Finding Business Value in Unified Communications and Collaboration
Real-world results demonstrate UC&C business benefits
Business white paper
The globalization of today’s workforce, combined with the growing number of employees no longer tied to traditional desktop environments, is intensifying the pressure to improve communications and facilitate collaboration among geographically dispersed teams.

While organizations recognize the need for more efficient and effective communications, they are often hobbled by an inflexible infrastructure that lacks interoperability, is costly to operate, and hinders productivity.

To address these issues, corporations are turning to unified communications and collaboration (UC&C), which combines disparate communications channels and integrates collaboration tools, leveraging voice, email, instant messaging, audio conferencing, video conferencing, and advanced functionality such as presence awareness to immediately locate and contact individuals.

UC&C reduces “communication latency”—that is, the amount of time required to make and execute business decisions. This in turn increases productivity, enabling faster project completion, expedited time-to-market, and shortened sales cycles. Other UC&C benefits include enhanced customer service, lower travel costs, reduced telecom and IT operating expenses, and a smaller carbon footprint.

HP has teamed with Microsoft to provide end-to-end UC&C solutions. The modular approach of HP enables organizations to implement the UC&C components that address their most pressing needs first, then add future capabilities on a flexible timetable.

This white paper outlines the business value available to organizations that are leveraging UC&C to address key business challenges.

**Battling communication latency**

As business communications grow more complex—with employees using multiple devices, applications, and communication modalities—connecting to the right people at the right time becomes increasingly challenging—and increasingly important to an organization’s ability to compete.

Making the right connections can have a significant impact on productivity, customer relationships, and even your bottom line. So incidences of “telephone tag” and unanswered email or text messages are far more than annoying inconveniences.

Employees need immediate access to colleagues to obtain key customer information. Managers must be reached for time-sensitive decision-making. Sales people, typically relying on mobile communications devices, have to be able to link up with individuals or work teams at critical stages throughout the sales cycle. Customer service requires instant connections with subject-matter experts to provide accurate information in real time.

With the widespread adoption of diverse communication devices, making those connections in a timely manner can be quite difficult. The resulting “communication latency” lengthens the amount of time required to make and execute critical business decisions.
Communication latency is often increased by the fact that work teams are as likely to be on another continent as in another city. Face-to-face meetings are prohibitively expensive. Yet collaboration is essential to complete work projects.

Organizations facing intense competitive pressures are increasingly finding that traditional standalone data, telephony, and video solutions are no longer effective in enabling the fast response and coordination necessary to reduce communication latency. These legacy solutions lack interoperability and add to system administration burdens.

For enterprises that have undergone mergers or acquisitions, the multiple email and voice mail systems of varying vintages typically in place compound the complexities. In addition to interoperability issues, these systems also tend to be difficult to manage and costly to support.

The result is a growing demand for more efficient and effective tools that unify and simplify communications, enhance collaboration, and streamline administration.

Beyond convergence: UC&C

UC&C is an alternative approach to traditional standalone systems. As the name implies, UC&C fuses various communications modalities and makes it easier for people to work together productively.

By seamlessly and securely integrating email, calendaring, enterprise voice, instant messaging and presence, and conferencing through voice, video, or Web, UC&C enables employees to connect, communicate, and collaborate independent of medium, location, or device. Communications channels that typically exist in silos are linked together, enabling one-click calls, one-click conferencing, and one-click collaboration.

Unlike unified messaging, which is restricted to recorded messages made available through a common interface on a computer or telephone, UC&C provides real-time communications and connections. It leverages advanced functionality such as presence awareness, which enables individuals to immediately locate a colleague, determine his or her availability, and know exactly which communication mode—office phone, home phone, mobile phone, email, instant messaging—is best for making contact.

And unlike unified communications, which allows various communications modes to flow from a single pane on a user’s computer, UC&C integrates virtual collaboration offerings with communications solutions for greater interoperability and coordination.

With the geographically dispersed nature of today’s workforce, the demand for virtual collaboration—audio, video, and Web conferencing, desktop sharing, and other tools that enable people to work together without face-to-face interactions—is rapidly expanding. Forrester Research predicts that organizations “will insist on greater interoperability and coordination between unified communications and collaboration.”

