

Enhancing Business with Smarter, More Effective Communications



Introducing Cisco Unified Communications Applications

Summary

In today's global environment, knowledge workers frequently travel away from their offices or workgroups—or are located in distributed locations far from peers, subordinates, and supervisors. Organizations from the enterprise to the small and medium-sized business (SMB) have spent lavishly to give these knowledge workers communications devices and applications designed to keep them connected. But productivity suffers and projects are delayed when customers cannot reach these primary players.

Unified communications is an emerging class of applications and services designed to improve communications within the modern organization—to keep workgroups connected, enable them to collaborate effectively, and streamline business processes.

As the industry leader in networking and secure business communications, Cisco® is uniquely positioned to deliver the solution to these challenges: Cisco Unified Communications is a comprehensive IP communications system of voice, video, data, and mobility products and applications that help organizations communicate more effectively, more securely, and in a more personal way.

This white paper addresses Cisco Unified Communications applications in the context of emerging organizational needs and identifies quantifiable benefits—such as greater productivity, a richer collaboration environment, and reduced costs—that can be gained by deploying these applications.

The Problem: Many Devices, Not Enough Dialogue

In 1970, the late management visionary Peter Drucker invented the term knowledge worker. The most important role in business, he predicted, would be “to make knowledge more productive.”

That goal remains at the forefront of the modern organization, where knowledge workers—from executive and middle management to contact center agents—travel constantly or work in mobile or distributed environments.

According to a study conducted by Sage Research for Cisco, 27 percent of the employees of IP-enabled companies travel at least once per month. Of those companies, 58 percent say that one-fifth of their workforce travel out of the office monthly, and almost one quarter report that 40 percent or more of their employees work from the road at least once each month.

The prevalence of the distributed workforce—located in multiple campuses or smaller offices, often around the world—represents another challenge. Nemertes Research reported in 2005 that 90 percent of employees work in locations other than headquarters, with between 40 and 70 percent of employees working in different locations from their supervisors. Nemertes also noted that the number of virtual workers (people who work in offices geographically separated from their supervisors) has increased by 800 percent since 2000.

Indeed, millions of knowledge workers telecommute from home. According to published data from In-Stat, 44 million Americans telecommuted at least part time in 2004, and 51 million are expected to do so in 2008; the same study estimated that there were 14 million full-time telecommuters in 2004.

Figure 1. Millions of Knowledge Workers Telecommute from Home



Finally, the rise of outsourcing and the networked virtual organization among SMB and medium-sized businesses—that concentrate on their core responsibilities and partner with other entities to complete the “value chain”—make it imperative that project team members be able to communicate easily and transparently across organizations.

Business and technology decision makers already place a high priority on providing optimized communication between remotely located knowledge workers and their teams. Indeed, the modern organization is already awash in communications devices. The Sage Research study (conducted in September 2005 and encompassing interviews with more than 200 organizations) revealed that those businesses average more than six communications devices and almost five communications applications per employee. At the same time, the “quality of interaction” expectations have increased as the use of Web chats and Web conferences, video conferences, and multimedia contact centers has grown.

But the essential problem—how to create and sustain an effective communication environment for mobile personnel and distributed workgroups—remains.

As stated in an August 2005 Forrester Consulting Report commissioned by Cisco, “Business communications have become more complex. Despite investments in technology such as instant messaging and mobile devices, companies still have difficulties contacting key decision makers in a timely manner.” (The study was designed to quantify the effect of unified communications applications on businesses.)

In order to solve this problem, modern organizations must overcome two major communications challenges:

- *Gain visibility* into the availability, schedules, or presence status of primary decision makers and primary players in a timely way
- *Improve collaboration*—spontaneously, productively, cost-effectively, and on an ongoing basis, regardless of their location or the device being used—to produce tangible results and business benefits

Four Major Pain Points

The failure to address these challenges inflicts real penalties. Projects are delayed: the Sage Research study discovered that 22 percent of the organizations it polled experienced monthly communication-caused delays—and 13 percent experienced such delays weekly.

Communications delays disrupt efforts to streamline business processes or adopt emerging “best practices”. Decisions and projects are negatively affected by lack of instant (or timely) access to decision makers and collaboration with important peers, and communications and technology resources are squandered.

