

Business Communications 2020: What to Expect in the Year Ahead

8 UCaaS Trends to
Watch in 2020



Introduction

Customer Experience Manager John spends most of his days in and out of meetings. Whether he's journey mapping, evaluating new technology, or making updates to the latest Customer Satisfaction surveys, he relies heavily on technology to get this job done. The problem? His company uses a variety of vendors to serve several different needs. For internal chat, the team uses Slack. For phones, they still rely on-premises technology, but many of his customers have his personal cellphone number, too. In addition to Slack, John gets messages throughout the day on Skype for Business, which they also use for conference calling and video chats. Keeping track of all the threads and conversations has become more and more challenging. He wishes there was a better way, and according to Hanover Research conducted earlier this year, he's not alone. More than two-thirds (70%) of companies use two to five providers for communication services, while almost a quarter (22%) use more than six providers. Only half of those businesses are satisfied.

How might these numbers shift in 2020? Will more companies make a move to cloud-based Unified Communications platforms? What other trends in business communications will change the ways we work, collaborate, and serve employees and customers? In this eBook, we'll share eight trends to watch in 2020 and beyond. Keep reading for insight on video communications, the emergence of digital natives in leadership, the pace of cloud migrations, and more. At the end of each section, we've saved space for you to take notes. As you're planning for technology upgrades in 2020, we hope you'll use this eBook as a space to get organized, plan your strategy, and prioritize your investments.

Ready to begin? Let's start with trend #1.





Trend #1: Adoption of Video Will Increase Exponentially

While video has been on the rise for years now, we expect a sharp increase in adoption within the next year. Over the last two decades, the way businesses use video to communicate has shifted dramatically. Gone are the days when video meetings required expensive setups and external webcams. Now, with the click of a button, employees can join video meetings from their laptop or mobile phone, with no software downloads required. And although camera-shy employees and leaders have been slow to embrace video in the workplace entirely, the tide is shifting. From 2020 onward, video will no longer be a nice-to-have tool for the business communications toolset. It will be essential.

According to [2019 research from PGI](#), 75% of CEOs expect video conferencing to completely replace conference calls in the near future. And for good reason. As the enterprise workforce becomes more distributed, and more than half of employees begin working from home at least part of the week, video will become an essential tool for collaboration, relationship-building, and productivity. CFOs are also motivated to invest in videoconferencing technology

and to increase enterprise-wide adoption, as businesses will be able to realize significant savings in travel costs. (According to PGI, [56% of CFOs worldwide](#) plan to invest in video conferencing systems for this reason.) And the reduced travel will also help businesses reduce their carbon footprint, meaning sustainability managers will push for broader adoption, too.

Is your business ready for the growth of video? If you're considering an investment or upgrade in video conferencing technology in the year ahead, use this space to organize your thoughts and prepare a business case.

Action Item: Jot down your requirements using the MoSCoW method: Must have, Should have, Could have, Won't have.

Must have features:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Should have features:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Could have features:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Won't have features:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We expect a sharp increase in video adoption within the next year, regardless of location.





Trend #2: Employee Demand for Better Collaboration Tools

According to a Hanover Research study commissioned by 8x8, fifty-four percent of professionals define “collaboration” as working together towards a common goal. And according to that same research, the most prevalent challenges that professionals face when using the collaboration media are connectivity issues and miscommunication due to a lack of face-to-face interaction. Both of which are issues that the majority of employees have little patience for.

And [the New Digital Workplace Divide research paper](#) reveals more than half of digital workers at “technology laggard” organizations expressed frustration with their employer. Further, employees at companies with outdated communication technology are 450% more likely to want to leave and work somewhere else. What can businesses do to ease the frustration? Hanover Research indicates that employees want the ability to Instant Message (IM) and screen share, and remote employees, in particular, desire video collaboration capability. Employees feel IMing, screen sharing, and video meetings help them better collaborate and communicate and improve productivity. And when it comes to all this technology,

more and more employees prefer to use one platform, and a majority cite reliable connectivity at the top of their wishlist for features.

Does your current technology stack enable this level of collaboration? Are your employees satisfied with the features, ease of use, and reliability? Ask your employees to share their thoughts on your existing toolset and their ideas for improving internal collaboration and communication.

