes and will be linked to a company's strategies. Here are the major steps for identifying your own enterprise UC goals and creating a UC roadmap:

By **Marty Parker** and **Don Van Doren**, Principals, UniComm Consulting, LLC

STEP 1: Examine your enterprise strategic initiatives. The purpose of any UC implementation is to optimize business processes and deliver improved results. Any UC application should align with and support your company's strategic business initiatives, so identify the top three to five initiatives as a guide for UC investments.

STEP 2: Identify major business processes. UC solutions can deliver labor savings in business processes by eliminating unnecessary communications steps and can accelerate business processes by speeding access to resources and information. Identify the top business processes in your company either by (a) examining the organization charts to find the largest (and most labor-intensive) areas or (b) following your product through the value chain from design/development to production to marketing/sales/delivery to service/maintenance.

STEP 3: Map the business processes to the jobs in the enterprise. Communications improvement opportunities are found in the jobs that people (not computers) perform in the business processes. You need to know what jobs are involved with each business process that you want to improve with a UC solution. Once you identify a UC solution for a specific business process, you will get significant ROI only if you provide change management and training to the people in the jobs associated with that business process.

STEP 4: Find communication "hot spots." A

communication hot spot is a communication step in a business process that is prone to delays or errors. The UC benefits come from eliminating, streamlining or otherwise optimizing communication hot spots. Some typical hot spot examples are queues of messages (voicemail or email); time spent waiting for responses or resources or information; collaborative or consultative activities that require agreement among a group of people; getting approvals to proceed with a task or project; or asking others to relay information, especially when mobile.

STEP 5: Optimize the process. Once the hot spots are found, you can look for ways that new UC techniques and capabilities will optimize that process step. Essentially, you can look at each new UC capability and ask the question: "Could I apply this new UC functionality to reduce or eliminate the business problems that are occurring at this hot spot?"

STEP 6: Prioritize possible UC solutions to form a roadmap. Once you have analyzed your selected business processes and found possible UC applications to optimize the processes, decide on your priority applications. Base your prioritization choices on:

- The business value of each possible action.
- How well each action supports your enterprise strategic initiatives.
- The ease of implementation.
- The fit with existing skills and resources.

Setting the priorities will guide you in laying out the best sequence of investments, which will naturally translate into a UC investment roadmap.

STEP 7: Identify the technology needs. Using solution optimizations and priorities in Steps 5 and 6, you can begin to select the technologies that will best accomplish the purposes. If the top-priority problem is linked to an enterprise application like SAP, Salesforce.com or Siebel, for example, then you may focus on integrating communication to those applications. Or, if the main problem is contact between your customers and their sales and services teams, then you will probably focus on presence-based contact management tools and on delivering communications and information to mobile devices (cell phones, BlackBerrys, etc.).

STEP 8: Create an implementation plan. Detailed implementation plans are critical to the success of a UC solution. A detailed UC implementation plan will improve the outcome in terms of speed, safety, cost and enjoyment. The purpose of the UC implementation plan is to:

- Show the business benefits and ROI for the UC solution.
- Describe the "before" and "after" for the business process that will use the UC solution.
- Win support for the project.
- Lay out a detailed implementation plan.
- Educate the internal and external implementation team.

CLICK FOR MORE ON UC STRATEGIES

+ Why you need VoIP to move to unified communications
+ Unified communications implementation and management

Your company may have standard templates for this purpose, or you can look to industry resources, consultants or integrators for support in this area.

ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

Implementation roadmap and technology choices have the highest probability of success if they are organized into small, logical steps. This way, each step can receive the appropriate amount of focus and can be thoroughly completed before moving on to the next step. In addition, keeping the steps reasonable and modular will lower the investment level for each step and will provide return on that investment sooner than is possible with long, extended projects.

It is often better to avoid making an enterprise-wide upgrade to VoIP or Internet telephony before or during a UC project.

For example, it is often better to avoid making an enterprise-wide upgrade to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or Internet telephony before or during a UC project. Often it is possible to implement the UC applications while retaining existing telephone systems and products. When it is necessary to replace or upgrade older systems—e.g., Time Division Multiplexed (TDM) PBX systems—then consider upgrading only the systems needed to support the specific process and the related set of jobs.

You will also have choices as to which approach or "model" to use for each segment of the UC roadmap. The four major "models" for UC applications are:

- Enhancing or installing IP PBX systems and software, such as providing IP phones with mobility features for remote workers or wireless IP phones for campus mobility needs.
- Enhancing or installing UC features for desktop software applications, such as integrating IM and presence into the processes and workflow.
- Enhancing or implementing communications features in enterprise application software, such as providing click-to-call from the CRM system for sales productivity.
- Enhancing or implementing mobile information delivery, such as email access via BlackBerry devices, but extending further to include mobile information portals.

