

WHITE PAPER

5 Things You Need to Know to Make Your UC Deployment a Success

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5 Things You Need to Know to Make Your UC Deployment a Success

The adoption of unified communication (UC) is accelerating as businesses recognize its value by bringing together VoIP telephony, instant messaging, video conferencing, mobility, presence, and collaboration capabilities into a seamless business environment.

A successful UC implementation offers many benefits for organizations, including low cost of communications and increased productivity as a result of improved collaboration and streamlined business processes.

As a result, it's not surprising that businesses are increasingly turning to UC. A recent [Infonetics Research report](#) shows enterprise UC posted 34 percent growth in the second quarter of 2013, while SMB spending on UC solutions is expected to increase by 10 percent a year over the next four years, [according to Telecom Reseller](#).

As more businesses consider moving to UC, there are numerous considerations that can markedly impact the level of success an organization achieves with its UC deployment. To assist CIOs and other IT decision makers achieve successful UC deployment, here are five considerations to take into account.

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1. Identify necessary communications features

Before any investment is made in procuring new hardware and software and prior to any installation work, there are a number of conditions that should be met. IT managers should ensure a prospective UC solution meets low-cost requirements, makes it easier to accomplish regular business tasks for employees, and simplifies corporate network management.

During this initial evaluation phase, C-level executives should examine baseline call routing, management and collaboration features of a prospective solution.

Basic calling capability is essential at any business, regardless of whether a company utilizes traditional telephone service or IP-based phone. More businesses are adopting IP-PBX phone solutions, as these typically offer numerous call processing advantages over legacy systems. However, even while more organizations are finding themselves unable to resist the lure of a voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) system, it is best to select a system that supports both legacy analog phones and VoIP desk phones, ShoreTel advocated in a recent [UC buyers guide](#).

Additionally, such systems provide a number of basic (but necessary) communications features, such as an instant messaging platform and integrated voice mail system. A provider should offer integrated directory capability, which can go a long way toward streamlining communications and business operations.

It is also important to consider a system's management and collaboration features. Management features should be considered from both an end-user's and administrator's perspective, and CIOs should look at the specific controls the system has in place. Collaboration is a powerful driving force for enhanced business productivity, innovation and overall success, so tools and features that facilitate optimal internal communication are especially valuable in a UC solution. Features that boost collaborative efforts include video conferencing, document sharing, presentation tools, presence and click-to-call or click-to-conference.

2. Evaluate current network capabilities and plan upgrading

In order to deploy the many communication tools comprised under the UC umbrella, the corporate network of the prospective buyer needs to be able to support them. Performing an initial network evaluation is paramount to developing a deployment plan that accounts for necessary network upgrades and additional capacity investments. Additionally, when a network is readied prior to deployment, the UC system is more reliable, which can mean big benefits for the business. This is because a UC system will have certain requirements of the network in order to support the applications and traffic. When these considerations are made in advance, administrators can better ensure the UC system is best supported.

Organizations can hire third-party consultants to evaluate the network or do so itself with its own in-house IT team. Even if a company has not yet decided on the specific provider for the UC solution, the voice and data networks can still be assessed at this stage. [The UC Buyers Guide developed by ShoreTel](#) noted a few observations about how reliability and UC relate.

"Finally, a note about how reliability is affected by a purpose-built UC system appliance vs. software-based solution that is deployed using commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) hardware," the guide stated. "This is a nearly religious debate, but provided an approved COTS appliance is used, these servers can be just as reliable as the purpose-built model. However, the same equality is not always true when it comes to performance, because purpose-built devices include a hardware design that is custom-made to facilitate UC applications. Still, the trade-off for performance must be weighed against other factors, especially when considering a virtual machine (VM) architecture."

3. Research implementation/technology partners and explore IT security practices

While an initial evaluation of the network is essential prior to moving forward with deployment, this is also a good stage to map out a plan for future upgrades. While the network may already be capable of supporting the UC system, the business will constantly evolve moving forward so both the UC system and the network will need to be upgraded eventually. By planning for these upgrades now, businesses will put themselves in a better position for continued growth, minimizing potential disruptions that regularly emerge as IT infrastructure is altered down the line.

Another essential step in successful UC deployment will be to thoroughly research any and all implementation and technology partners that will be assisting in the process. It is not enough to blindly select partners, since reliability, security and scalability will require that all parties are on the same page.

UC expert Frank Semmler, in an article for TMCnet, explored some of the top UC security issues that businesses face and offered a number of solutions to mitigate risk.

“Today, enterprises demand information to flow across software products and devices,” Semmler wrote. “Building a bigger and more efficient network through UC is an advantage when it comes to managing workflows. Unfortunately, when multiple systems are tied together, the impact of any type of security breach or attack can be major. Security features and solutions need to be a mandatory part of the UC deployment process. Understanding compliance and corporate governance, limiting potential exposures to security risks and business resiliency all need to be addressed in UC security planning.”

Common security objectives include: availability, confidentiality, integrity, accountability, use control and countermeasures to SIP threats. When a security incident occurs, availability can often suffer as services are disrupted. This highlights the need for prevention, meaning IT managers need to put appropriate security measures in place to protect the network against attacks like denial of service. Common tactics for this include the employment of spoofing protection, audit and oversight measures. Regarding confidentiality, IT managers should apply user and device authentication in tandem with encryption to preserve confidentiality and privacy.