Use the space below to note your findings.

Trend #3: Continued Security & Compliance Concerns

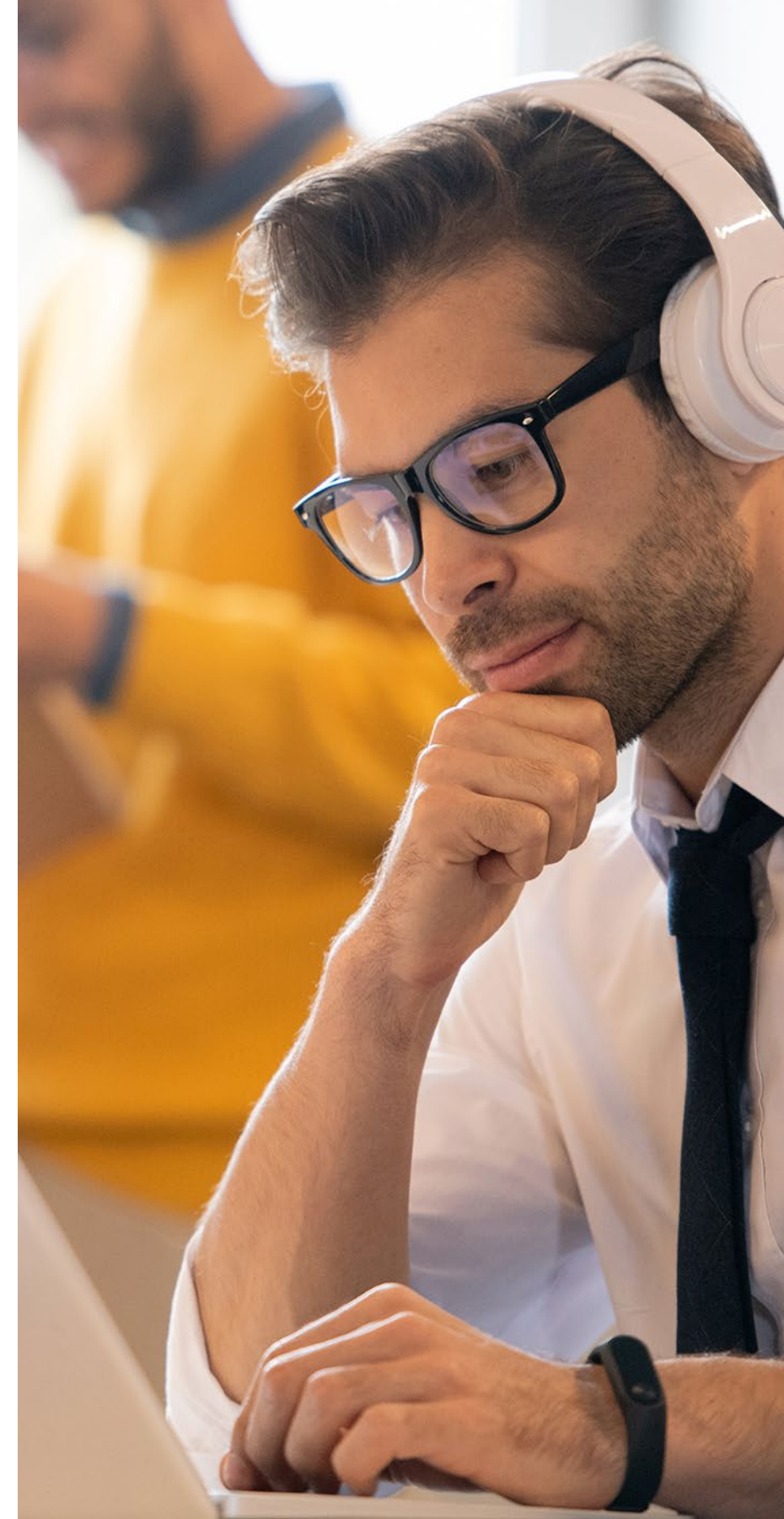
Data Security is defined as protecting data and data infrastructure from unauthorized access for malicious purposes. The news is full of reports of data breaches at organizations ranging from top retailers, hospitals, government municipalities, as well as global Fortune 500 companies. In fact, those stories have only seemed to garner more media attention in recent years. As a result, data security is more than a hot topic; it is a real concern for all IT managers across all industries. And it's an important consideration for leaders investing in communications technology, as it has a profound impact on the integrity of business communications. While security and compliance have been trending topics for the last decade, this trend won't fade away in the coming year.