In many cases, a UC solution will require some elements of two of these four methods. Seldom are three or four required to optimize a process step, so consider reviewing the analysis (see Step 5) if that appears to be the case.

PREPARE, PILOT AND DEPLOY

Once the right set of technologies is selected, it's time to prepare, pilot and deploy. Preparation will almost always include an assessment of the network(s) required to support the UC applications. Sometimes, as in the case of a

mobile information portal, there will be little additional network load and minimal reconfiguration needed. However, for a large deployment of Wi-Fi mobile IP phones, the access point coverage and bandwidth will be critical.

For implementation of IP telephony elements of a UC solution, there are many preparation resources, network assessment tools and design aids to properly configure the necessary bandwidth and to ensure proper quality of service (QoS) for the network. Be sure to visit "SearchUnifiedCommunications" to learn more about these topics.

It is far easier to implement a small amount of additional software, storage space and reporting tools when the application is in the design and preparation phase than after it has been launched.

Preparation must address the proper security and access controls for the UC solutions. It is also important to provide for business continuity and disaster recovery, since a new UC application will often become an essential part of the business processes.

Also, be sure to include measurements and metrics in planning for UC apps. It is far easier to implement a small amount of additional software, storage space and reporting tools when the application is in the design and preparation phase than after it has been launched. The measurements and metrics will be crucial for understanding the adoption rate of the new UC application(s), as well as for proving that the new UC application has, in fact, optimized the business process and delivered the expected benefits.

Once preparation is complete, a pilot test is recommended that includes a set of the actual users of the new UC solution. It is important to notice that the IT and communications teams are not the actual users of the tools and do not participate on a daily basis in the business processes that are being changed. An IT pilot is fine to test the technology and assess the administration and operation of the new system, but it is not sufficient for assessing the effectiveness of the technology for optimizing the business process. Plan on having a set of users (a team, department or site) use the new UC applications sufficiently to ensure that the solutions will give the ROI that is expected. Be prepared for some tweaks and adjustments before a full rollout.

And, throughout the entire process, be sure to use your best change-management programs. Users are always reluctant to change. But if the project has executive sponsorship, if there are sufficient support tools and training, and if there is positive feedback to reinforce the successes, you will dramatically increase the probability of a major UC success.

UC is a huge opportunity for business improvement, and the growing list of success stories is proof that it is worth the effort! ■

RESOURCES FROM CISCO

- **Unified Communications Offers Value to Small and Medium Businesses: Global Study Indicates Several Benefits for SMB Financial Services Firms (Part 1 of 3)**
  This Cisco commissioned Forrester Research study combines survey data from six countries to quantify how unified communications (U.C.) affect the small and medium-size business sector. This survey (part 1 of 3) identified several areas that enable small Financial Service firms to achieve their business objectives. Major findings from the survey indicate that UC offers several benefits.

- **Unified Communications Offers Value to Small and Medium Businesses: Global Study Indicates Several Benefits for SMB Manufacturing Services Firms (Part 2 of 3)**
  This Forrester Research study (part 2 of 3) reveals that UC affects several areas for manufacturing - from product development to production - and it enables workers to improve results of core business processes.

- **Unified Communications Offers Value to Small and Medium Businesses: Global Study Indicates Several Benefits for SMB Professional Services Firms (Part 3 of 3)**
  This Forrester Research study (part 3 of 3) confirms that UC allows PS firms to facilitate decision-making, collaborate more effectively with peers, respond faster to customers, and increase productivity for mobile workers.

- **Unified Communications Business Advisor**
  Get a customized assessment of how unified communications can help your business.

- **Vancouver Film Studio Case Study Video**
  Vancouver Film Studios relies on Cisco Unified Communications to meet the ever changing demands of the entertainment industry.

ABOUT THE SPONSOR:

Cisco provides end-to-end networking solutions that customers use to build a unified information infrastructure of their own, or to connect to someone else's network. An end-to-end networking solution is one that provides a common architecture that delivers consistent network services to all users. The broader the range of network services, the more capabilities a network can provide to users connected to it. Cisco offers the industry's broadest range of hardware products used to form information networks or give people access to those networks; Cisco IOS software, which provides network services and enables networked applications; expertise in network design and implementation; and technical support and professional services to maintain and optimize network operations. Cisco is unique in its ability to provide all these elements, either by itself or together with partners. **http://www.cisco.com**

4.

UC In the Real World

NEW CONCEPTS AND solutions, including unified communications (UC), always face the "show me" challenge. If this stuff is so good, then who is using it and what benefits are they gaining? At first, this was a problem for UC, but now there is a flood of reports of impressive successes. Let's take a look.

Many enterprises are reporting successes in linking their customers to the enterprise sales and services teams.