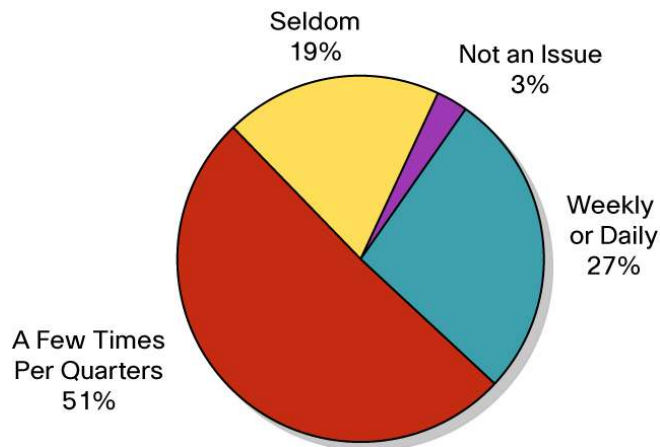
Ultimately, both profitability and customer and channel relationships are put at risk. More specifically:

- Communication-caused delay and disruption is a pervasive business problem—In its study, Sage Research found that the multiplicity of communications devices has not yet solved perhaps the most obvious problem in the distributed and mobile workplace: how to access an important colleague or primary decision maker on the right device *the first time*. Indeed, 36 percent of respondents said they typically cannot reach remotely located colleagues on the first attempt, and 52 percent said they were forced to use multiple means of contact on a daily basis.

The Forrester study revealed that 78 percent of the 67 IT decision makers it polled experienced project delays at least quarterly because of the inability to quickly communicate with peers, supervisors, or subordinates. Twenty-seven percent reported that it happens on a daily or weekly basis. (Refer to Figure 2.)

In addition, 63 percent reported a slowdown of projects, while 25 percent reported complete work stoppages due to delayed communications. Moreover, productivity suffers when communications opportunities are missed. Employees are forced to leave voice and e-mail messages, and try other means of contacting peers or decision makers. On the other end, recipients each must manage—review, delete, archive, or respond to—hundreds of messages daily and weekly.

Figure 2. “How Frequently Is a Project Delayed Because of Difficulty in Reaching Key Decision Makers When They Are Needed?”



Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Cisco.

- Communications complexity affects long-term productivity, business process reform, and financial performance—The Forrester Consulting study commissioned by Cisco found that, for many organizations, communication-caused delays are considered part of the daily routine. Poor communication affects strategic initiatives such as lean or just-in-time manufacturing, supply chain optimization, and customer relationship management. It can have disastrous results in high-turnover environments that are highly dependent on customer service or in the perishable goods industries. And it can frustrate the development of next-generation contact center environments that depend on the ability to quickly escalate customer inquiries, route them to the right “expert” across the distributed contact center, and resolve them quickly using the optimum mix of media.
- Decision support outcomes suffer from the inability to access and collaborate effectively with primary players—Knowledge workers need ways and means to resolve urgent questions across an entire project lifecycle. Upstream decisions affect future decision making and even the ultimate viability or relative success of the project itself. With a distributed or mobile workforce, primary players must be accessible and fully enabled to communicate effectively—spontaneously and fully—with team members. According to the Forrester Consulting study, “When issues come up, many workers find it difficult to quickly assemble their team in real time to discuss a critical problem. Trying to schedule informal or unplanned conference calls often results in delays while waiting for others to respond. As 74 percent of workers surveyed indicate, it takes up to a full day to schedule and confirm conference calls.” Until now, telephone conference and video conference solutions have lacked the capability to support spontaneous, full, and deep collaboration—and they were often expensive, constricted by communications silos, and too difficult to administer.
- Resources are improperly used or misallocated because of the complexity of communication—Mindful of the critical importance of maintaining customer loyalty and building brand equity, businesses invest heavily in both developing human talent and enabling technologies to, for example, better manage customer inquiries about a new product or service. But the excessive use and lack of integration of communications tools (such as desktop phones and mobile phones, desktop PCs, and laptops) and applications (e-mail, voicemail, instant messaging, and others) have undermined that strategic objective, and can squander those investments. In the example, if the customer does not receive the requested information in a timely manner, the sale is canceled. And, over time,

the organization cannot effectively grow its business or improve customer satisfaction ratings and loyalty.

An Emerging Need: Unified Communications

These developments have created a need among businesses—from SMBs to the enterprise—for an effective communications system that enables them to streamline business processes; reach the right person the first time; make communications more personal, collaborative, and mobile; and improve profitability. This system is called *the Cisco Unified Communications system*.

Forrester Consulting noted in the study that there is “a new paradigm for employee communications” that improves the flow of information “and allows employees to reach each other rather than an unattended communications device.”

Unified communications enables people to find peers or decision makers using a single telephone number or Internet address. It integrates e-mail, instant messaging, and calendaring applications with communications devices and applications—telephony—wired and wireless; voice messaging; and audio, video, and Web conferencing. Unified communications applications support advanced presence-sensitivity and find-me capability, and media independence. They are easy to use, with a familiar intuitive interface linked to powerful functions. Finally, they provide voice access to applications and data.

