

Modernise Your Workplace with Cloud Communications

Empower Employees and Drive Better Results



Companies everywhere need their workforces to perform faster and smarter than ever before. Distributed teams, deeply intertwined supply chains, rapidly evolving technology and increasing mobility have radically transformed the modern workplace and serve up growing communication challenges. Today, most businesses are struggling to enable truly seamless communication and collaboration across platforms, systems and devices.

Enter unified communications (UC).

UC solutions provide a single platform that integrates real-time communication features, such as phone calls, instant messaging and video conferencing, with non-real time communication features, such as voicemail, email, SMS and fax. UC solutions are designed to eliminate the barriers that have historically separated voice calls, email, instant messaging and conferencing in all forms, thus enabling faster connections and greater collaboration.

Some companies opt to deploy UC solutions on-premise, but the cloud-based model—in which the telecommunications equipment and applications are hosted and maintained offsite by a cloud communications provider—is gaining popularity. Cloud-based UC solutions, also known as cloud communications, are ideal for businesses that have limited IT staff, a distributed workforce and/or a desire for payment flexibility.

By enabling diverse communication media to be carried over a common Internet Protocol (IP) network, cloud communications makes it possible to manage a full suite of capabilities from a single point and use them across a variety of devices.

But what's the best way to maximise UC capabilities for your specific workplace? Spiceworks surveyed IT professionals responsible for IT decisions at their companies to get their insights on identifying and deploying collaboration and communication solutions across their organisations. This white paper explores the survey results, including key concerns, pain points and roadmaps around driving UC strategies.



The Need for Easy-to-Use Solutions

Businesses everywhere are discovering the appeal of a communications solution that extends the functionality of their business phone system beyond a dial tone. In the new global workplace that's driven by collaboration, employees rely on a variety of solutions to communicate. Our survey respondents indicated they use multiple voice solutions in the workplace, including mobile phones (67%), on-premise private branch exchange (PBX) phone systems (65%) and hosted/Internet-based phone systems (50%).

Top Three Voice Solutions in the Workplace



In most organisations, users rely on these voice solutions and other channels—email, instant messaging and so on—to communicate with internal and external audiences. Traditionally, these various forms of communication work independently of each other, sometimes forcing employees to try multiple methods before successfully reaching someone.

An effective UC deployment brings together these various forms of communication. UC solutions harness the power of software to streamline communications and collaboration tasks with anytime, anywhere access, using tools that integrate seamlessly and are simple to use. Business users can quickly find the right person and easily communicate from within everyday applications and business processes.

In a robust UC environment, the workforce is empowered to accelerate business processes, work more efficiently and improve service delivery. Business-critical information reaches recipients faster and through the most preferred channel. UC can become a competitive advantage for businesses that need one system to manage multiple tools and platforms, making their employees more productive.



Empowering the Mobile Workforce

It's no secret that the mobile workforce is on the rise. The global mobile workforce is expected to climb to 1.75 billion workers by 2020, accounting for 42% of the total global workforce.¹ For today's employees, the idea of a workplace doesn't necessarily translate to an office space. It might be an airplane seat, a coffee shop, a hotel room or a trade show booth. The modern employee regularly collaborates with internal and external stakeholders via desktop phones, mobile devices, desktop computers and laptops via voice, chat and video conferencing tools.

As more employees leave the corporate office to manage their workload on the road, it's critical that their applications and devices provide access to all of the data, resources and communications features they would experience at their desk.