By **Marty Parker** and **Don Van Doren**, Principals, UniComm Consulting, LLC

This is a hot area, since it is customer facing.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

One of the earliest success stories in this area is Shimano, the global bicycle parts maker. Shimano's U.S. operation found that it could dramatically improve the ability of its customers to reach the sales teams by using the "find-me" mobility features of Siemens OpenScape. In addition, the sales teams could use presence and click-to-call to find immediate help from the sales support and logistics teams. The result was a significant year-over-year revenue growth, plus increased customer satisfaction from the Shimano distributors.

Another example of improved customer access comes from France. The French National Railway (SNCF) has opened up a Web portal for its many customers to access from their GSM mobile phones. More than 28% of its customers (3 million passengers per month) are now using the "Infogare" service to access train schedules, resulting in a 3% increase in total passenger travel. If the passenger still needs access to live customer service, the numbers are visible and ready to dial right on the user's mobile device.

UC PROVIDES MOBILE WORKERS INNOVATIVE ACCESS TO DATA

Delivering information and communication to mobile personnel is another important UC application. Nokia, RIM and Sony Ericsson are all active partici-

pants in this area. For example, China Mobile, the world's largest mobile communications operator, provides Shenzhen Mobile's 6,000 employees with secure access to corporate information from any mobile device using Sony Ericsson phones powered by BEA WebLogic Mobility Server. The resulting improvement in information flow to the mobile workers and the ROI comes primarily from improved use of China Mobile assets such as vehicles and test equipment.

The result [of click-to-talk] for Global Crossing is a 75% lower cost per transaction with an 80% increase in customer responsiveness.

FFF Enterprises—the largest U.S. distributor of plasma products, vaccines and biopharmaceuticals—found that it could dramatically improve customer service while also increasing revenue growth by putting product and inventory information on a RIM BlackBerry device portal. This eliminated most calls or return trips to the office to clear up customer questions. Those calls that must still go back to the office are assisted by the information and software linked to the BlackBerry device.

But mobile information isn't always visual. It can also be provided audibly through speech recognition and text-to-speech to any cell phone. For example, California's Marin County uses the Avaya Speech Access solution to deliver calls, voicemail, email and calendar information seamlessly to its officials, attorneys and inspectors who are constantly on the go in the performance of their jobs. The result is improved service to the constituents and decreased time spent traveling and placing call-backs.

BUSINESS PROCESS ACCELERATION

Rapidly solving problems is another hot application of UC. Global Crossing uses Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007, with links to its provisioning system, to support the technical staff members who perform the network provisioning for Global Crossing's customers.

With the UC solution, staff members no longer call around to get help with process exceptions. Instead, the software looks up the assigned technician to solve the problem. If the assigned tech is available as shown by presence, an IM session is automatically opened to that technician. In most cases the problem is solved via IM, entirely eliminating the time required for a phone call.

If the assigned tech is not available, the software finds another qualified and available technician for the IM session link-up. When a voice conversation is needed, the two technicians simply use OCS to click-to-talk between their two PCs.

The time spent calling for help has dropped dramatically, and voice messages (a queue of work with implicit

delays) have been almost entirely eliminated. The result for Global Crossing is a 75% lower cost per transaction with an 80% increase in customer responsiveness.

Whirlpool Corporation is another example of problem resolution using UC. In the past, when a major new order arrived or some other issue indicated the need to adjust the supply chain quickly, staff members had to determine who needed to get involved in the solution and then had to make calls and send email messages and pages to get the right team together. Whirlpool made major improvements using Avaya's Communications-Enabled Business Processor.

When the supply chain software identifies a problem, a new UC software module looks in the skills directory and the presence server to find the right staff members who are immediately available. The software then immediately and automatically sets up an audio and Web conference for the team and calls each team member to link them into the conference. Whirlpool reports that problems are now addressed in minutes rather than hours, with significant benefits in production throughput and customer service.

STREAMLINING COMMUNICATIONS

These problem-resolution UC applications can be easily implemented in basic form, simply by integrating voice and desktop communications modes. Singapore-based International SOS, a leading provider of medical assistance, international healthcare, security services and outsourced company care, has linked its Microsoft and Nortel solutions (as offered in the Innovative Communications Alliance or ICA). The company is blending together IP telephony voice with other communications services like instant messaging, multimedia collaboration, conferencing and presence to increase user productivity and simplify processes. Using UC, workers can scan resources with online presence to see who is currently available, making it quick and easy to tap into specialists to assist their customers and solve problems more quickly.

ACCELERATED COLLABORATION

Collaboration acceleration is a major UC theme, based on the rising use of audio, video and Web conferencing. Most of the cases highlight the ability of teams to meet more quickly, especially without travel time and expense.

