



Bringing it all together

Unified Communications and Collaboration

Reaping the benefits of
connecting your team



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1.0 EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Effectively rising to the challenge of today's global economy and the increasingly collaborative horizontal relationships that characterise interactions among employees, customers, and business partners demands – more than ever – a unified approach to communications and collaboration.

Increasingly, an organisation's ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with a broad range of interested parties is becoming a key business differentiator. Used effectively, unified communications and collaboration strategies, applications and infrastructure enables organisations to add value to a range of core business processes, realise significant operational benefits, and achieve quantifiable bottom-line savings.

As Thomas L Friedman, author of *The World is Flat*, puts it, “The more we connect everyone through common communication standards and then, on top of those protocols, connect more and more people through standardised business processes the easier it is to chop up work and send pieces of it to be done anywhere in the world. This increases productivity and enables a whole digital ecosystem to collaborate better, cheaper and faster – and the more energy employees have to concentrate on the high-touch, high-value-add, customised innovation or service that differentiates one company from another.”¹

However, the explosion in the multiplicity of communications channels often results in added complexity that undermines the potential benefits of an always-on, increasingly connected, global business environment. Productivity can suffer due to the difficulties associated with contacting people via multiple communications channels and the inability of existing infrastructure to effectively encourage and facilitate collaborative working. The phenomenon of sending multiple message versions in the hope of ensuring contact overburdens IT infrastructure and can compromise effective data storage compliance obligations. While at the same time, an individual's productivity, work/life balance and job satisfaction can be diminished due to the stress of handling, managing and responding to an increasingly onerous communications environment.

As global business activities shift from centralised to decentralised working environments, gravitate from single to multi-channel interactions, and implement and grow business ecosystems and value networks that operate outside of the traditional organisational confines, a unified approach to communications and collaboration is becoming essential for success.

Developments that can simplify or eradicate the unwanted complexity of modern communications are increasingly regarded as a source of competitive advantage. By simplifying and rationalising communications and collaboration resources, organisations can directly translate the seamless interaction of multiple communication channels into increased business agility, improved collaborative working capabilities, and a more rapid respond to changing market conditions.

With a unified approach to communications and collaboration organisations become better equipped to respond to the challenges and demands of today's global economy and increasing customer expectations. This white paper examines the current state of enterprise communications and explores the benefits that can be achieved through a unified communications and collaboration approach. The approach discussed below has a single aim: to simplify the user experience, encourage collaboration and – for the enterprise – provide a more cost-effective, controllable and value-added communications environment.

2.0 WHY WE NEED UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 The rise in complexity

As a result of the emergence of a range of sophisticated communications channels, the capacity for organisations to communicate, exchange and share information is richer and more widespread than ever. It has accelerated the pace of change in the social, political and business landscapes and represents a fundamental shift in how organisations do business and the role of the individual employee.

Yet communications technologies have proliferated to such an extent that the undoubted benefits are beginning to be undermined by the demands imposed by the ubiquitous, always-on business environment. Whereas in the past business and personal communications were largely carried out using fixed lines, traditional mail and fax machines, we are now in a situation where email, mobile phones, instant messaging and short message service (SMS) are changing the nature of how, when and why we communicate.

2.2 Managing the need to respond instantly

The increasing use of “instant” communication channels has led to a fundamental shift in expectations. We now routinely expect instant access and responses to every communication we are involved in. Keeping up with such instant expectations is becoming evermore challenging. The very tools that were meant to complement and enhance our working capacity are in danger of becoming a significant barrier to our ability to effectively communicate and collaborate with each other.

Employees and organisations are losing the ability to effectively manage the myriad forms of communication they are expected to respond to, resulting in increased individual and organisational inefficiency. This negatively impacts upon effective work/life balance for the individual and creates a burgeoning compliance demand for managing cross-organisational information.

2.3 Increasing communication costs

In an effort to counteract the complexity of effectively responding to multiple communications channels, employees tend to rely on mobile technology to simplify their working day, leading to high call costs and an undermining of the potential cost benefits that can be accrued from integrated network architecture. Consequently, many organisations are paying a hefty premium for the convenience of mobility even when users are located in the office.

2.4 Reduced productivity

The pressure to respond immediately to the latest text, email or phone call and the difficulties associated with contacting hard-to-reach individuals is reducing productivity and having a negative impact on employee satisfaction and work/life balance. Users are increasingly left with little choice but to respond immediately to the latest communication – or run the risk of potentially missing a vital contact or piece of information. With no effective form of prioritising incoming communications, precious time and resources are diverted and users are distracted from their core activities.

