

# The Unified Communications Journey – Setting the Itinerary

## Executive Summary

Given the significant positive impact unified communications (UC) can have on an enterprise, it is clear that now is the time to be moving forward with a UC agenda.

While it's true that some companies are still trying to figure out exactly what UC means to them, many are actively planning their UC deployments, and a growing number of companies have already launched their UC journey and are experiencing the capabilities and benefits of a UC implementation. In fact, according to industry analyst firm Forrester Research, there has been a 21 percent increase in UC pilots since 2007\*.

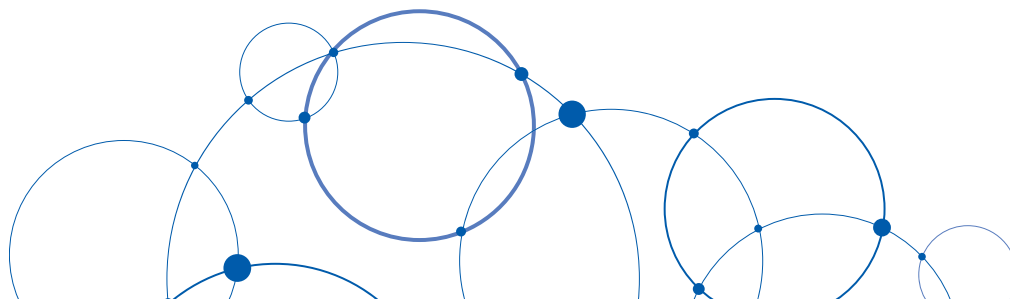
However, to fully exploit the power of UC, it is important to view UC not as a single project, but as a journey that requires careful business and technology planning and that targets distinct benefits at different points along the way. UC provides an opportunity to introduce productivity benefits, to transform business processes, and even create new and innovative ways of engaging the external marketplace.

Four main steps comprise the UC journey, each defined by progressively greater capabilities and benefits:

1. **Individual Productivity** – increasing productivity by enabling employees to save time in everyday activities through capabilities such as “click to call” and unified messaging.
2. **Workgroup Productivity** – extending productivity improvements to workgroups through collaboration and conferencing tools, and generating significant cost savings through system consolidation, reduction in external communications costs, travel, and even real estate.
3. **Communications Enabled Business Processes** – improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the enterprise by directly embedding unified communications capabilities into business processes that extend across functional groups of the enterprise.
4. **Enterprise Transformation** – accelerating the identification of new products, services and channels by using unified communications and collaboration to engage an ecosystem of customers and partners.

UC should not be viewed as simply a technology implementation. It is a process that starts with a strong understanding of the end goal, and involves a significant amount of planning and testing. When correctly implemented, it is an evolutionary journey that can deliver huge payoffs.

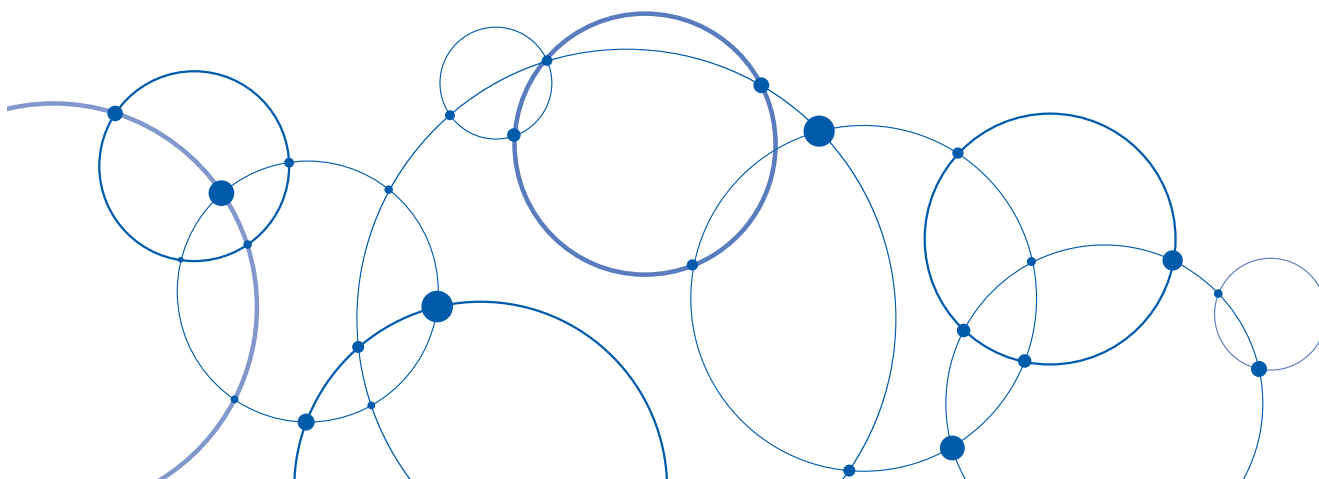
This white paper will provide you with detailed information about the four important stopovers that comprise a UC journey. It will also help you understand the need to take action—and why now is the right time to begin turning the potential of UC into reduced costs and improved business results for your organization.