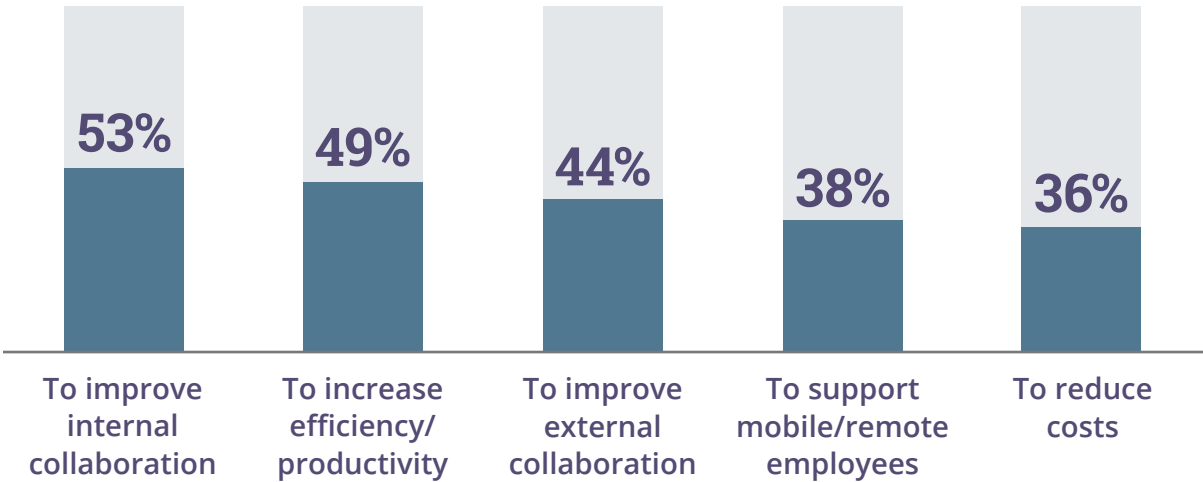
UC gives mobile workers the ability to make and answer calls on the office phone system from virtually anywhere. To external callers, it's just as easy and reliable to reach a mobile worker in a UC environment as it is someone talking on a desk phone in the office. In a UC setting, your employees can customise when, where and how they can be reached. For your customers and partners, UC makes it easier for them to interact and collaborate with employees using their preferred communication methods.

In a technology-driven work environment, everyone—not just mobile workers—is stifled by inconveniences like file incompatibility or missing an important voicemail message. Business users that collaborate with dispersed teams often encounter hiccups in starting a meeting because a remote team member has trouble connecting to the video conferencing program. In all instances, productivity suffers as the technical glitches add up.

With a UC infrastructure in place, your organisation can help ensure hassle-free collaborative experiences. For instance, voice calls to desk phones can be routed to the user’s mobile phone when required. Or an email notification with the audio file of a voicemail can be sent to the user’s mobile phone. In simple terms, UC helps businesses get more work done effectively with fewer resources and time.

Among the Spiceworks survey respondents, IT pros cited improved internal collaboration (53%), increased productivity (49%) and better external collaboration (44%) as their top three incentives for implementing a comprehensive UC solution.

Top Drivers for Communication and Collaboration Solution Usage and Consideration





Making Simplicity a Reality

In every technology-driven workplace, simplicity is key. Organisations constantly seek streamlined processes and improved efficiency across all departments. A comprehensive UC deployment is one of the most critical steps a company can take toward truly achieving fluid and seamless communication.

Simple and seamless UC experiences also stand out because they make life easier for everyone in the organisation. This is particularly valuable to IT pros who often have their heads and hands in every aspect of the job: strategic, operational and administrative.

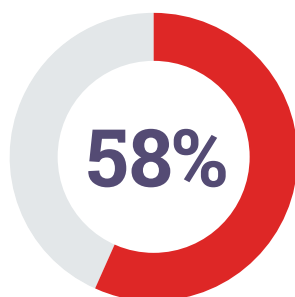
Most IT professionals find themselves juggling multiple tasks around the clock, figuring out how to get things done with limited resources. A study found that IT directors and administrators have the most demanding jobs in the industry.² They need to be smart, flexible and always available—much like the technology they work to support.

According to the Spiceworks survey, IT pros overwhelmingly seek simplicity in the various areas that they oversee and execute—from deployment and management to troubleshooting. More than one in four of the surveyed IT pros expressed a strong interest in deploying an all-in-one hosted UC solution from a single vendor, keeping the company's productivity high while also lowering the total cost of ownership.

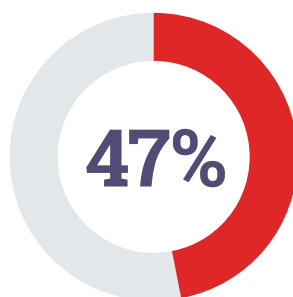
"It seems like every other week someone in my company is attending a different online meeting and it requires a different piece of software that I've never heard of."