Productivity is further compromised by the difficulties associated with the increased amount of time spent simply trying to locate the person to be contacted. Contacts may have multiple numbers to try, may be based in a disparate geographic locations, or use a variety of communications devices. As a result of the hit-and-miss nature of such contact, productivity inevitably suffers.

2.5 Overburdened users and infrastructure

The technological infrastructure currently in place for many organisations, which is often a result of legacy technology infrastructure or stovepipe development strategies is, in itself, increasingly acting as a barrier to effective communications. Users are forced to familiarise themselves with a range of devices and access technologies in an effort to manage communications effectively. While training can go some way towards addressing this problem, it fails to address the underlying concern that added complexity is undermining the potential returns from effectively deploying communications technology.

To compound many of the problems illustrated above, users are becoming increasingly stressed due to the demands of managing multiple forms of communication. What, on paper, looks like a straightforward task to contact a colleague, customer or business partner soon becomes an onerous and complex undertaking. Should the user email, telephone or send an instant message to be assured of tracking down the contact? And by the same token, the always-on nature of today's communications means users have difficulty controlling when and how they are contacted. As a result, it becomes difficult for users to strike the right work/life balance and ensure that they are contacted at the right time by the right people.

¹ Friedman, Thomas L. *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century*. Penguin Books Ltd [6 April 2006]

2.6 Compliance concerns

As multiple versions of communications are used to try and ensure effective contact the communications and technological infrastructure becomes increasingly overburdened. Organisations are faced with the task of storing, retrieving and distributing multiple versions of documents if they are to effectively comply with a range of national and international legislation. Such added complexity makes compliance significantly more difficult to achieve and leads to higher network, system and storage costs.

2.7 Undermining business agility

This added communications complexity is increasingly acting as a barrier to effectively responding to the challenge of today's increasingly horizontal business relationships. It negatively impacts an organisation's ability to rapidly and effectively respond to changing market conditions and customer demands, and undermines the capacity to reduce time to market. It hampers the ability to effectively collaborate across and outside an organisation in pursuit of innovative solutions to business challenges, and obstructs the streamlining of business processes necessary to reduce organisational complexity.

2.8 A new standard for effective business communications

Unified communications and collaboration (UCC) will enable organisations to significantly benefit from the sophistication and functionality of today's communication technology. It will simplify the experience and deliver an automated, seamless and highly controlled communications environment that encourages collaborative working and business agility. It enables users to enjoy the rich functionality of unified communications without the added complexity that has become counter-productive in recent years.

UCC offers users a single multimedia application suite that seamlessly converges with enterprise applications in support of right-time business processes. It enables voice and data to be managed across a centrally converged network, as well as enabling the convergence of wide-area, local-area, and access networks under a single solution. It provides the capacity to manage both fixed and mobile communications over a single converged network, enables secure access regardless of the device used, and incorporates "presence technology" which ensures that a user's availability is automatically updated to facilitate easier contact.

No wonder, then, that Forrester Research has predicted that integrated communications will become recognised as the new standard for effective business communication within the next five to six years. According to Forrester, up to 33% of the Global 2,000 firms are likely to complete at least a partial integrated communications rollout within this time frame.²

² 'By 2010 up to 33% of Global 2,000 enterprises will complete departmental rollouts of Integrated Communications,' Unified Synchronized Communications Arrives, Forrester Research [2004]

3.0 THE BENEFITS OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS AND COLLABORATION

"None of us are as smart as all of us."

Japanese proverb

UCC solutions are increasingly being seen as the mature way of achieving a range of business benefits by leveraging the rich functionality of converged network architecture. Although converged network architecture in itself offers no solutions to the added complexity of communicating in today's business environment, the capacity it provides to seamlessly integrate diverse applications and streamline the communication process delivers real benefits. It is where voice meets data and fixed line meets wireless that solutions are emerging with the capacity to re-empower users to communicate and collaborate with ease.

UCC solutions provide the rich functionality that enables information from any location or device, across networks to identify the user, wherever he or she is, regardless of the device used. It provides intelligently co-ordinated communications devices and networks that are developed around the needs of the user.

3.1 Simpler collaboration, improved productivity

By placing the user at the centre of a more controlled and manageable communications interface, UCC solutions represent a powerful mix that empowers individuals to work and collaborate much more effectively. By removing the complexity of operating collaborative applications, UCC enhances innovation and improves organisational responsiveness and agility. Collaborating is no longer about managing different systems and processes; it becomes a simple matter of "click to collaborate," using a unified solution that can incorporate the most convenient applications, such as instant messaging, to best suit the job in hand.