\* Source: State of the Enterprise Networks and Telecommunications: 2008, Forrester

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is Driving UC Adoption?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Embarking on the Journey</b>	<b>3</b>
Destination #1 - Individual Productivity	3
Destination #2 - Workgroup Productivity	4
Destination #3 - Communications Enabled Business Processes (CEBP)	5
Destination #4 - Enterprise Transformation	6
<b>An Opportunity at Stake</b>	<b>6</b>



## What is Unified Communications (UC)?

UC is a term generally used to describe an architecture that automates and unifies all forms of human and device communications including voice, video, instant messaging, conferencing, presence, and voicemail, in context and with a common experience. Its purpose is to optimize business processes and enhance human communications and collaboration by reducing latency, managing flows, and eliminating device and media dependencies.

## What is Driving UC Adoption?

Companies that are implementing or thinking about implementing UC are at the forefront of a communication revolution. Just as the telephone, and more recently, email, transformed the way people exchange information, UC promises to dramatically alter the way people connect to each other.

Though adoption is still in its early stages, there are several factors that are driving companies to begin to implement UC today. First, there are significant cost savings available from even basic communications and collaboration capabilities such as presence, IM, and conferencing, and these savings can be achieved very rapidly and used to fund ongoing investments. UC can lower the IT infrastructure and administration costs associated with communications by up to 50 percent by extending existing investments while optimizing IT infrastructure through consolidating servers and multiple vendor products. UC technology can also significantly reduce the total cost of ownership by eliminating the need to invest in and manage separate systems for email, instant messaging, voicemail and conferencing. And, it enables companies to better support a virtual workforce, allowing them to save money on physical office space— a measure that more and more companies are taking to cut costs and increase flexibility and employee retention.

Finally, companies are adopting UC so that they can start improving intra-enterprise and company-customer communications. In the end, they know this will help them have more productive employees and more satisfied and loyal customers, which translates into top and bottom line improvements.

## Embarking on the Journey

Where is the best place to start with a UC deployment? What should the end state look like? How can companies most effectively move from point A to point B?

To answer these questions, it is important to recognize that UC is a journey. Each voyage includes four interim destinations, complete with key considerations and accrued benefits.

### *Destination #1 – Individual Productivity*

Individual productivity, also referred to as Personal UC, primarily impacts the individual. It is here that companies can explore new and more efficient ways to initiate phone calls from their desktops with a simple click of the mouse using “click to call” - no need to look up numbers and no dialing required. Individual productivity gives companies a whole new set of features that eliminate time-wasting activities, such as phone tag. For example, with presence engines such as Microsoft® Office Communications Server, users can convey their availability, willingness to communicate with others, and preferred contact methods, and in turn, employees can see if someone is available and then quickly and easily initiate contact. Instant messaging can also help reduce latency by enabling employees to chat with no delay, as well as seamlessly escalate a conversation to voice, if necessary. And, finally, with Unified Messaging, employees have access to emails, voicemails and faxes in one inbox freeing them from having to check disparate systems, saving them time and improving their responsiveness.

Individual productivity results in real time savings for employees in their everyday activities, but one must recognize that benefits may be difficult to aggregate and quantify at the enterprise level. It is, however, a surefire way to build user experience with basic UC capabilities and tools, and serves as a solid building block upon which Workgroup Productivity can be added.

By replacing and consolidating disparate voicemail and fax systems with Unified Messaging, companies can reduce the cost of voicemail by 20 to 60 percent.

### UC at Work

A leading telecommunications company in Europe estimates that saving just 30 minutes per week for each of its 1,500 employees amounts to \$1.48 million in productivity gains.

A global Internet Protocol (IP) Solutions provider estimates that the average employee saves 20 minutes a day due to more efficient communications; including time to market on product development cycles and increased productivity across projects.

A manufacturer of folding tables and chairs reduced overall voicemail and traditional phone maintenance costs by \$851,000 annually.

### *Destination #2 - Workgroup Productivity*

Workgroup productivity, also known as Collaborative UC, builds on individual productivity to deliver improvements across an entire workgroup.