Growing adoption of UC&C

Due to the cost and complexities of operating multiple infrastructures and multiple applications, an increasing number of businesses are recognizing the advantages of UC&C. According to Forrester Research, 84% of enterprises in North America and Europe are currently evaluating, piloting, or implementing UC&C solutions.

Migrating to an integrated IP network, typically a first step in adopting a UC&C solution, can yield significant savings by lowering communication costs. However, UC&C goes well beyond merging data and voice networks to actually unifying business communications technologies and enhancing business processes.

Per Forrester: “Most enterprises that we interviewed were confident that they would ultimately implement basic UC features (voice, email, and IM linked together in a single presence-aware application or device) for 90% of their workers. And they predicted that up to two-thirds of those deployments would have enhanced UC capabilities like mobility, video, or integration to business processes.”

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3 ibid
Business benefits of UC&C include measurable returns on your investment. Cost savings are based on customer interviews and calculations using Forrester Research’s Total Economic Impact Framework.  

Delivering business value: Real-world customer experiences

With its advanced capabilities, UC&C delivers a range of business benefits, some readily quantifiable and others more intangible but just as real.

Travel, training, real estate, telephony, and audio conferencing costs can be reduced by as much as 40 percent. Within IT organizations, an HP-Microsoft UC&C solution can result in cost reductions of up to 50 percent.  

The following section offers a look at actual benefits realized by customers that have implemented HP-Microsoft UC&C solutions.

Reduced conferencing costs

Virtual presentations are a staple at most large enterprises, providing an effective alternative to on-site meetings that can be cost-prohibitive when they require the participation of a geographically dispersed workforce. Standalone solutions, however, may not be delivering the performance levels necessary to remain competitive in today’s fast-paced market.

For Syngenta, one of the world’s largest agricultural businesses, adopting an integrated Web conferencing and communications solution enabled the company to cut its conferencing costs in half—while improving collaboration.

Web conferencing plays a critical role in facilitating communication among the company’s 21,000 employees located in 330 offices across more than 90 countries. Departments hold monthly and quarterly virtual presentations that require hundreds of participants. In addition, market pressures demand instant collaboration among employees.

Working closely with HP consultants, Syngenta deployed HP servers running Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007. A single hardware deployment handles all traffic from the company’s main data center in Basel, Switzerland, with existing servers used to run back-end software. The server technology is supported by an HP storage area network (SAN). HP worked with Syngenta to plan, design, and implement OCS.

The company is saving 50% in costs compared to its previous solution. Because the system requires fewer servers, it also uses less power, reducing the company’s carbon footprint and lowering energy costs. With the servers deployed in a single centralized location, management is simplified.

The company has also realized intangible savings through enhanced communications and collaboration. At times, the system is handling 600 instant messages a minute and more than 30 Web conferences simultaneously, with no degradation of the user experience—even for meetings that have as many as 350 participants.

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5 ibid.
Syngenta: UC&C solution at a glance

**Challenge:** Reduce Web conferencing solutions while future-proofing its hardware environment.

**Solution:** Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, Microsoft Office Communicator 2007, Microsoft Office Live Meeting 2007, HP ProLiant DL380 GS servers, HP EVA 8100 SAN, HP workstations.

**Business value:** Cut conferencing costs in half, improved Web collaboration, and simplified management.

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HINT AG: UC&C solution at a glance

**Challenge:** Cut hardware and software cost, reduce management time and complexity, improve client services.

**Solution:** Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, HP ProLiant servers and storage.

**Business value:** Reduced maintenance costs, simplified management, enhanced the customer experience.

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Barker Implement: UC&C solution at a glance

**Challenge:** Replace outdated telephone system with reliable, scalable solution that provides integrated communications.

**Solution:** Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 (SP1), Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, HP BladeSystem c7000, HP ProLiant BL460c blades, HP ProLiant ML350 server, HP ProLiant DL380 server, HP Compaq notebook PCs, and desktop PCs.

**Business value:** Faster communication among staff and with customers; enhanced customer service and employee efficiency; sharper competitive differentiation; scalable, readily expandable infrastructure to meet future needs as business grows.