UCC enhances and streamlines the communications process and delivers significant productivity benefits. It enables users to save valuable time by eliminating the "spray and pray" nature of many of today's communications activities. The use of intelligent embedded presence technology provides users with a clear indication of the location, availability and preferred device recipients wish to use. It helps save valuable time because users no longer waste time by trying to contact someone who isn't there or is unavailable at that time due to ongoing work commitments. It has been reported that organisations using unified communications clients saved an average of 32 minutes per employee, per day, because presence technology enabled staff to reach one another on the first try.³

³ Unified Communications Application: Uses and Benefits, White Paper, Sage Research [Jan. 2006]

3.2 Speed to market

UCC enhances and encourages the collaborative processes that are essential if today's organisations are to be competitive in an increasingly collaborative, horizontal business environment. As teamworking becomes simpler to carry out projects can move forward much more quickly. This provides organisations with the capacity to more rapidly respond to changing market conditions, speeds up the time to market process, and helps add value to core business processes through enabling the right people to be quickly bought together to satisfy a particular project or business need, regardless of where they are located.

By providing seamless links to critical information held in front- and back-office systems, UCC enables users to access vital information that can be easily and quickly shared amongst a team: which in turn ensures that productivity is enhanced and positive outcomes are more easily achieved. At the individual level, it helps to re-empower employees to more effectively manage communications channels. It provides users with the capacity to screen and prioritise communications, to avoid unnecessary distractions and ensures they can focus on the core task in hand.

3.3 Real-time response

The capacity to converge both voice and data communications into a single collaborative application enables users to achieve a clear and fully informed view of critical business information. As a consequence users are equipped with up-to-the-minute information that enhances their capacity to rapidly respond to the specific business needs and seamlessly communicate their response to all interested parties.

By leveraging the powerful collaborative capacity of audio and video conferencing tools UCC solutions encourage cost-effective dissemination of critical business information. By responding to the needs of the individual user UCC ensures that voice calls or instant messaging communications can be seamlessly transferred into a video collaboration with ease, if the situation demands.

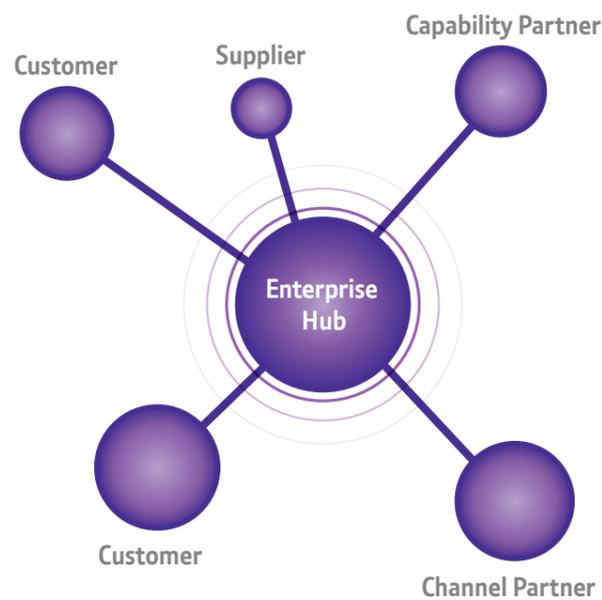
3.4 Enhancing value

While it is undeniable that UCC solutions can lead to significant cost savings, their ability to add value to a range of business processes and facilitate more effective collaborative working is just as important.

By providing an integrated portfolio of capabilities and services, UCC enables organisations to increase business agility and leverage increasingly dynamic and flexible working practices. It enables dispersed project teams and remote workers to embrace and develop value-added horizontal relationships with customers, suppliers and business partners and realise more effective outcomes from mergers and acquisitions.

By ensuring that the right person can be easily reached at the right time, it improves business agility, minimises wasted time and alleviates the increasing IT infrastructure burden created by multiple message versions.

Diagram – Value Network



3.5 Cost savings – the bottom line

Yet the more transparent cost savings should not be overlooked. As mentioned above, many users today tend to rely on their mobile phones for convenience, even when located in the office. Through enabling the integration of soft phones, organisations have reported average cost savings of \$1,727 per month in cell phone and long-distance call charges.⁴

The increased business agility that UCC delivers has helped save an average of 32 minutes per employee, per day through presence technology – removing the uncertainty of tracing and communicating with important contacts. Organisations have also reported that unified messaging applications helped employees save on average 43 minutes per day by enabling more effective message management, while mobile workers reported a time saving of 53 minutes per day as a result of increased communications efficiency.⁵

Significant cost benefits are also being realised as a result of the increased flexibility that Web, audio and video conferencing is able to deliver. By enabling seamless collaboration between geographically diverse team members, organisations have reported a 30 per cent reduction in the overall cost of conferencing expenses and realised an average saving of \$1,700 per month in travel costs. Such facilities not only enhance the cost benefits of enabling collaborative working, but also help to bolster the environmental credentials and corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations of organisations by eliminating unnecessary travel.