Whether HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is your main concern or your focus is CPNI (Consumer Proprietary Network Information) regulations, it's critical to ensure that the tools your employees use to communicate both internally and externally are secure and equipped to safeguard confidential information.

[8x8 Employee and industry expert Kay Phelps](#) recommends asking these eight questions:

- 1 Are you a HIPAA-compliant business associate? If so, can you put it in writing?
- 2 What has your communications company done to ensure its own compliance?
- 3 Do you have a dedicated security and compliance officer?
- 4 Which security and compliance regulations and standards do you support?
- 5 Has your compliance been assessed by independent experts? If so, who did the assessment?
- 6 What kind of fail over capabilities does your service provide?
- 7 What methods do you offer for business continuity?
- 8 What makes you better at responding to emerging security threats than the competition?

As you're evaluating UCaaS options, reading the Gartner Magic Quadrant report is a great place to start. Not only does the report evaluate vendors based upon security capability, but it also offers unbiased recommendations covering a variety of key considerations. You can [download a free copy of the 2019 report, which named 8x8 an eight-time leader in UCaaS, here](#).





Trend #4: All Eyes on AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a thing of the future. It's not just something the Jetsons dreamed up; now, it is a reality, and its presence is known in households all over the world. In its most basic form, average Americans use AI in the way of Siri, Google Home, or Alexa. In 2019, [118 million households were equipped with a smart speaker](#), and 52% of smart speaker owners had two or more in their homes. Beyond Alexa, how is AI making its way into the workplace, and what's next? [At UC Expo 2019](#), the future of AI technology in unified communications was one of the top topics for discussion. Heading into 2020, we don't see the chatter slowing down anytime soon.

If you're wondering how your business should prepare for the growing presence of AI, here are a few things to consider:

- According to [Juniper Research](#), chatbots are expected to help cut business costs by \$8 billion by the year 2022.
- According to [Drift](#), 27% of adult clients in the United States are ready to purchase essential goods through a chatbot, 13% of adults in the US have at least once bought expensive items using chatbots.

- Machine learning is expected to rise in prominence—in one year alone, [Netflix saved \\$1 billion](#) by implementing a machine-learning algorithm to make personalized viewing recommendations for users.
- According to [Harvard Business Review](#), companies using AI for sales were able to increase their leads by more than 50% and reduce call time by 60–70%
- The AI market is projected to become a \$190 billion industry by 2025.
- AI will boost profitability by 38% and generate \$14 trillion of additional revenue by 2035.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a thing of the future; now, it is a reality.

Which areas of your business might benefit the most from AI? What are your top three priorities for AI implementation/adoption in 2020? Use this space to compose your thoughts and develop an action plan.

Brainstorming Activity

What are 3-5 business pain points that AI might help your business solve? How could AI help you better communicate internally, with prospects, and with customers?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next Steps/Milestones/Priorities:





Trend #5: Focus on Mobility

Gone are the days when workers were tethered to their desks or cubicles for eight hours each day. Today's workforce is mobile and distributed, and only becoming increasingly so. Within the next decade, [50% of the U.S. workforce will work from home three days or more each week](#). This drastic shift has already disrupted office telecommunication needs, and we don't see that trend slowing down in 2020. And mobility isn't just essential for remote employees. In industries like insurance, the need for communication access in the field has never been greater. 8x8 client Farmers Insurance is a perfect example of a mobile workforce in action.

"To serve as a personal insurance agent, I need a high-quality communication system," says John Clark, Farmers Insurance Independent Agent. "With 8x8, I can be anywhere and still be available to clients."

If, like John, your business requires high-quality, flexible, and mobile communication tools, here are some key considerations:

- What features will your employees need? IM, team messaging, call-forwarding, voicemail, fax? Will at-home employees be able to access the same systems and functions as in-office employees?
- Will employees need access to a mobile app?
- What are your media storage needs?
- How will mobility impact customer engagement?
- Will you require call recordings? International calling?

