



GUIDE.

A guide to Unified Communications: the what, why, who & how.

HELPING BUSINESS DECISION
MAKERS TO UNDERSTAND
AND UNLEASH UC'S
POTENTIAL TO DELIVER
FINANCIAL AND
PRODUCTIVITY BENEFITS.

DECEMBER 2009

What's inside?

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS?	3
WHY CONSIDER UC? THE BENEFITS.	4
Improve employee productivity	5
Reduce back office costs.....	5
Save on call costs.....	5
Save time and reduce carbon emissions.....	5
Support flexible, home and mobile working	5
Standardise the user experience and minimise training	6
Improve customer service.....	6
Increase competitiveness	6
WHO IS USING IT? EXAMPLES OF UC AT WORK.	7
Organisations with a mobile workforce: enhancing communications and boosting productivity	7
Organisations with multiple sites and a distributed workforce: boosting collaboration, lowering costs and reducing the carbon footprint	7
Healthcare providers: improving efficiency and the patient experience	7
Customer service organisations: enhancing the contact centre experience.....	8
HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE RIGHT UC SOLUTION.	9
Four steps to implementation	9
Step 1) Decide what UC means for you	9
Step 2) Prepare the network for UC	9
Step 3) Protect critical communications	9
Step 4) Choose the right implementation partner.....	9
Simplifying UC deployment - The managed service story	10
CONCLUSION	11
ABOUT AZZURRI	11

December 2009

WHAT?

INTRODUCTION

Unified Communications (UC) means different things to different people. It's not a 'one size fits all' product, but a collection of integrated communications technologies which are specifically designed to maximise an individual organisation's opportunities.

This high-level guide will help boost your understanding of Unified Communications. It will explain **what** it is, illustrate **why** you should consider it, give examples of **who** has been using it and advise on **how** you can go about implementing the right solution for your organisation.

Read on to find out about the various UC options and the benefits that they could deliver to your organisation. You'll learn about the technical foundations your business must have in place in order to get started and you'll discover how a managed-services approach could be the simplest, lowest-risk way to reap the benefits of UC.

WHAT IS UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS?

As a truly integrated set of technologies, UC enables organisations to communicate and work more effectively – helping mobile workers be more productive, driving more responsive customer service and allowing staff, partners and customers to collaborate with each other across geographies.

Unified Communications solutions can include voice calling, presence, secure Instant Messaging, video conferencing and more – all delivered over a single, converged infrastructure. UC allows an individual to send a message on one medium and receive it on another, leading to increased efficiency. For example, a person can receive a voice mail message and choose to access it through email or a mobile phone and respond accordingly.

When it comes to deployment, unifying so many technologies over a single infrastructure presents a number of challenges. For example UC involves a significant increase in real-time traffic, so the underlying network infrastructure must be highly secure and robust and organisations need to achieve seamless integration of voice and data. In the face of challenges like these, and with a plethora of solutions available from different vendors, implementing UC can be overwhelming for any organisation.

December 2009

WHAT?

Key UC Applications.

UC delivers a range of functionality that can help your workforce collaborate and work more effectively:

IP Telephony, which offers the ability to make phone calls over a converged data and voice network and significantly reduce call costs.

Presence, which indicates people's status, showing whether they are available to talk or respond to messages.

Audio and video conferencing, which avoids the need for so much travel, reducing the associated cost, time and carbon footprint.

Intelligent call routing, which routes customer calls to the most appropriate member of staff.

Secure Instant Messaging, which enables people to use real time messaging to swiftly and cost effectively resolve simple issues.

Social networking, which encourages collaboration and information sharing between employees, partners and customers.

Caller identification, which delivers more personalised customer service by intelligently recognising incoming callers and automatically displaying the appropriate call history and customer records.

One number calling, which pushes calls and messages to employees wherever they are using the one telephone number.

December 2009

WHY?

WHY CONSIDER UC? THE BENEFITS.