Advocate Health Care, a major regional provider in the Chicago area, reports that by deploying Alcatel MyTeamwork for videoconferencing right from the desktop and including links to conference rooms, it cut out hours of travel per day between locations for a combined savings of $750,000 per year in direct travel expense and lost time.

A major German pharmaceutical company found that the adoption of Microsoft's Office Communications Server 2007 for secure conferencing helped protect its intellectual property, extending the economic life of its drugs

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and also helping to bring new drugs to market more quickly. The UC benefits for this pharmaceutical company are measured "in the billions."

Colgate Palmolive, a global leader in oral care, personal care and pet nutrition products, is another example of business process acceleration through collaboration tools. Colgate Palmolive product managers are using IBM Lotus Sametime, IBM Lotus Quickr and the beta release of IBM Lotus Connections to accelerate time to market for their new products. Product managers are even using the Quickr collaborative workspace to conduct customer focus groups, providing more feedback from more customers in less time without travel expense.

The ability of staff members to click-to-call ... can save minutes and even hours of time for the user—time that can be converted into improved business speed, cost, quality or customer service.

Job-specific communications-enabled portals are another area of UC innovation. One example shows up in hospitals and clinics that are using the XML displays on Cisco wireless IP telephones to provide rapid two-way communication of information and requests for nurses, doctors and support staff. Replacing the former one-way paging, the result is improvements in both patient care and patient "throughput," i.e., the ability to complete the care on time and on budget.

SIZING UP CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH UC

Another great example is the use of Cisco's IP phones with an RFID scanner attachment in the retail store environment. This combination allows customers to request alternate sizes or colors of clothing to be delivered right to the changing room. A high-end producer of designer jeans in Japan placed Cisco IP phones directly in the changing rooms.

When a shopper finds that a pair of jeans does not quite fit, or wants to try another color, he simply scans the pair he currently has and then selects his alternate choices on the phone's display screen. A clerk quickly finds the new choice and delivers it directly to the changing room. The shoppers can evaluate their options more quickly. Consequently, more customers are finding more items to purchase during the visit. The leaps in customer satisfaction and purchase rates have dramatically increased revenues per store.

Almost all of these are examples of specific applications of UC technologies to business process optimization. In most cases, the customers called on their IT staff or on VARs and systems integrators to create links between the UC tools and the enterprise's back-office applications to make the fastest and most effective links to the relevant customers and employees. It's important to note that the cost of these

investments was included in and justified by the very positive ROI results.

However, some customers are certainly getting benefits from the basic UC packages offered by all the IP PBX suppliers, by all the desktop office software providers, and by many of the mobility device makers or carriers. The simple use of presence to find a skilled person without making a number of phone calls or sending a number of emails can make an enormously positive difference in productivity. The ability of staff members to click-to-call from a visual directory on the phone or PC or to call automatically from a contact list, customer directory or supplier list can save minutes and even hours of time for the user—time that can be converted into improved business speed, cost, quality or customer service.

It is certainly fine to start with these basic tools. But don't stop there. Our ROI models confirm the customer results that the UC applications which actually change the business processes will deliver returns 10 times or even 100 times greater than those available by simply providing better tools to the users.

More great UC customer success stories are continually appearing. If your company is wondering where to invest in UC, we recommend you ask for references and case studies on what others have done and then apply or innovate from those cases to reap the UC benefits in your enterprise. And please visit UCStrategies.com for many more customer case studies and some excellent customer podcasts, as well as detailed descriptions and RFP templates for each of the application areas mentioned above.

We wish you every success as you bring these UC opportunities into focus in your enterprise. ■

RESOURCES FROM DIALCOM

- **Spontania Architecture**
  The **Spontania** platform is an adaptable, scalable, and easy to administer on-premise, software-only solution that enables many-to-many interactive voice, video, and data collaboration sessions on the most common devices—PCs, PDAs, mobile phones, fixed phones, H.323 and SIP devices.

- **Spontania Brochure**

- **Spontania Archtecture Datasheet**

ABOUT THE SPONSOR:

An innovator in unified collaboration, Dialcom delivers premise based, real-time video communication, collaboration and multimedia sharing capabilities over IP between any device, any network, and any user—seamlessly and securely. The most complete, flexible, and integrated system available, the Spontania collaboration software suite empowers users to spontaneously switch among collaboration methods, to suit the immediate circumstance within the session including IM, VoIP and/or teleconference, multi-party IP videoconference, interactive file sharing, and white-boarding. Dialcom's collaboration application automatically controls bandwidth and seamlessly integrates into the existing IT infrastructure—with a light footprint. More than 100 customers spanning a number of industries around the globe use the Spontania unified collaboration suite. Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, Dialcom maintains offices in Madrid, Frankfurt, and Singapore and supported by a global network of partners in other regions. More information can be found at **www.dialcom.com**