—IT pro, describing challenges with communication solutions

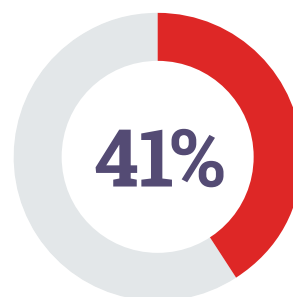
What IT Pros Want in a UC Solution



Simplified
management



Simplified support/
troubleshooting



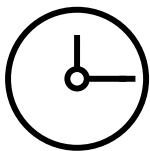
Simplified
set up



Looking for More

While IT pros everywhere seek a consistent, unified interface and communications experience across multiple devices, most of them are dissatisfied with their current infrastructure. Only 28% of the survey respondents indicated that they are completely or very satisfied with their organisation’s existing communications solutions. Some of the key drivers of this growing dissatisfaction include the assorted learning curves associated with each solution, significant time required to train users, limited troubleshooting support and the complexity arising from using multiple platforms.

Top Communication and Collaboration Challenges



33%

Time required to train end users



27%

Limited knowledge/ expertise to support/ troubleshoot



23%

Confusion with using multiple platforms



22%

Cost/affordability of paying for multiple solutions



22%

Poor audio quality

In the always-on IT landscape, where businesses must ensure continuous operations and data availability, it's imperative that IT professionals minimise the risk of downtime and maintain business continuity. For global corporations with data centres located thousands of miles apart, many IT pros look for vendors that provide secure and reliable hosted communications. But, regardless of company size, security and reliability are priorities for any business phone system.

What would make life dramatically easier for businesses? If all of the key communications and collaboration services were unified under one umbrella, delivered seamlessly and securely to all of the company's employees on whatever device they choose to use. This would result in tremendous productivity gains for the business user as well as in reduced deployment and management headaches for the IT pro.

While the thought of changing communications providers can be a deterrent, more than one in four of the survey respondents said they were likely to evaluate new UC solution providers for their organisation in the next year. The top five features that IT pros say are critical in their UC solutions are: extension dialing (69%), audio conferencing (64%), IP desk phones (62%), IP telephony (55%) and remote management (54%). Though less critical, call recording, instant messaging and video conferencing were also rated as "nice to have" features.

"My users aren't technology experts. They are often confounded by relatively simple problems with online solutions."

—IT pro, describing challenges with communication solutions



8x8—Complete Communications

Businesses everywhere are turning to 8x8 to connect, communicate, collaborate and compete. 8x8 delivers a complete UC solution in the cloud, combining voice, video, chat and contact centre capabilities on one platform. 8x8 eliminates information silos to deliver vital, real-time intelligence across all applications and devices, improving customer experience, team productivity and business performance.

With 8x8, companies can benefit from award-winning business phone service, team messaging, video conferencing and other key features their employees demand, such as presence awareness, mobile apps and visual voicemail. And, with its built-in disaster recovery capabilities, 8x8 helps ensure high availability, business continuity and service reliability, even if your power goes down or a natural disaster occurs.

For IT pros looking to change their communications and collaboration provider—or to deploy a comprehensive, cloud-based UC environment—8x8 hosts and maintains all the communication services it provides, eliminating on-site maintenance costs and significantly reducing IT administration hassles.

8x8 knows that every company wrestles with a unique set of challenges—from expanding operations and going global to seeking better collaboration, greater reliability and more robust security. No matter what the concern, 8x8 cloud communications rises to meet the challenge.

Ready for the Next Step?

Contact an 8x8 Solutions Expert to learn more about how to modernise your workplace with cloud communications. Call **0333 043 8888** or visit **8x8.com/uk**.

LEARN MORE



8x8, Inc. (NYSE:EGHT) is a leading provider of cloud phone, meeting, collaboration and contact centre solutions with over a million business users worldwide. 8x8 helps enterprises engage at the speed of employee and customer expectations by putting the collective intelligence of the organisation in the hands of every employee. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com/au, or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.



Source:

Based on a Spiceworks Voice of IT survey of 175 U.S. IT decision-makers on behalf of 8x8, February 2017.

¹ Strategy Analytics, *Global Mobile Workforce Forecast 2015-2020*, 2015

² Emerson Network Power, *Most Always-On IT Jobs Survey*, 2012