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In addition, Syngenta employees now have access to advanced communications and collaboration features such as presence awareness, which allows them to determine a colleague’s availability, along with instant messaging for immediate access. Integration with the company’s Web portal and email makes the solution’s functions available in whichever application employees are using.

### Reduced operating costs through simplified management

Swiss IT provider HINT AG develops and delivers IT solutions for healthcare organizations in the German-speaking area of Switzerland. Historically, HINT hosted a separate, customized IT infrastructure for five hospitals, each with its own applications and Active Directory service. Together, these provided a total of 2500 users with a range of business-critical technology, including five distinct messaging environments: two running on Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5, one on Microsoft Exchange Server 2000, and two on third-party solutions. The messaging environments used direct attached storage (DAS).

This system allowed HINT AG to give each customer a centralized, highly available, secure solution tailored to individual needs. However, these disparate systems also created a number of challenges: high hardware and software costs, complex management, and slow, expensive integration of new customers. To improve services and expand its customer base, HP consultants worked with the Swiss IT provider to create a strategy and a plan to standardize messaging, and then to move its messaging systems to a single infrastructure.

Consolidating its messaging infrastructure with Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 running on HP servers enables HINT AG to simplify management and lower maintenance costs. Increased automation has reduced maintenance time by 50%. In the past, five team members spent two hours each day managing the system. Cutting this time in half gives them more time to spend on strategically central work such as integrating new customers, setting up new services, and exploring innovative ways to improve the company’s IT environment.

### Enhanced customer service

In today’s always-on business world, customers with questions about their orders, who need support, or looking for general information expect immediate gratification. The inability to provide fast response can affect a company’s reputation and brand—and result in lost revenue, if frustrated customers decide to take their business to another firm.

At Barker Implement, a full-service John Deere dealership with eight locations in Iowa, fast-response capability is an important competitive differentiator.

On a growth path since 1990, the company found its communications capabilities severely hampered by an inefficient telephone system that was cobbled together as new locations were acquired. The company could not transfer calls between locations, provide instant messaging, or integrate its telephone system with its email platform. Meanwhile, server sprawl was filling available data center space, overloading heating and cooling resources and driving up power consumption.

To remain competitive, Barker Implement needed to transform its existing infrastructure and upgrade its telephone system. The company implemented a scalable solution for integrated communications, including Microsoft Exchange 2007 (SP1) and Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 on an HP ProLiant blade infrastructure. Now all communication modes—voice, email, and instant messaging—issue seamlessly from a common platform, enabling multiple ways to communicate.

Service technicians use their notebook PCs for diagnostics on tractors and combines, as well as to keep in touch by email. Traveling managers and sales people have instant access to internal resources when on the road or with customers.

As a result, the company can better serve its customers. When a call comes in, it can be routed directly to the right person. If employees need to consult a colleague, instant messaging lets them get answers right away.

In addition to faster communications and enhanced customer service, the new system offers the scalability and flexibility to readily adopt greater functionality in the future, such as hosted Web conferencing.
**Increased efficiency and productivity**

Improving internal communications not only facilitates faster response to customer needs, it can also boost employee productivity.

Adelaide Bank, a leading financial services provider in South Australia with 25 branches across Adelaide and offices in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne, has adopted a UC&C solution to meet its conferencing and security needs.

Initially implemented in response to the Business Lending department’s request for conferencing between interstate users and the Adelaide head office, the solution deployed by HP supports video, voice, and Web conferencing and is fully integrated with the Microsoft Office Outlook messaging and collaboration client.

The bank’s interstate offices use the video conferencing function to conduct meetings, while reducing travel costs and improving the quality of interaction. Their previous video conferencing capability was too expensive to deploy below the senior management level.

The solution’s presence feature has also made a difference in terms of efficiency and improved productivity by reducing unnecessary or misdirected communications. Rather than wasting time trying to reach people who are in meetings, on calls, or traveling, bank employees can see at a glance if the person they need to contact is available. One-click contact can be made using instant messaging, a VoIP call, or a video conference, rather than relying solely on email.