3.6 BT's experience – driving competitiveness

In recent years BT has embraced UCC solutions in the drive to increase competitiveness and add value to its core offerings. A 2006 Economist Intelligence Unit report recognised that “improving the productivity of knowledge workers is seen as the major boardroom challenge of the next fifteen years.”⁶ To this end BT has been at the forefront of empowering employees to improve their effectiveness through offering the flexibility, collaborative opportunities and increased business agility provided by UCC solutions.

Sir Christopher Bland, BT Chairman, recently said, “for BT’s 110,000 employees flexible working is ‘business as usual.’ It increases productivity, cuts costs, motivates our people and releases more potential.”⁷ As a result of embracing unified communications and collaboration, more than 70 per cent of BT employees now work flexibly and more than 10 per cent are home-based. This has helped to increase job satisfaction, enable employees to strike a more effective work/life balance, and enabled the retention of key personnel.

Yet there are also significant bottom-line benefits that BT has enjoyed. The move towards flexible and home-based working has enabled BT to realise property savings in excess of \$418 million in the last ten years. It has also significantly reduced the cost of facilitating collaborative working by using conferencing facilities to minimise the time spent traveling: a saving of approximately 1,800 person years in travel time as well as delivering the added benefit of reducing BT’s impact on the environment.

3.7 Effective management of remote workers

BT has also enabled a range of business and governmental organisations to realise similar benefits through implementing UCC solutions. The City of Edinburgh Council, as part of its wide-ranging, 15-year Smart City project, faced a common problem – they identified that mobile working can reap significant benefits in terms of improved efficiency, but realised there were risks if a technology was introduced without a full understanding of its practical application. BT overcame this by running a pilot scheme aimed at identifying the pros and cons of mobile working in a “live” setting.

The Council identified a number of departments that relied heavily on paper-based forms for information collection when out of the office.

- Environmental and consumer services – environmental wardens
- Social work – rapid response team
- Housing – stair cleaning inspectors
- Building design services – kitchens and bathrooms replacement officers.

The pilot approach was based on BT’s mobility consulting framework and aimed to enable the council to accurately assess the real needs and business justification for each identified area. Working closely with the council and end users, BT helped develop individual solutions that addressed the day-to-day needs of the identified areas.

Environmental wardens

The environmental wardens were given a personal digital assistant (PDA), delivering secure access to corporate email (via GPRS) that enabled them to stay in contact with team managers effectively whilst out in the field. They were also given a mobile electronic forms application, known as mForms, which enabled them to capture data more accurately for transference to back-office systems.

Rapid response team

Because they had different input requirements, social workers in this department were provided with tablet PCs. The system enabled them to gather information electronically and communicate wirelessly – via email and fax – with the office and other departments.

Stair cleaning inspectors

Using PDAs, stair cleaning inspectors were able to collect data using a modified version of the mForms application. It enabled them to send and receive email remotely (wherever there was mobile phone coverage) and communicate more effectively with the job planners back at the office.

Kitchen and bathrooms replacement officers

The varied nature of their work meant this group had a number of different processes to be mobilised. One set of officers used PDAs to gather information via the mForms application, whilst the other employed tablet PCs to provide graphically rich information to the public. It enabled both groups to remotely send and receive email and more effectively communicate with the office.

4 Unified Communications Application: Uses and Benefits, White Paper, Sage Research [Jan. 2006]

5 Unified Communications Application: Uses and Benefits, White Paper, Sage Research [Jan. 2006]

6 Foresight 2020, Economic, Industry and Corporate Trends, Economist Intelligence Unit [2006]

7 Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman of BT, speech to the WorkWise UK summit, sponsored by the IT Forum Foundation. [2006]

Improved mobility has eliminated the need for unnecessary and time-consuming journeys back to the office. In addition, the increased accuracy and timeliness of data capture has helped identify many potential business process improvements. This in turn has led to improved job satisfaction, increased professionalism and enhanced flexible working practices.