UCaaS platforms like 8x8 make all of the above possible, with affordable and flexible pricing options, and easy setup.

Trend #6: Digital Natives Will Fill the Leadership Pipeline

As of September 2019, [10,000 Baby Boomers \(the generation born between 1946 and 1964\) are retiring each day](#). In the year 2020 alone, more than 3.65 million Baby Boomers will leave the U.S. workforce. Many of those 3.65 million currently hold leadership positions, which leaves businesses scrambling to fill their leadership pipelines. Enter: Millennials and Gen Z. According to Time, by the year 2025, 75% of employees will be Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996). How will this new generation of leaders change business communications?

In a [survey of 4,500 office workers across six regions](#), TechSmith found that nearly half of Millennials think their current company's communications methods are outdated. Favoring a more visual approach to communication, 67% of younger workers in the study said they'd prefer to use more image-based tools at work, and 59% said they'd like to use video tools more.

What about Generation Z? (Those born after 1996) Now entering their 20s, this generation is invading the workplace, and according to [research conducted by Robert Half Technology Group](#), they value communication above all else. When asked what skill

was most important to their future success in the workplace, Gen Z'ers said communication. Eighty-nine percent said it would be vital for their long-term career growth.

Is your business equipped to provide compelling, visual, and collaborative communication?

Use the space below to brainstorm areas of improvement and potential opportunities for investment:





Trend #7: Increase in Enterprise Cloud Adoption

While cloud adoption continues to rise, there's still tremendous opportunity for enterprises to update their legacy systems. According to research from McKinsey, enterprises that move to the cloud can expect to reduce their IT incidents by 70% and reduce IT overhead costs by 30-40%. For businesses looking to reduce technical debt and realize a quick return on investment, cloud adoption makes a lot of sense. Which is why we predict a significant uptick in enterprise cloud adoption in the next year. Is your business ready to make a move? Ask these questions first.

8 questions to ask before you undertake a cloud migration:

- 1 Do we stay on-premises, or move to the cloud, and will it be risky? (Spoiler: yes, you should move to the cloud! Find out more here: <https://www.8x8.com/uk/blog/cloud-communications-made-easy-8-questions-you-need-to-ask>)
- 2 What policies, capabilities, and certifications are in place to ensure our data is kept private and secure?
- 3 With a growing distributed workforce and increasing disruption possibilities, what capabilities are in place to ensure business continuity?
- 4 What is the cloud deployment model that ensures quick and complete service delivery?
- 5 How do we reliably measure our performance, and gain insight into the customer experience?
- 6 With customers driving innovation, how can a partner keep up with that and enable us to deliver?
- 7 How do I reduce the complexity and cost of our current network infrastructure?
- 8 How difficult is it to integrate communications into our systems of records?