IT staff members use instant messaging and presence to communicate within local offices, saving time previously spent visiting the person at their desk or using multiple, less immediate, and lower impact communication methods such as email or voice mail. Presence and video conferencing also reduce email traffic, thus alleviating pressure on email storage.

Another key capability for Adelaide Bank is the single conversation history folder provided through Office Communications Server 2007, which seamlessly tracks email messages, instant messages, and telephone calls. This increases employee efficiency and reduces the need for duplicated communications by providing an instant record of the meeting and all agreed-upon items. Internal bank meetings no longer require follow-up to confirm action items.

Thanks to its ability to create an encrypted audit trail of all customer communications, Office Communications Server 2007 may be implemented in the company’s call centers to comply with requirements to maintain a record of customer conversations.

**Adding time to the clock**

Telephone tag, leaving messages, waiting for call-backs, and other failed communication attempts all consume valuable time. And the resulting delays in decision-making can be costly.

At Lion Nathan, a leading producer, marketer, and distributor of premium alcoholic beverages in Australia and New Zealand, the adoption of Office Communications Server 2007 has yielded significant time savings.

The company estimates that at the IT Service Desk level alone, the solution is helping nine team members reclaim at least 30 minutes from each work day that was previously spent unproductively leaving messages. And for geographically dispersed teams, the system accelerates collaboration and workflow processes and enables access to corporate data from outside their offices.

Employees frequently work from home or in one of the company’s many locations across Australia, collaborating with colleagues and managing projects. Conference calls are booked at a central location that users can access from outside their offices.

The solution also provides an external URL to enable audiovisual services and desktop sharing with customers.

**Instant access to key personnel**

Founded in 1850, the University of Sydney is a leading research institute that operates in multiple campus locations worldwide. Over the years, the university’s many departments had adopted a diverse range of incompatible technology solutions—including various email systems.

Integrating Office Communications Server 2007 with the university’s messaging platform has streamlined and simplified its communications system.
Real-time features enable instant access to people and information, which significantly increases effectiveness and productivity. Presence information, instant messaging, and VoIP capabilities have reduced unnecessary email traffic and email storage requirements. It has also cut down on missed calls among colleagues. People who are online at the same time can use IM capabilities to open a chat session and get questions answered quickly.

Embarking on the UC&C journey

With its multiple potential rewards, the concept of UC&C is clearly attractive. However, many companies may feel challenged when it comes to realizing their UC&C vision and transforming it into a working solution.

The unique nature of each organization’s existing communications environment, along with varying objectives and desired end-states, precludes a one-size-fits-all solution. For most organizations, UC&C is implemented over time, using a phased custom-designed approach.

Choosing the right UC&C partner to determine the most efficient route and to integrate the various elements of your solution is central to a successful implementation. With 23,000 Microsoft-trained and more than 16,000 Microsoft-certified professionals, HP has one of the largest, most specialized forces of consultants and support professionals for Microsoft environments. And, backed by more than 40 years of experience delivering networking solutions, HP has over 30+ years of experience and credentials in global program management with 5500 certified network infrastructure and voice professionals at work in 170 countries.

A recommended first step on the UC&C journey is one of the Business Value Services from HP: The Transformation Experience Workshop, the Business Benefits Workshop, or the Information Architecture. This onsite workshop, delivered by HP services professionals, explores your company’s unique requirements to determine the value and relative priority of various UC&C components. It also assesses your current communications and collaboration capabilities and identifies opportunities for reducing cost, growing revenue, and mitigating risk. Based on this assessment, you can readily prioritize investments and chart next steps.

Conclusion

UC&C can deliver demonstrable business value to corporations of all types and sizes. Benefits include lowering costs, improving productivity, and strengthening customer relationships.

Working with experienced services professionals enables you to develop a UC&C implementation plan that maps to your strategic vision.

HP and Microsoft offer the experience and know-how to provide an end-to-end UC&C solution using a proven modular approach that lets you address your most pressing communications and collaboration needs today and add capabilities cost-effectively and non-disruptively over time.

For more information

To learn more about HP and Microsoft UC&C solutions, contact your HP Representative; or visit www.hp.com/solutions/microsoft/ucc

Technology for better business outcomes

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