Amongst the benefits realised:

- Environmental wardens saved four hours a week and achieved substantial savings in paper costs alone
- Rapid response team made a ten per cent time saving per week and improved data quality through use of the tablet PCs and remote fax
- The devices provided an innovative and interactive way of meeting with members of the public
- Users quickly familiarised themselves with mobile working practices and the associated technologies.

3.8 Empowering individuals

UCC solutions empower individuals by freeing them from the complexity of technology and enabling them to concentrate on why they are communicating. Whether in the office, on the move or working remotely, such communications technology facilitates and enhances collaborative working. By enabling individuals to work in the location best suited to effectively carrying out their duties, without sacrificing their capacity to effectively collaborate and share the same information as their office-based colleagues, organisations are able to maximise the effectiveness of their skills base and enhance employee's satisfaction and work/life balance.

Another area where UCC solutions are realising significant benefits is in health service provision. Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust has recently benefited from the increased flexibility and functionality of a BT installed, fully-managed Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) that has helped bring care closer to the patient.

The WLAN enables hospital employees to communicate more easily and cost efficiently. Employees can now communicate and collaborate with colleagues using a voice activated "badge" to contact fellow professionals. The solution has greatly improved interdepartmental communications and has led to a significant reduction in the time taken to transfer patients from Accident and Emergency to admitting departments. By facilitating easier communications it has also enabled users to quickly and efficiently collaborate with colleagues when a second opinion is needed, to multi-task more effectively, and helped save valuable time for health professionals, administrative staff and patients.

3.9 Communicating on a global scale

UCC solutions can also prove to be hugely effective when it comes to maximising the value of marketing activities. The Volvo Ocean Race, as well as being the pinnacle of ocean racing and a premier sporting contest, is also a hugely effective marketing and business platform that delivers unparalleled return on investment. With global television coverage expected to reach an audience of one-and-a-half billion viewers, ABN AMRO decided that the Volvo Ocean Race was the perfect vehicle to help extend its brand globally.

TEAM ABN AMRO recognised that Information Technology would play a pivotal role and BT was selected to provide all-important networked IT services, not only to the company's headquarters in the Netherlands, but also at training locations and ports around the world. The BT solution matched ABN AMRO's requirement for a secure and resilient collaborative environment with 'round-the-clock support on a global basis.

At its core is the hosting and management of a centralised IT environment for TEAM ABN AMRO. It provided connectivity for land-based support staff, enabling secure email, collaboration and Internet services, as well as an events booking system for hospitality services.

As the examples above illustrate, the ability of UCC solutions to enable seamless collaborative working can bring a range of benefits that improve business agility and responsiveness. UCC enables a diverse range of people to come together in response to changing business needs quickly, cost-effectively and with the minimum of fuss. Organisations, individuals and business communities can realise tangible benefits from harnessing the rich functionality and message management capabilities of such solutions.

UCC solutions enable organisations to extend enterprise solutions across a range of areas. Through facilitating organisational change and adding value to core offerings, they enable positive benefits to be realised from improved inter-organisational communication and collaboration. They help to transform traditional value chains into dynamic, multi-directional trading networks that are increasingly an essential element of today's horizontal business practices and help empower individuals to improve performance, work more effectively in teams and strike the right work/life balance.

4.0 EARLY ADOPTION: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

As illustrated above, there is a strong business case for adopting a UCC approach as a method of eradicating much of the complexity and many of the problems associated with managing today's communications environment. Yet there are a number of important factors for organisations to take into account if they are to implement a successful solution.

Organisations need to be assured that the solution they implement has the capacity to deliver a range of benefits including:

- A faster and more flexible response to customer demands
- Improvements in innovation and enhancements to distinctive capabilities
- The facility to streamline processes and reduce organisational complexity
- The ability to extend the enterprise, and implement and embrace horizontal relationships with business partners, suppliers and customers that add value to an organisation's core offering.

The chosen solution needs to enhance the effectiveness of multiple communication channels and ensure that the flow of information achieves a clear understanding of what the sender and recipient are working towards. It needs to enhance collaboration by facilitating people working together towards a common purpose or goal using shared resources and minimising the complexity of sharing information and applications.

4.1 Competing approaches

Yet there are a number of competing approaches currently available in the market place.

1. Enterprise application vendors who seek to solve everything with user controlled software on every device and a "dumb" network
2. Telecommunication providers who desire a joined up network where the users take whatever information feed they choose from any point in the network and pay for the value gained
3. Network equipment vendors who plan to solve the problem within the network fabric and provide every element of an end-to-end service.

The fact that there are competing approaches inevitably causes concern for organisations seeking to reduce corporate risk. They need to be assured that they are obtaining a strong, integrated solution, rather than a set of existing products that have been extended with an inadequate feature set. Primarily, they must have confidence that the approach they adopt will reflect the bigger picture for integrated communications as it emerges in the future.