Workgroup productivity uses the same tools as individual productivity, with the addition of other tools, such as Sharepoint and audio and video conferencing, to support collaboration and team activity and improve productivity. For instance, a manager is developing a presentation for a customer or internal board meeting and requires input from sales operations and finance. She checks the presence status for people in these departments to determine who is available, and begins an IM conference which seamlessly escalates into a voice or video conference with the presentation material shared. All of this can be accomplished with a few clicks of the mouse in a single tool such as Microsoft® Office Communicator coupled with Microsoft® Office Communication Server (OCS). Because of these communications and collaboration tools, the co-workers are able to quickly complete their virtual discussion and proceed with the project, and do not have to go through the typical round of voice mails, emails, scheduling and rework.

Workgroup productivity can result in several significant measurable cost reductions, including:

- 20 to 40 percent travel and training cost reduction achieved by replacing internal meetings, in-person training and customer or partner visits with Microsoft® Office Live Meeting.
- 30 to 40 percent real estate and facility cost reduction realized by reducing office space per employee and improving space utilization with telework and remote working.
- 10 to 40 percent reduction in telephony and audio conferencing charges achieved by replacing long distance and audio conferencing call charges with voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

While cost savings can be quantified and quickly realized, any company that employs workgroup productivity should beware of "too much productivity". To avoid this pitfall, which is manifested in the form of excessive and unnecessary "pings" to an available resource, companies must consider in advance the capabilities that are needed by different classes of employees (i.e., people in different roles or with different job or location characteristics). Companies should also think about the business outcomes that they would like to achieve with specific groups or teams, and provide employees with appropriate training on how to use and manage their presence status and control how, when, and where they can be contacted so as to optimize individual and workgroup productivity.

There are two more dangers lurking at this destination - security and compliance. All companies that implement workgroup productivity should be sure to implement stringent security measures to maintain the integrity of their corporate data. In addition, businesses in vertical markets, such as financial services and healthcare, must be cognizant of compliance requirements and continue to record all voice and data conversations regardless of where they are taking place in the enterprise.

### UC at Work

A provider of mezzanines for manufacturing facilities saved \$300,000 in travel and meeting expenses and \$100,000 in training costs with the Microsoft® Web conferencing solution.

A leading vendor of globalization, development and testing services reduced long-distance charges by 25 percent and the cost per move, add, or change of their PBX by 90 percent, cutting telephony costs by approximately \$670,000 per year.

A world-leading agribusiness committed to sustainable agriculture through research and technology replaced its virtual conferencing solution with the Microsoft® Web conferencing solution and cut costs by 50 percent.

#### *Destination #3 – Communications Enabled Business Processes (CEBP)*

Communications enabled business processes, sometimes referred to as Enterprise UC, is the next destination in the usage of UC capabilities. It is here that businesses seek to enhance performance at an enterprise level on a cross-functional basis by streamlining and even reengineering a process to leverage UC capabilities.

The ultimate goal is to improve the efficiency of business processes that are communication intensive and/or are prone to latency when human intervention is required. Examples of CEBP include improving customer's first call resolution, accelerating decisions or approvals on purchasing transactions, and reducing the time it takes to deliver a customer proposal. Both human to human processes and computer to human processes can benefit from Enterprise UC:

- **Human to human CEBP** - a human being leverages UC tools to remove latency and accelerate one or more steps in the process. For example, using IM and presence, a contact center agent can, in real time, connect with a knowledge worker outside the center to quickly resolve a customer issue. Previously, the agent may have had to hang up the phone, research the information and call the customer back. The use of UC speeds problem resolution and enhances the customer's experience. For a sales or collections customer interaction, it can even improve top and bottom line results.
- **Computer to human CEBP** - the use of presence, conferencing and instant messaging is embedded into the systems and applications to enable issues to be addressed based on pre-defined conditions, removing latency, accelerating problem resolution and eliminating human intervention. For instance, when the product inventory of a particular company falls below a certain level, the ERP system automatically looks at the presence of the people who can resolve the issue. The system initiates a call, sends an email or delivers an instant message to notify the appropriate person. Then, the system automatically informs the appropriate sales person or sales manager to contact the customer with the change in status.

In addition to process change, this stop on the UC journey often requires cultural changes. Companies should carefully consider their desired benefits as part of the planning process and ensure they have achieved a certain level of "maturity" in the use of presence and other tools. It is important to include user adoption activities in the overall plan, with appropriate training, incentives, metrics and cultural expectations defined for each role. As an example, to avoid experts being "overloaded" or contacted too much in an ad hoc manner, it may be necessary to assign coverage periods for different people in a support department so that someone is available at all appropriate times, without hampering individual or group productivity. Planning early for effective user adoption can open up a whole new world of benefits. One that includes increased sales, improved customer satisfaction and loyalty, improved vendor relationships, and reductions in costs, errors and waste.

