

Keys to achieving successful mobile integration with unified communications

Unified communications (UC) has transformed the way enterprises do business. Converging voice and data on the same network has eliminated redundant costs. The nearly ubiquitous adoption of personal mobile devices, conferencing and video solutions has let UC vendors extend traditional telephony services to the mobile phone. Yet, many industries such as healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and retail have found that some consumer-grade mobile devices are too fragile to withstand these demanding environments.

Ilan Rubin, managing director, Wavelink, said, “A more enterprise-grade mobility solution is required. Transformative technologies such as Wi-Fi and the cloud make it possible to access and deploy mobile voice and data across an organisation, wherever people are, and through a single enterprise mobile device. The outcome of this consolidation is improved productivity, lower cost, and enhanced customer satisfaction.

“Yet, because UC systems are already complex, adding mobility can seem like a risky proposition. However, with careful execution, businesses can ensure workers have the tools they need to access co-workers and data from anywhere in the organisation, while on the go, to improve decision-making and boost the bottom line.”

There are six critical steps to adopting a mobile strategy:

- 1. Focus on the primary goal with a well-defined vision.** The company vision clearly defines what an organisation expects to achieve. By identifying these goals, businesses can avoid confusion and achieve better business alignment. Once defined, a detailed plan is needed to clearly identify what success will look like and how it will be measured. For many service-oriented businesses, for example, success often means the ability to respond quickly to opportunities and challenge. Giving workers access to the information they need, in real time, can therefore deliver a competitive advantage.
- 2. Take inventory of critical business processes.** A successful mobile deployment begins with a list of workflows that teams follow to accomplish daily tasks. These processes provide a shared understanding of the business and may lead to discussions on ways to improve. Enlisting key representatives within the organisation is necessary to examine the needs of each team, and align technologies and processes. By looking closely at the various workflows, data, and teams, everyone can gain clear alignment and identify roadblocks in the processes.
- 3. Assess the IT infrastructure.** Assessing the company’s current infrastructure and technology assets provides clarity into the opportunities and limitations that are inherent in the environment. Mobile UC improves the speed and flexibility of communication, however, any DECT infrastructure or Wi-Fi network must be designed with both voice and data in mind. Adequate bandwidth and coverage is necessary to support calls, video conferencing, seamless roaming, and multi-client usage. Businesses must ensure the infrastructure can accommodate wireless communication throughout the organisation. A site assessment can be helpful in analysing current infrastructure and technologies.

4. Evaluate enterprise mobility solutions. While there are numerous mobile solutions available, including consumer-grade devices or a BYOD strategy, few offer the reliability and coverage to support more demanding enterprise environments like healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and retail. Mobile workers within business environments need solutions that offer reliable network connectivity, durability, seamless integration, and complete device management.

5. Determine proper management and governance. IT often faces competing objectives, from satisfying employee demand for greater mobile access to ensuring the security of corporate data by putting limits in place. Policy consistency will help break down silos and ensure each department is executing on the same strategy. Training and communication are key to keeping employees informed of what is and is not permissible with their mobile devices. The lack of a complete end-to-end strategy and awareness leads to greater risk, potential long-term administrative issues, and ultimately, greater cost to the company.

6. Initiate a test pilot. A pilot program, or proof of concept, lets organisations ‘test and tinker’ with the proposed technology to ensure it addresses their unique business needs. They can track KPIs to get a baseline of performance metrics, as well as gain feedback from users on existing and future processes. As an initial rollout, a pilot lets organisations test the proposed solution within a limited scope. It may consist of deploying a specific number of mobile devices within a particular facility or engaging a certain department to test its unique workflows. The purpose of the rollout is to verify functionality and determine whether the proposed system works as designed.

Ilan Rubin said, “Successful businesses today focus on listening and responding to customer needs and delivering solutions to address them. UC brings tighter collaboration among workers, and mobility, by its nature, helps companies respond quickly to new opportunities. Understanding the vision, assessing workflows, and implementing an end-to-end mobility infrastructure is the first step to increasing productivity and decision making. It’s a business strategy that ensures an organisation does not get left behind.”