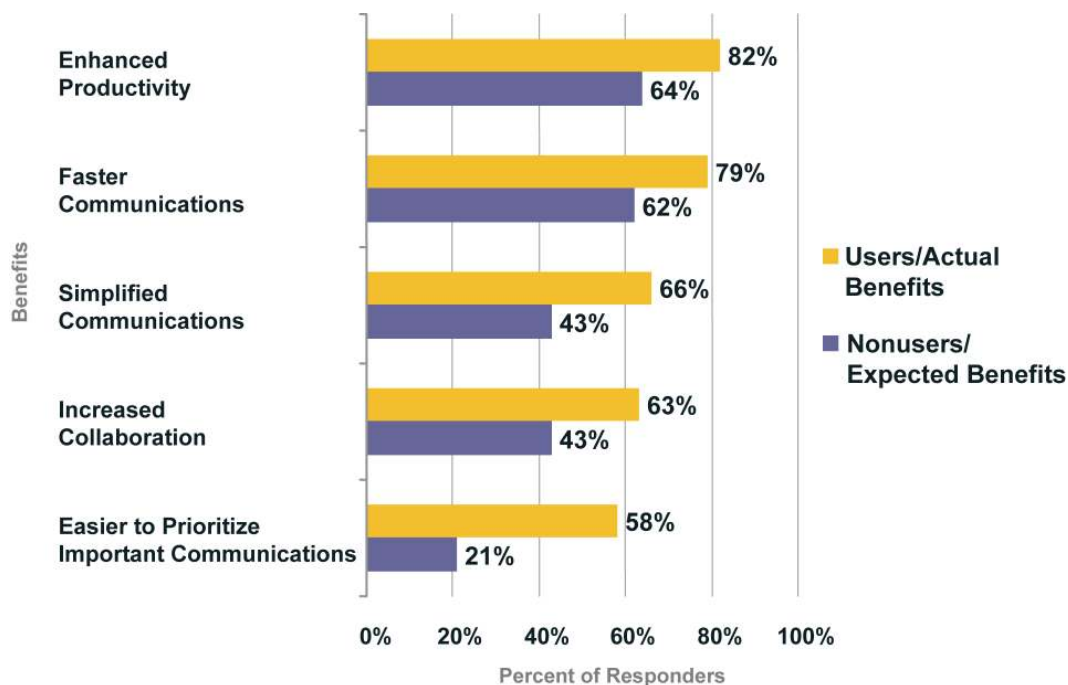
Unified messaging, one cornerstone of the unified communications application, has already proven itself to be a highly effective productivity tool. The Sage Research survey revealed that employees without unified messaging spend more than 75 minutes a day handling e-mail, voicemail, and fax messages. But central message management of unified messaging saves people an average of 43 minutes a day—a 57-percent improvement in productivity.

Sage Research also found an average reduction of 30 percent in conferencing expenses (when in-house conferencing was deployed) and \$1700 saved monthly on travel avoidance by using rich-media conferencing, another core unified communications application. It also reported that unified communications-enabled employees save an average of 55 minutes per day, and that conferencing, soft phones, and other unified communications applications significantly reduce out-of-pocket costs for travel, long-distance telephony, and nonintegrated videoconference services. Moreover, Sage Research discovered that deployed unified communications applications actually exceed expectations.

Figure 3. Actual vs. Perceived Benefits of Unified Communications

Q1: What are the main benefits you realize from being able to access your corporate communications applications from a single desktop interface? N = 38 (respondents who currently use unified communications clients)

Q2: What are the main types of benefits you would expect from being able to access your communications applications from a single desktop interface? N = 165 (respondents who do not currently use unified communications clients)



Source: Sage Research

Cisco: Uniquely Positioned to Provide a Superior Unified Communications Solution

Unified communications requires an integrated communications strategy and architecture—enabling the secure combination of voice, video, data, and mobility applications within a robust, intelligent network. With its industry-leading breadth of solutions, its world-class partnerships, and its understanding of how to map technology to address business challenges, Cisco is uniquely able to fulfill the promise of unified communications.

Cisco Unified Communications is a comprehensive IP communications system of voice, video, data, and mobility products and applications. It enables more effective, more secure, more personal communications that directly affect both sales and profitability. It brings people together by enabling a new way of communicating—where your business moves with you, security is everywhere, and information is always available...whenever and wherever it is needed. Cisco Unified Communications is part of an integrated solution that includes network infrastructure, security, mobility, network management products, lifecycle services, flexible deployment and outsourced management options, end-user and partner financing packages, and third-party communications applications.

Cisco Unified Communications provides structure and intelligence to business communications, helping organizations streamline and integrate their communications and ultimately connect users to users—instead of simply to devices. Using the reach and intelligence of the network to deliver presence and preference information, Cisco Unified Communications strengthens connectedness

to provide better, more natural collaboration, quicker decision making, reduced communications bottlenecks, and improved overall efficiency. With more informed, responsive customer service, organizations can improve customer loyalty, sales, and profitability.