Why should you implement UC? By deploying a UC solution that is tailored to your business, you can achieve a range of operational benefits.

Improve employee productivity

UC solutions unite individuals and distributed teams through real time collaboration with applications such as Instant Messaging, audio conferencing and video conferencing. These tools speed the decision-making process, improve responsiveness to customer needs and enable employees to work together effectively – wherever they are.

Reduce back office costs

With UC, mobile workers can contact customers, log work status and complete a range of other tasks remotely. Because they no-longer rely on staff back in the office to record information and contact customers, it's possible to reduce your management administration overhead and achieve significant cost savings.

Real time presence allows organisations to streamline internal communications by showing when and how to contact a person. It enables your people to see at a glance the availability of co-workers (ie. on a call, in a meeting, away from desk) in real time and be actively notified when their status changes. Presence aids efficient communication and collaboration between staff, eliminating telephone tag and time wasted attempting different communications options.

Additionally the management of devices can be centrally controlled, rationalising the support structure and decreasing management and hardware investment.

Save on call costs

As a key element of UC, Fixed-Mobile Convergence (FMC) routes mobile calls over the corporate network. This technology means that fewer calls are placed over mobile service provider networks, helping to reduce mobile spending dramatically. Also by making IP calls over a single converged network, UC can help eliminate site-to-site call charges within an organisation.

Save time and reduce carbon emissions

UC features such as audio and video conferencing enable your people to meet in a virtual environment at extremely low cost. This reduces the time they spend away from the office at physical meetings and lowers the costs and carbon emissions associated with business travel.

Support flexible, home and mobile working

UC gives staff access to office applications from home or while travelling – so they can work productively wherever they are. This means an organisation can implement hot desking and home working initiatives that reduce real estate costs and minimise travel.

December 2009

WHY?

Standardise the user experience and minimise training

UC solutions provide a single, familiar user interface on all devices – often based on Microsoft Office tools such as Outlook. This increases convenience, reduces training requirements and enables people to work with multiple devices and media types quickly and easily.

Improve customer service

By implementing a UC solution and joining up the various communication channels, responsiveness to customer enquiries and demands increases greatly. First Contact Resolution (FCR) becomes a reality and not just an aspiration.

Increase competitiveness

The increased agility that a tailored UC solution brings to an organisation gives a competitive edge over others. Through real time collaboration increasing the speed to decision and improved access from anywhere and through any communication device, UC enables a more intelligent, streamlined communications processes.

UC ensures that your staff and customers can contact the right people, at the right time through the most efficient method to maximise results. In these tough economic times such an edge can make a real contribution to the health and longevity of an organisation.

Generation Y: unleashing the business value of UC

The terms 'Generation Y' and 'Net Generation' refer to tech-savvy people who regularly access all manner of communications technologies – from MSN messenger and text messaging, to email, social networking and video calling.

By 2012, Generation Y employees will represent 52 per cent of the UK's workforce, and they will expect to have access to the same technologies at work as they use at home.

By adopting UC technologies in the business environment, such as Instant Messaging and social networking, it will enable additional channels of communication between co-workers, partners and customers and enhance the productivity of Generation Y employees.

December 2009

WHO?

WHO IS USING IT? EXAMPLES OF UC AT WORK.

Unified Communications solutions can meet a variety of business requirements. One size simply doesn't fit all. Read on to see how UC is being used to drive innovation across a range of sectors.

Organisations with a mobile workforce: enhancing communications and boosting productivity

For organisations with large numbers of mobile workers, such as field sales teams or engineers, deploying specialist UC solutions helps employees work more effectively on the move. These solutions give mobile workers anytime, anywhere access to the corporate network and key productivity tools such as email, enabling them to work effectively, wherever they are. By providing a consistent user experience across all devices, they make communications easy and keep training requirements to a minimum.

