

***ENABLING BUSINESS
TRANSFORMATION WITH
CLOUD-BASED COMMUNICATIONS***



COMCAST
BUSINESS

It's the challenge businesses of every size wrestle with: How to improve employee productivity while driving down costs. Technology can help achieve that goal – when the right tools are used. But when systems are not intuitive, not integrated with business processes, too costly, and too difficult to maintain, the promised benefits quickly take a back seat to the headaches.

One area where companies are finding this to be the case is with their communications system. On-premises platforms that were state of the art five years ago are showing their age – and for many businesses, all too clearly. But it's not only reliability issues and the costs of keeping everything humming that are cause for concern. Today's businesses need to leverage highly mobile workforces and anywhere-anytime communications.

Harnessing the power of the cloud is rapidly gaining traction. Cloud-based unified communications offer all the advantages of hosted solutions: predictable monthly costs, easy scalability, reduced capital expense, and support and upgrades that are provided by the service provider instead of your own. Just as importantly, cloud unified communications offer enhanced features – like voicemail-to-email and click-to-call capabilities within PC applications – that increase the mobility, the availability, and the productivity of employees. The result: more collaboration, more innovation, and a competitive advantage.

The Case For The Cloud

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a compelling proposition for an increasing number of companies. According to Frost & Sullivan, “Hosted IP telephony and UCC services adoption is growing at a steady pace with the installed user base expanding at about 25 to 30 percent year-over year.” Although these services initially appealed to small- and medium-sized businesses, research firm IDC states that “a shift has occurred in the market whereby many medium-sized businesses and large enterprises, particularly those with distributed workforces and thousands of employees in hundreds of sites, are showing increased interest in hosted IP voice services.”

Four key factors are driving the adoption of cloud unified communications:

Reducing capital expenditures. With hosted solutions like cloud-based voice, the core hardware that runs the system is owned, operated, and housed by the provider. This means that businesses don't need to make large capital investments in order to benefit from the latest technology. Smaller enterprises can now leverage the same tools and efficiencies that benefit larger enterprises. Many companies will also find the cloud model of monthly subscription fees far easier to manage than the varying, often unpredictable costs of running an on-premises system.

Total Cost of Ownership. Companies have long discovered that outsourcing a task can translate into significant savings over doing it internally. Cloud-based unified communications can be particularly cost effective, since maintenance and support are now the service provider's responsibility. IT staffs don't have to understand how many servers they need and how to get them to integrate together. For companies with remote sites or users, the savings can add up especially quickly.

More efficient use of IT staff. Small- and medium-size businesses may not have the IT staff or skills to keep an on-premises PBX running smoothly. Or if they do have the resources, they would rather focus them on core business tasks – the work that drives growth. With cloud unified communications, companies can reap the benefits of cutting-edge IT without having to deploy an IT department.

An Advanced Platform. One of the biggest advantages of the cloud is that companies don't need to worry about upgrading the technology.

Other benefits of cloud-based unified communications are less tangible but equally important. Support for teleworkers, or anyone working outside the office, is enhanced because the user experience – including all phone and messaging features – is the same no matter where that user is located. With the cloud, an employee's physical location becomes irrelevant. Customers and colleagues can always reach them via a single business phone number. Disaster recovery – a growing concern for businesses of all sizes – is also improved. Cloud services have redundant platforms to help protect in the event of trouble.

Choosing the Right Provider

Cloud unified communications have been embraced by a wide variety of businesses, in sectors ranging from manufacturing to health care to professional services such as the legal industry. Non-profits and the public sector have been adopters, as well. So it's not surprising that the number of service providers has grown, too. That gives users choices – but it can also cause confusion.

Today there are over 100 service providers in the U.S. alone, and they come with vastly different backgrounds and expertise, from startups and systems integrators to cable operators and legacy telecommunication providers. Often, cloud unified communications is sold as a separate service, so users have to integrate it with a network – complicating matters further.

How to choose the right provider? “Some providers, including Comcast Business, include network access in the cost of a hosted VoIP service. The value proposition of a hosted VoIP service is enhanced when network access is included, since the customer is dealing with one vendor for the whole solution,” says Diane Myers from Infonetics. “Both the network and the voice service are monitored and managed by the same provider, allowing for improved service quality and a single point of contact for customer support.”

Advanced features like 'Be Anywhere' enables calls to a business phone number to ring on any device a user specifies – making communication and collaboration that much easier while out of the office.



This is the approach Comcast has taken with its Business VoiceEdge™ service, a cloud-based voice and unified communications package for small and medium business, as well as enterprises. It is an alternative to traditional on-premises PBX and offers a hosted solution with high-definition voice and advanced features like 'Be Anywhere,' which enables calls to a business phone number to ring on any device a user specifies – making communication and collaboration that much easier while out of the office. Bundling key services – starting with the network – is a fundamental part of Comcast's strategy.

“With Business VoiceEdge, you don't have to buy the solution and then buy Internet or data to go with it,” says Caitlin Clark-Zigmond, Senior Director, Product Management at Comcast. “VoiceEdge comes with a dedicated network, it's simply part of the solution. Of course, businesses have a lot of needs, so Comcast takes bundling a step even further, offering packages with voice, video, data, Ethernet.”

Whether you're a small, medium or enterprise-size business, cloud-based unified communications can offer the features you need – and the managed costs you might not have known you could realize.