4.2 Key criteria

BT believes there are vitally important criteria that the customer should demand when seeking to implement a UCC solution.

Business-grade quality

Although a variety of products are currently available that make use of emerging technologies, it is important that the “business fit” is suitable for the organisation. Solutions that are orientated towards the consumer and small business are often unsuitable for large organizations, and there is a risk that business-grade quality of service will be sacrificed by choosing an “economical” solution. Let us be clear here: what is at stake is an organisation’s vital communications and they need to be certain that the solution they choose offers the business-grade quality and support they require, now and in the future.

Security

Security is of primary concern when managing organisational communications. Organisations need to be assured that employing innovative collaborative technologies such as instant messaging will not compromise security. They need to be able to confidently deploy a range of communications and collaborative applications that enhance horizontal relationships with a range of interested parties, without undermining the essential security of their networks and intellectual property.

Compliance

Organisations are today faced with a plethora of regulations relating to data security, and are obliged to provide an accurate and up-to-date audit trail of business activities. It is therefore vital that any UCC solution facilitates the accurate recording, storage and dissemination of critical business information. For example, if a trader is given an order to buy 500 shares through an IM discussion, there has to be a sufficient audit trail to prove that the buyer did indeed mean 500 and not 50 or 5,000, and that information has to be stored in a compliant manner for the correct length of time.

Interoperability

As a consequence of stovepipe development and legacy systems, many organisations have complex network architecture, which means they don’t have a complete picture of all the infrastructure elements that the organisation possesses. This obviously raises concerns about ensuring compatibility with UCC solutions. In an effort to ensure that they benefit from the rich functionality required to effectively leverage today’s horizontal business relationships, organisations must select a solution that guarantees internal and external interoperability. In doing so they will be equipped with a solution that can maximise the value of a range of business relationships and ensure that collaborative applications do not become a “colleague-only” tool.

Optimising the value of existing investments

When choosing to implement a UCC solution it is important to ensure that the solution makes best use of existing network infrastructure or converged solutions such as IP Telephony. By ensuring a suitable fit with existing infrastructure, organisations can continue to benefit from the improvements brought about by recent change and migration projects, while at the same time, maximising ROI and reducing the cost of upgrades. After all, UCC solutions are about integrating communications, not replacing them.

Scalability

Ensuring the future scalability of UCC solutions is an essential consideration for those organisations seeking to realise their benefits. They must avoid implementing solutions that satisfy the immediate business need, yet may in the future prove problematic as uptake and usage increases. If solutions need to be re-designed or replaced every time a business goal shifts or the business environment changes, then ROI will be low and any positive organisational or process changes will be negatively impacted.

Ease of use

UCC solutions also need to be intuitive and enable users to quickly and easily familiarise themselves with the benefits they can bring to a range of essential work processes. With their capacity to encourage positive organisational and cultural change, both at an individual and enterprise wide and beyond level, UCC solutions can act as key enabler for improving the way we work and collaborate.

A path to the future

Many of the unified communications and collaboration solutions referred to above are currently available, yet many of the more advanced features that such an approach has the capacity to deliver will not be available until some time in the near future. Early adopters, therefore, need to ensure that their communications solutions have the capacity to evolve in line with their competitors and do not require a “rip and replace” approach for further advancement. As a result, any solution that is implemented now must be standards-based and be, as far as possible, future-proofed.

5.0 STRATEGY AND DEPLOYMENT: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The convergence of communication and collaboration is a relatively new trend in the evolution of technology – so it’s no surprise that the state of collaboration within many organisations is still relatively immature. Many organisations have a patchwork of point solutions in different business units that are often incompatible and duplicate capabilities across the broader enterprise. A small proportion have taken a big-picture view and developed communication and collaboration strategies that cover people, process, structure and technology aspects.

5.1 Collaboration strategy and architecture

The purpose of collaboration strategy is to enable the organisational business strategy by improving collaboration effectiveness and business performance. The collaboration strategy informs the collaboration architecture and takes an incremental and modular approach, based on prioritised business projects. Key projects can be identified by assessing collaboration hotspots across your core processes and focusing on the areas that provide the fastest and greatest payback.

Even though many organisations may employ an enterprise architecture approach to their IT strategy, the communication and collaboration component is often missing. The collaboration architecture articulates the coherent technology blueprint, gap analysis and roadmap for incremental investment and development.

5.2 Collaboration maturity model

So how would you assess the strategic importance of getting this right and how can you assess your collaboration maturity?