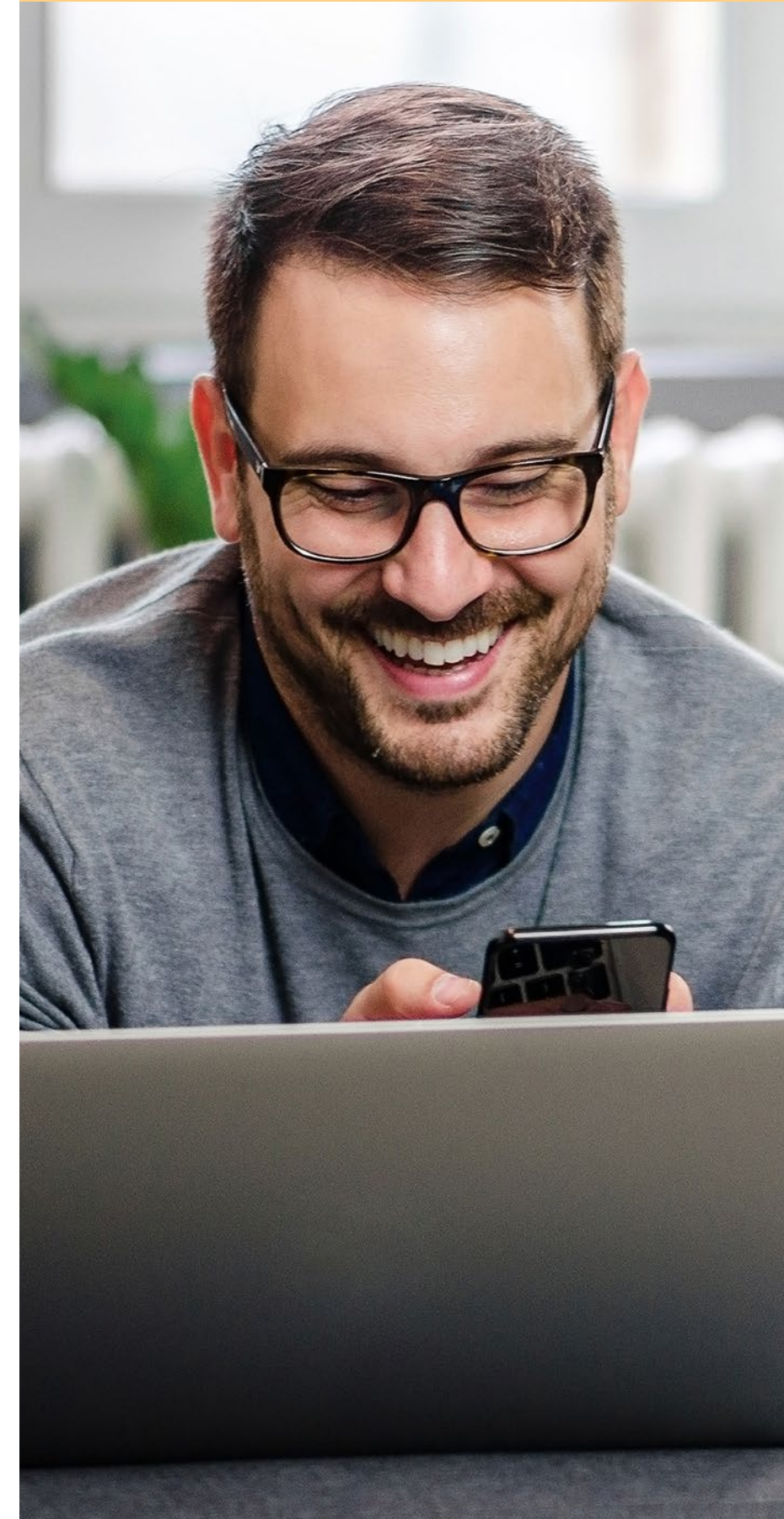
Trends #8: Emojis Will Become the Norm

Formal letterhead, memos, and salutations have practically become relics of the business world. In the age of SMS, IMs, email, and video chat, communication moves quickly and has become much more conversational. Enter: the emoji. Remember the earlier point about the younger generation preferring more visual forms of communication? The humble emoji is a prime example. According to the [2019 Emoji Trend Report](#), 61% of employees now use emojis in workplace communications.

Particularly for distributed teams, interpreting tone in written communication can become a challenge. When facial expressions aren't possible, emojis can help add more context to a conversation. And while they've become an increasingly common part of informal communication, 8x8's CEO, Vik Verma, expects them to become more commonplace in the business world, too.

"Plain and simple, emojis help employees communicate more effectively with each other. They can indicate tone that might otherwise be misconstrued and can boost credibility. What's really important is getting your message across as clearly as possible, and if emojis can help with that, then go right ahead."

Communication moves quickly and has become much more conversational.





Bringing It All Together

2020 is set to bring more disruption, innovation, and growth for business communications and UCaaS technology. While staying on top of the trends can seem overwhelming, it's a lot easier with the right partner. And 8x8 is here to help. We serve businesses of all sizes across all industry verticals—from dental practices, collection agencies, and law firms to larger enterprises, such as government organizations, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and insurance companies.

If your business collaborates internally, communicates with constituents, students, or customers, or if you want a UCaaS service that can be enhanced with Contact Center as a Service capability, [8x8 X-Series](#) is the ideal solution for you.

[Learn more here](#), or call us today for more information: 1-866-928-0720.



8x8, Inc. (NYSE:EGHT) is a leading provider of cloud phone, meeting, collaboration and contact center 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 organization in the hands of every employee. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com, or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.



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