Extending access to corporate resources to mobile or remote workers enables them to be more productive and responsive. For example, they can edit documents and review presentations on the go or continue to work effectively when faced with problems like road closures, rail strikes and floods. UC can also enhance collaboration between staff by enabling people to be contacted on a single number, irrespective of their location, or by providing access to a corporate directory from their mobile device.

Organisations with multiple sites and a distributed workforce: boosting collaboration, lowering costs and reducing the carbon footprint

UC helps organisations based across multiple sites and geographies to realise significant cost savings and business efficiencies. Good business is all about being able to adopt strong team working and the essence of UC is the ability to collaborate easily with colleagues in different offices. Specifically, UC provides a number of tools such as presence status, voicemail-to-email, Instant Messaging and audio and video conferencing, which enable employees to contact one another in real time, increasing productivity, reducing the carbon footprint and cost of business travel.

By working across a single converged IP network, UC solutions deliver cost savings by eliminating the charges for on-net calls between sites. Additionally, Fixed-Mobile Convergence (FMC) allows organisations to reduce their mobile call costs, as any call made on a mobile device while in the office will be delivered via the local voice network.

Healthcare providers: improving efficiency and the patient experience

Innovative healthcare providers are deploying UC solutions that enable medical practitioners to stay in touch with colleagues in real time on a range of devices. Because medical staff can share medical and patient information in real time, they can make the best diagnostic and prescription decisions and enhance patient care. There are also examples of healthcare providers who are deploying UC solutions to help patients stay in touch with friends and family. These provide access to telephone,

December 2009

WHO?

video calling, email and Instant Messaging, sometimes directly to hospital beds, enabling them to improve the patient experience.

Customer service organisations: enhancing the contact centre experience

A number of customer service organisations are implementing UC solutions that enhance the customer experience by blending multiple media types onto a single platform. These solutions can intelligently route calls, emails and SMS messages and all other customer communications to agents with the best knowledge and experience related to the call, and automatically present agents with customer records during calls.

Because this type of UC solution takes a holistic view of communications entering the contact centre, organisations can report more effectively on performance – including the number of calls handled effectively and the number of callers on hold at any moment.

UC also allows organisations to pull some of the newer communication channels such as web-chat and social networking sites into the contact centre. As the younger generation become customers, organisations must be able to communicate with them over their preferred channels.

Using UC integration technology organisations can convert their presence on social networking sites into direct customer interactions. For example, it's possible to queue Facebook messages into a contact centre along with emails and web chats in the same universal queue that handles inbound calls; or for people to click a 'call me' button on a company Facebook page which will schedule a task for an agent to call the customer back.

December 2009

HOW?

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE RIGHT UC SOLUTION.

Four steps to implementation

The rationale behind every UC deployment is different. But in all cases, these four basic steps can help to minimise risk and ensure your organisation gets up and running effectively.

Step 1) Decide what UC means for you

Firstly it's important to assess what communication challenges your organisation faces and what business objectives need to be achieved through a UC strategy. Through consultation it will then be clear what elements of UC will deliver real business benefit, and what applications would complement your organisation's working practices to increase efficiency.

Step 2) Prepare the network for UC

UC applications such as Instant Messaging and audio and video conferencing dramatically increase real-time network traffic. Without the right infrastructure in place, your new and existing applications may not perform in line with expectations. That's why it's advisable to conduct a thorough infrastructure-readiness assessment. This will show where any capacity bottlenecks are likely to impact on application performance and reveal ways to optimise the UC infrastructure. It will also show how to increase efficiency by using existing networking resources and capacity to the maximum.

Step 3) Protect critical communications

Information and communications security is a vital factor in the success of any organisation. However there are some threats and avenues of attack that are specific to UC or have new application to UC and you need to take the logical steps to ensure the security of your communications.

With UC, securing the confidential information that passes through your data, voice, video and mobile applications, across both fixed and mobile networks, is critical. The bottom line is that confidentiality, integrity and availability of critical multimedia resources must be ensured, while maintaining the UC solution's performance. Companies should (or select a partner who can) examine UC security from a business perspective by defining goals, policies and patterns of usage across all applications.