Cisco Unified Communications Applications

The Cisco Unified Communications system offers a complete array of secure, integrated applications that support communication and collaboration, including intelligent telephony, mobility management, messaging, video and rich-media conferencing, and contact center applications. These standards-based applications integrate smoothly with the business tools that users use on their desktops and while on the road every day. Automated configuration speeds deployment and reduces operating expenses, and robust service offerings improve critical business processes and help ensure high availability.

The Cisco Unified Communications portfolio includes the following:

- *Cisco Unified Communications clients* such as Cisco IP Communicator, Cisco Unified Video Advantage, Cisco Unified CallConnector for Microsoft Office, Cisco Unified CallConnector Mobility, Cisco Unified Mobile Communicator, and Cisco Unified Personal Communicator improve productivity, speed decision making, and enhance collaboration. The Sage Research study showed that users of unified communications clients saved an average of 32 minutes each day just by reaching colleagues on the first attempt. Cisco provides a range of clients—from intelligent telephony applications to full, rich-media interfaces for both desktop and mobile devices that integrate voice, video, instant messaging, mobility, Web conferencing, and presence sensitivity—to meet the needs of SMB, midmarket, and enterprise-class organizations.

Figure 4. Cisco Unified Communications Enables More Effective, More Secure, More Personal Communications



- *Presence and mobility applications*, including Cisco Unified Presence, provide presence and state information for features such as Cisco IP Phone Messenger and clients such as Cisco Unified Personal Communicator, Cisco Unified CallConnector for Microsoft Office for Cisco Unified Communications Manager Express users, and the Cisco Unified Mobile Communicator, and let users know which co-workers are available to them and by which device—wired or wireless—at any given time. In addition, Cisco Unified Mobility for Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unified CallConnector Mobility for Cisco

Unified Communications Manager Express help enable “single-number reach” capability. The Sage Research study revealed that device-aware presence capabilities save an average of 32 minutes daily. Moreover, 50 percent of users claimed to save 15 to 30 minutes per day, and 47 percent reported that they save 30 to 60 minutes per day.

- *Messaging*, including Cisco Unity® messaging solutions, Cisco Unity, Cisco Unity Connection, and Cisco Unity Express, is a foundational element in bringing unified communications to businesses of all sizes. With powerful voicemail, integrated messaging, and unified messaging options and a rich array of advanced features such as speech recognition, users can interact with the system in a more convenient and productive way. The Sage Research user study showed that unified messaging saves the average user 43 minutes a day—and the traveling knowledge worker 55 minutes daily—through more simplified message management.
- *Rich-media conferencing and collaboration solutions*, including the Cisco Unified MeetingPlace® solution, Cisco Unified MeetingPlace Express, Cisco Unified MeetingPlace Express VT, Cisco Unified Videoconferencing, and Cisco TelePresence, make long-distance collaboration as easy and effective as meeting face to face. They provide a range of capabilities—from integrated voice, video, and Web conferencing to ultra-high-definition video, and interactive elements that deliver a unique, “in-person” experience over the network—to improve personal productivity, streamline business processes, and reduce costs. Sage Research reported that conferencing solutions showed a 30-percent reduction in conferencing expenses and a significant reduction in travel costs.
- *The Cisco Unified Contact Center* includes both assisted- and self-service solutions. Assisted-service offerings—including Cisco Unified Contact Center Enterprise, Cisco Unified Contact Center Express, and Cisco Unified Contact Center Hosted—help enterprises, service providers, and SMBs create a next-generation customer interaction network. They are designed to meet contact center needs for improved operational efficiencies, revenue growth, employee productivity, and customer satisfaction. Self-service offerings include Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal and Cisco Unified IP Interactive Voice Response (IP IVR). Cisco Unified Customer Voice Portal allows businesses to take advantage of existing Web self-service deployments for a consistent customer experience, regardless of interaction channel.

Summary: Streamline Business Processes with More Effective Communications

After massive investments in technologies and devices, businesses demand ways of simplifying communications for their mobile and distributed workforce to improve communication flows, access primary decision makers quickly, enhance collaboration, and improve productivity to positively affect their business.

Cisco Unified Communications applications provide the means to flexibly and productively manage communications in a multidevice, mobile, and distributed environment. They speed access and improve communication, integrate different device modes and communication applications, and dramatically improve collaboration, allowing organizations to streamline business processes, reach the right resource the first time, and enhance profitability.

The Cisco Unified Communications Solution provides an integrated communications strategy and architecture—helping enable the secure combination of voice, video, data, and mobility applications within a robust, intelligent network. With its industry-leading breadth of solutions, its world-class partnerships, and its understanding of how to map technology to address business challenges, Cisco is uniquely able to fulfill the promise of unified communications.

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