4. Account for future needs in regard to scalability, mobility, BYOD and workforce distribution

As touched on previously, effective partnerships can be key to mitigating difficulties involved in scaling the UC solution according to the evolving needs of the business. The emergence and rapid uptake of mobility has had a profound impact on business operations, and the Bring Your Own Device trend has dramatically altered the corporate network environment. With BYOD enabling telecommuting, more organizations are witnessing the transformation of their workforce distribution, with employees increasingly dispersed and the traditional office environment a thing of the past.



As such, mobility, BYOD, telecommuting and workforce distribution should all be considered and addressed as part of the UC deployment plan. For example, certain businesses will have a pressing need to include mobility solutions as part of their UC system because regular job duties require employees to be more actively mobile and out of the office setting. Many organizations are adopting BYOD policies to embrace employee use of personal devices. This is because they are increasingly becoming more cognizant of BYOD's benefits when it comes to operational costs, staff productivity and employee satisfaction.

5. Investigate how powerful cloud technology can be leveraged as part of a UC solution as well as how TCO is impacted

Cloud computing technology is commonly viewed as a disruptive force for enterprise IT, but its many business benefits also position cloud solutions as too good to pass up. In regard to UC, organizations can opt for premises-based solutions or cloud-based UC services.

"The advantages of a cloud-based service vs. a premise-based solution often boil down to whether or not the business wants to avoid the initial capital expense for a premise-based system, but a business case can be made for both options," the UC Buyers Guide stated. "For example, cloud services also offer an immediate cost-management advantage because they are maintained by a third party. If well engineered, a cloud-based UC service also offers increased reliability through features like geographic redundancy and secure, hardened data centers. On the flip side, a premise-based option may cost more in the short term but save money in the long term as the equipment is depreciated yet still fully useful."

Organizations should keep these points in mind when evaluating whether a cloud-based UC solution or a premise-based UC solution is the best for its business. Most UC providers will offer both options, in addition to hybrid solutions that merge the two. Such providers could be especially beneficial to partner with, as an on-premise UC system could be implemented at some key locations and cloud-based UC service leveraged for branch offices or to enable remote staff with access to the suite of robust communication tools that are available to central office staff.

It is also important to consider costs. While many businesses will attach more weight to total cost of ownership than any other factor, it is mentioned last here to highlight all the other considerations that are also important when preparing for UC deployment. This does not mean that costs should be neglected, only that they are one part of the bigger UC deployment puzzle.

"Features are always a consideration, but once baseline requirements are met, the ultimate decision will come down to the total cost of ownership between two or more finalists," the UC Buyers Guide stated. "The business case for UC is complex, especially when factoring in (or not) the productivity savings that will be achieved

from better collaboration and other efficiencies along with the savings on monthly telephone bills. Provided that features are equivalent from a variety of vendors, the cost side of the equation may be the determining factor.”

“ShoreTel solutions provide the lowest total cost of ownership in the industry.”

If one business’s corporate network needed extensive upgrades to ready it for UC deployment, cost considerations will be markedly different than those of a company that already had a network primed and ready to go. Because of this disparity, it is difficult to say how much total cost of ownership will factor into partner choices related to UC deployment. In addition, specific features selected for the UC system will affect the cost. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize how cost considerations are related to the choices that came before it.

Deployment Success Within Reach

By making the aforementioned considerations, an organization can better ensure that it is set up to achieve a successful UC deployment. While there are many factors that go into successful UC deployment, a common theme running throughout these considerations is that it is essential that businesses select optimal partners for implementation and technology procurement that are aligned under a common goal. As a leading provider of brilliantly simple unified communications solutions, ShoreTel has positioned itself as an ideal partner for UC deployment. ShoreTel solutions provide the lowest total cost of ownership in the industry, and the company prides itself in being able to offer a wide array of solutions including on-premise, cloud-based and hybrid UC systems.

ShoreTel’s unified communications solutions are comprised of the many features that businesses need and demand today. For evidence of ShoreTel’s viability and reliability as a provider, one need look no further than Gartner’s Unified Communications for SMB Report.

“ShoreTel is the only company evaluated in the report to receive a Strong Positive rating for four consecutive years,” said Don Joos, president and CEO of ShoreTel. “With thousands of happy SMB customers already, we believe this report confirms that our flexible, simple to use and deploy services continue to solve business problems for this important market segment.”

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About ShoreTel

ShoreTel is a provider of business communication solutions whose brilliantly simply unified communications platforms, applications and mobile UC solutions promise a new rhythm of workforce engagement and collaboration. With costly complexity eliminated by design from its award winning, all-in-one IP phone system, UC and contact center solution, and its industry leading hosted business phone system, workers enjoy a freedom and self-reliance that other providers can't match. Users have full control to engage and collaborate, no matter the time, place or device, for the lowest cost and demand on IT resources in the industry. ShoreTel is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, and has regional offices and partners worldwide. For more information, visit shoretel.com or shoretelsky.com

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