Step 4) Choose the right implementation partner

Integrating the disparate technologies required for UC requires a broad range of UC skills and experience – from cabling, data networking, wireless networking and IP voice, to UC applications and Microsoft networks. A single UC solution may incorporate technologies from a range of suppliers – all requiring customisation to work together.

December 2009

HOW?

By selecting a UC deployment partner with broad UC, manufacturer and product knowledge, organisations can reduce deployment risk, gain access to a single point of contact for multi-supplier components and ensure UC solutions are supported effectively for the long term.

Simplifying UC deployment - The managed service story

A small number of UK organisations, such as Azzurri, can deliver UC as a fully managed service – deploying, maintaining, managing and supporting your UC solutions from end to end. This approach helps you reduce deployment risk, lower communication costs and concentrate fully on your core business.

With a managed UC service, you get all the technology you need from a single point of contact. While individual products that make up the solution may come from several different vendors, it will all be pre-integrated and optimised – which means you can achieve excellent results from the earliest days of deployment.

A managed services approach to UC also delivers significant financial benefits. With a flexible partner, you can choose to scale services up or down, often without significant financial penalties – paying only for what you use. And with some service providers you can request a single bill, which increases predictability of communications costs.

While support of multi-vendor UC equipment can be a key challenge, a managed services approach minimises risk and enhances the user experience. This is because the provider has in-depth knowledge across a range of manufacturer technologies and significant experience of deploying mission-critical UC environments.

In addition, a fully managed UC service helps drive maximum value from UC investments in the long term through effective management, security and support.

With some managed services, organisations can choose whether to house UC infrastructure in-house or at a remote data centre. For some, the most important thing is to have infrastructure on site – enabling rapid changes and constant visibility of operations. For others, low cost, excellent connectivity and built-in disaster recovery makes data-centre hosting more attractive. Either way, managed services deliver the best UC has to offer, while enabling organisations to focus on core business rather than managing their UC solution.

December 2009

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Organisations of all sizes and across all industries are deploying UC solutions to enhance employee collaboration, improve customer service and support effective mobile working. However, the most successful deployments are conceived, planned and executed by experts – many delivered as fully-managed services from end to end.

This guide is designed to give you a head start when it comes to successfully designing, deploying, managing and supporting appropriate UC solutions for your own organisation. For more information on the issues raised here and how Azzurri can help, please visit www.azzurricommunications.com/solutions/unified-communications, call 0844 324 0000 or contact findoutmore@azzu.co.uk.

Top six benefits of Azzurri-managed UC services

1. **Simple, low-risk deployment**, with no need to integrate and maintain complex multi-supplier solutions
2. **Predictable communications costs**, with simplified billing and options for pay-as-you-use payment
3. **Increased business agility**, with the ability to scale services up or down, often with no financial penalties imposed by carriers
4. **A single point of contact**, with responsibility across all communications channels
5. **Constant innovation**, retaining the technical agility to deploy the latest UC technologies
6. **Flexible hosting options**, with the option to house the UC solution on premise, in a data centre or a mixture of the two

ABOUT AZZURRI

Azzurri is the UK's leading independent managed services provider, delivering end-to-end infrastructure transformation services – from auditing, analysis and solution design to implementation and ongoing management and support. Our independent network management and support team delivers vendor-independent solutions globally, and around 25% of the FTSE100 are Azzurri customers.

At Azzurri, we deploy innovative, highly secure UC solutions, helping our customers reduce operating costs, drive productivity and enhance customer service. Our communications engineer and architect teams reduce UC deployment risks, giving customers access to skills sets that span networking, telephony, mobility, UC applications and more.

Because Azzurri can design, build, deploy, manage and support UC deployments from end to end, our customers can focus on core business activities. Our fully managed services also ensure constant availability for critical communications services and increase the predictability of IT costs.