One way is to answer this set of straightforward questions:

1. How important is the effective use of communication and collaboration to achieving your strategic goals and objectives?
2. How dependent are you on collaborating with customers, partners and suppliers?
3. How dependent are you on collaborating across internal business units?
4. Where are the collaboration hotspots across your core processes?
5. What barriers and conflicts to effective communication and collaboration exist within these collaboration hotspots?
6. Who owns the business-led collaboration strategy and enabling technology architecture in your organisation?

Diagram – Unified Communications and Collaboration

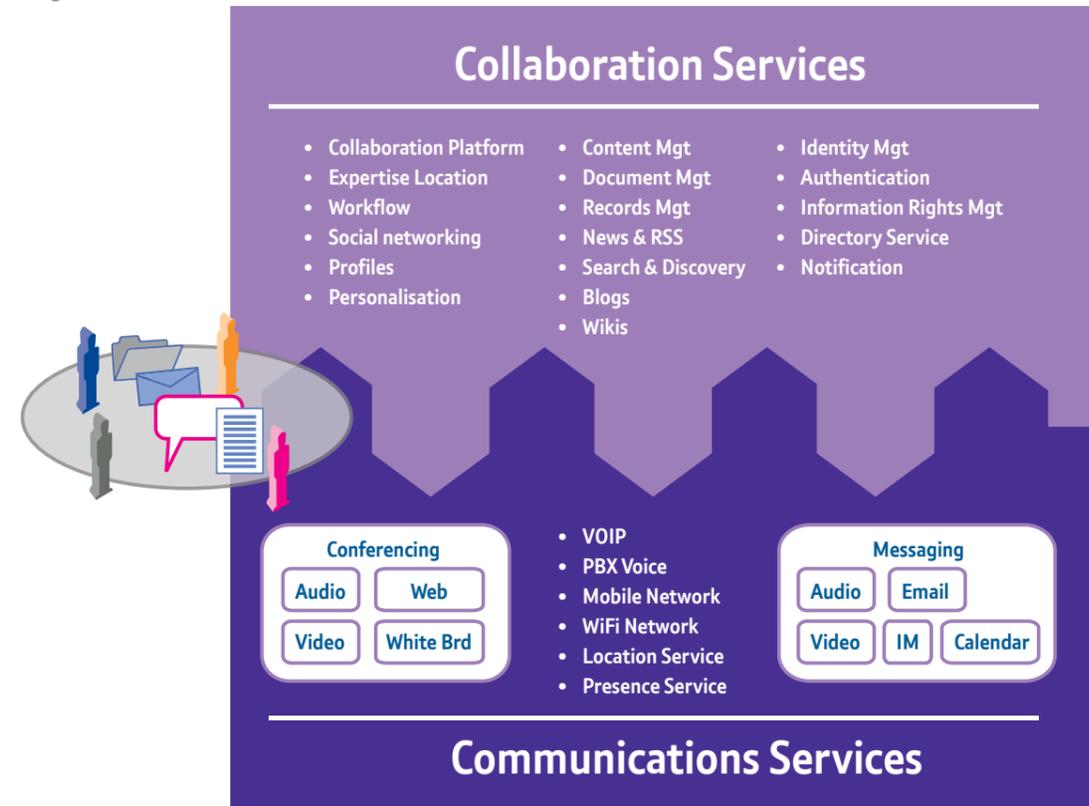


Diagram – Maturity Model

| | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| People | Isolated and misaligned | Collaborative roles and responsibilities | Communities and social networks | Self-organising people networks |
| Processes | Not synchronised | Process hotspots | Decentralised coordination | Self-organising process networks |
| Organisation | Fragmented stovepipes | Inter-business unit collaboration | Enterprise-wide collaboration | Self-organising value networks |
| Technology | Non-integrated point products | Collaboration architecture | Standardised modular tools | Adaptive converged workplace |
| | Undefined | Defined | Co-ordinated | Adaptive |

The key domains of the maturity model include:

- **People** – encompass the roles, knowledge, skills, experience, aspirations, development, profiles, culture, utilisation, performance, motivation and reward. Installing a collaborative platform and tools is one thing; getting people to collaborate effectively may involve changes to rewards, incentives and behaviours.
- **Processes** – includes the value flows, stages, events, collaboration hotspots, costs, timing, people, information and knowledge. Although we tend to see processes as neat diagrams of flows, much of the actual work is done by people collaborating towards common goals.
- **Organisation** – covers how you have structured what you do and includes functions, disciplines, people networks, teams, metrics, relationships and commitments. Conflicts in the way different business units are measured cause some of the biggest barriers to effective collaboration.
- **Technology** – includes the content, platforms, tools and applications that make up your communications and collaboration architecture as well as enabling devices and infrastructure.