### UC at Work

A telecommunications company reduced its time to generate customer proposals by up to 20 percent, lowering the company's cost of developing proposals and improving its responsiveness to customer requests.

Employees of a global leader in silicon-based technology and innovation are communicating more efficiently worldwide, and capabilities, such as presence information and video conferencing, help the company deliver better customer service.

A U.S.-based managed care organization nearly tripled its member preventive care adherence rates through an automated patient contact and scheduling system.

#### *Destination #4 - Enterprise Transformation*

Enterprise transformation is the fourth and final stop on the UC journey. As a primarily external-facing stop, it looks outside the company to enhance communications and collaboration with customers and partners. Enterprise transformation gives companies the tools and capabilities that can be used to change the way businesses are structured. It enables new ways to collaborate through both business and social networking to accelerate the creation of new products and services, introduce new channels, globalize or virtualize the business, or introduce other similar transformative changes.

This is essentially a cultural shift— a transformation in the way businesses think about communicating internally and externally—but it's closer to reality than you may think. We're already seeing forward-thinking companies using these technologies to collaborate with the public. These organizations are setting up websites to ask customers to vote for favorite promotions or products, building awareness on corporate responsibility initiatives through video, and creating online communities through social networking websites for consumers to share their experiences. Even political campaigns are being transformed in the ability for elected officials and campaign staff to reach out to millions of constituents, to share news through text messages, online videos, and micro-blogging tools, and receive feedback via online registration forms, message boards and social networking Web sites.

Clearly, these organizations have harnessed the power of Web 2.0 to successfully collaborate with the public and turn this information into usable information, sending trends, patterns and opinions directly through the enterprise to the appropriate expert that could make actionable decisions. These innovative, forward-thinking organizations are few and far between—but their numbers are growing.

Soon, more leading-edge companies will begin to couple social networking tools with communications and uncover new capabilities that result in new business processes and increased business value.

### An Opportunity at Stake

Unified communications offers a number of benefits that companies cannot afford to ignore. Organizations have an opportunity to increase productivity, improve sales cycles, reduce communication costs, lower training and meeting expenses, and even gain greater insight into customers' needs and interests. There is clearly a competitive advantage at stake and the time to start looking at UC and embarking on this journey is now.

One compelling reason for beginning the UC journey now includes the very real possibility that your organization already has some of the infrastructure in place. You may have the licenses for using presence engines, instant messaging tools, and unified messaging applications, but you haven't turned them on or are not using them to the best advantage. It may be just be a matter of creating a logical plan with the right software and services to step through each of the destinations at a pace that makes the most sense for your organization.

The UC journey is one that involves four progressive stops along the way. It is a voyage that can have many similarities across companies but can also result in significant competitive differentiation depending on how capabilities are embedded throughout the enterprise. Some companies may choose to focus on Workgroup Productivity or Communications Enabled Business Processes for an extended period of time, or even indefinitely. For them, taking the abbreviated trip fulfills their needs and provides sufficient payoff. Others will focus on reaching the final stop, enterprise transformation, working through each of the other three steps on their path to achieving this objective.

Because each of the destinations is associated with its own set of benefits and specific ROI, there's clear value in going through each individual phase of the process. Since it takes time to get the plan and infrastructure in place, it is important to plan for the different destinations, invest in the right software and services, and get ahead of the business demand for UC solutions. This ultimately means a competitive advantage for the successful early adopter.

Regardless of where you think this journey may take your company, now's the time to start. Your first step is to determine your goals. Then, evaluate your current infrastructure and technologies, determine what you'll need for your UC rollout and upgrade your current infrastructure. Make sure to educate your employees so they are able to use the new technology and are prepared for the business process and cultural change that accompany UC. And finally, measure your results so that you can refine your strategy as you look to optimize your results. Starting today will ensure that you have the foundation in place to rapidly introduce employee productivity and business process improvements as opportunities arise.

Don't sit at home reading the postcards from others that have already embarked on the UC journey. There's no reason to delay in planning your own UC journey; in the end, the advantages and benefits will make the trip worthwhile.

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#### **About Aspect**

Aspect provides software and consulting services that turn the potential of unified communications into real business results across the enterprise and in the contact center. Applying 35 years of insight and experience, Aspect helps more than two-thirds of the FORTUNE Global 100, as well as small and medium enterprises, power their business processes with communications. For more information, [visit www.aspect.com](http://www.aspect.com).