The key stages include:

- **Undefined** – You may have some of the basics in place, but you lack a coherent strategy and architecture.
- **Defined** – You have developed a business-led collaboration strategy that informs a collaboration architecture in place and have started improving collaboration across business units.
- **Co-ordinated** – Phased delivery on your collaboration strategy and architecture is having a significant impact on improving performance at the enterprise level.
- **Adaptive** – At this stage you will have aligned flexible ways of working with collaboration-enabled core processes that can be readily re-configured to match changes in your environment (e.g., working with a new strategic partner). Users may have access to a personalised workplace that brings together communication, collaboration and content services within a flexible environment that seamlessly operates across a range of devices – from Web-based portal to PDA to mobile.

5.3 Getting started

Using the maturity model and questions outlined above, you can start by making a high-level assessment of the current state and importance of communication and collaboration. Assuming that improving communication and collaboration can make a significant impact on business performance, the next steps are to carry out top-down and bottom-up assessments. The outcomes of these assessments are a target-state blueprint and roadmap for incremental investment and development.

Improved communications and collaboration will have a greater impact in some areas than others. For instance, when applied in a complex core process hotspot that suffers from delays or quality issues, it can make a significant impact.

The next steps include making a top-down assessment of the impact of communication and collaboration at high-level. This may include mapping the business environment, core processes, organisation structure and assessing people and culture dimensions. A high-level target blueprint can be developed by understanding the resulting communication, collaboration and content needs.

A bottom-up inventory of existing communication and collaboration assets can be used to identify gaps, duplications and interdependencies within the blueprint. This can then be used to determine the modular and incremental roadmap towards target-state, in which projects deliver capabilities based on business priorities. For instance, you may start by focusing on the highest-impact collaboration hotspot, which delivers a key building block in Project One that is re-used across all subsequent projects.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The convergence of communications and collaboration may well represent a significant opportunity for your organisation. By exploiting this trend you can respond faster and more flexibly to customer demands, streamline core processes and improve innovation. In order to achieve this you need to first understand your current level of maturity, then establish a business-led collaboration strategy and architecture that provides a coherent path for investment, development and benefit realisation.

While it is clear that unified communications and collaboration (UCC) solutions will have a significant role to play in equipping organisations for the challenges of today's and the future's global marketplace, the relative immaturity of the marketplace is preventing many organisations from travelling down the UCC road. While there is no doubt that the journey towards a fully unified communications and collaboration approach will be a long one – is it a journey you can afford not to begin now?

About BT

BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in 170 countries. Its principal activities include networked IT services, local, national and international telecommunications services, and higher-value broadband and Internet products and services. BT consists principally of four lines of business: BT Global Services, Openreach, BT Retail and BT Wholesale.

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If you would like more information on the benefits that UCC solutions can bring to your organisation, contact:

Jeroen Spierings, Proposition Marketing Manager, Convergence, BT Global Services.

Email: jeroen.spierings@bt.com

Paul Riches, Principal Consultant, BT Global Services

Email: paul.riches@bt.com

About the authors

Jeroen Spierings Proposition Marketing Manager, Convergence, BT Global Services.

Jeroen Spierings is a Marketing Manager for Convergence, focused on Unified Communications and Collaboration. Jeroen has 14 years experience using communications, collaboration and wireless technologies to help increase employee productivity. He works closely with the Convergence and IT Transformation product and service line within BT, helping translate overall marketing strategy into operational marketing activities. He also works closely with Marketing and Communications, and manages relationships with partners, suppliers, and key stakeholders, internally and externally. Furthermore he has developed several whitepapers and spoken at seminars in the US and Europe.

Paul Riches, Principal Consultant, BT Global Services

Paul Riches is a Principal Consultant within BT Global Services and has over 20 years experience using IT to improve business performance. Paul's focus is on designing and implementing innovative Collaboration and Knowledge Management (KM) strategies for Corporate and Government clients. He has been actively involved in the European Knowledge Management Forum and made major contributions to Trends and Visions in KM and Knowledge Organisation Transformation Roadmaps projects. In addition to KM, Paul has worked within proposition and product marketing and contributed to BT's market-facing IT strategy.

Offices worldwide

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Registered office: 81 Newgate Street, London, EC1A 7AJ
Registered in England No. 1800000.

Designed by Unigraph Limited 22819/12/06.
Printed in England.

PHME 51777

