

When unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions are implemented successfully, both the business and IT will realize many benefits. However, to get the most out of UC&C implementations, organizations often require managed services.

Managed Services Drive Successful UC&C Implementations

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Questions posed by: Lumen

Answers by: Denise Lund, Research Vice President

Q. How does an enterprise define a successful UC&C implementation?

A. UC&C solutions were once part of early adopters' digital transformation plans but are now on the agenda for nearly all businesses. A cloud-based UC&C solution offers a cost-effective approach to improving business resiliency, employee outcomes, and customer experiences. UC&C is only as effective as it is well implemented and supported; when done well, UC&C delivers seamless connectivity and integrates into the broader base of enterprise software and business processes.

UC&C implementations must have measurable impacts on employee productivity and customer experience for IT and business leaders to call them a success. IT faces the enormous challenge of supporting the communications and collaboration needs of nearly half (47%) of employees who work remotely either as desired or on a schedule. This is up from 33% last year. For UC&C to have a positive impact on the employee experience, all employees need to be able to work within the same enterprise-grade communication and collaboration environments regardless of whether they are in the office or remote. The experience for employees in the office and out of the traditional office needs to have the same degree of quality and the same features for recordings, call escalation, presence, and more. UC&C solutions can deliver on this access, but without skills and resource bandwidth, IT will struggle and at times be forced to make critical trade-offs that limit the scope of UC&C. IT departments everywhere need to see tangible cost savings while business unit leaders must maintain a sharp eye for improvements to sales and revenue growth. Secure risk and resource planning designed to alleviate constraints on the IT department's tight budget, skills, and time is a critical piece of UC&C deployments and ongoing management for businesses. Further, seamless connectivity is a must-have and is tightly tied to employees' access needs and business objectives for engaging omni-channel interactions by customers, the latter of which can help improve the ability to achieve business revenues and sales goals.

Q. What benefits do enterprises get from working with a managed service provider to implement UC&C solutions?

A. More than half of all enterprises are still evolving their connectivity strategies and goals. Hybrid work environments are here to stay, which intensifies the urgency for IT to deploy UC&C and to get it right. Whether or not businesses have widely

deployed UC&C technologies, it has been found that using a managed service provider for the planning, deployment, and management of the implementation is cost effective and drives optimized outcomes because of the provider's expertise in integrations and deployments across locations, in cases where there is a hybrid legacy and cloud-based UC&C solution planned, and with a wide range of support services.

Managed service providers deliver on a value proposition around the planning, management, and support of UC&C solutions for businesses regardless of where a business is on its UC&C journey. Among other benefits, cloud-based solutions can significantly reduce the time required to deploy UC&C services and applications by reducing the provisioning time from months to weeks or days. Managed service providers that offer network services, security, enterprise-grade support, and UC&C solutions have expertise and resources that many businesses lack. As a result, managed service providers can help businesses maximize their investments in UC&C and get to the point where employee productivity and customer experiences improve more easily.

Q. Do enterprises have to be at a certain stage in their digital transformation to benefit from a UC&C managed service provider?

A. According to a survey of enterprises conducted by IDC in February 2022, the majority of businesses would not describe themselves as being far along in their connectedness as an organization. In fact, two out of three businesses described their organization's connectivity as limited or minimal with regard to the use of cloud communications, open data models, data sharing, and more. Yet, these businesses have a vision for cloud-based unified communications. Without the expertise of a managed service provider, the burden on IT to plan, staff, and support a UC&C implementation will be so great that it slows the overall project. Level 1 support; engineering support for reporting and audit requirements; integrations into enterprise software, such as software used in call center processes; and the handling of day-to-day change requests increase the complexities for IT.

IT leaders agree that using a managed service provider would give their IT staff time to spend on other business priorities and give them the opportunity to pursue specialized integrations with UC&C that deliver on the employee productivity and customer experience metrics that matter so much to their businesses. Organizations that head off the challenges of a UC&C implementation by attempting it alone quickly recognize the advantages that a managed service provider can bring.

Q. How should an enterprise think about taking its UC&C solution investment or vision to the next level?

A. An enterprise that has already begun to use UC&C solutions in its business should consider adding a managed service provider engagement to help achieve the support and integrations driving employee and customer outcomes. According to IDC's February 2022 survey of IT buyers, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents whose companies were already using UC&C solutions indicated that they would switch to a provider that brought with it attributes key to a managed service provider value proposition. Reasons cited for switching included the UC&C solution provider's bundled service offering, the provider's formal managed services offering, better solution quality and reliability, availability of a simplified application for UC&C, and consolidation to a single provider. An enterprise that plans to deploy UC&C must clearly

communicate its needs at the outset of the solution provider search process. Looking for a managed service provider that has enterprise-grade expertise and formal support across a variety of popular UC&C solution elements today will get the business on its way to achieving the employee and customer goals it has set sooner and do so more smoothly. Having a single point of contact for ongoing management of solution and integration across the multitude of communications and collaboration software and hardware elements across the company is critical.

Q. What can an enterprise expect when all goes well with a UC&C solution implementation?

A. When UC&C solution implementations go well, the pace of the deployment across the business is often quickened versus a more lengthy rollout that can happen in cases where a cloud-based UC solution is being deployed and being integrated with an existing on-premises UC solution. Even more importantly, businesses can see their resources freed up to support IT initiatives elsewhere in the business and cost efficiencies across IT. According to IDC's February 2022 survey of IT buyers, 75% of businesses using cloud-based UC&C solutions experienced these benefits — and, in many cases, that was before even involving a managed service provider. The lines of business benefit from cloud-based UC&C implementations that are done well, too. According to the same IDC survey, enterprises reported improvements in their ability to respond to business demands and unexpected business events. Improved employee satisfaction, morale, and productivity as well as improved quality of customer engagements are common benefits to the vast majority of businesses using cloud-based UC&C. That being said, many businesses have a long way to go on their UC&C journey. While 81% of businesses using UC&C solutions are at least *somewhat* satisfied with their cloud-based implementation today, there is room to improve on the level of satisfaction with more than half of those businesses.

About the Analyst



Denise Lund, Research Vice President

Denise Lund is a Research Vice President on IDC's worldwide telecom team. Her research focuses on advanced communications services including VoIP and unified communications as a service (UCaaS). In this position, she provides coverage of voice communications including fixed and legacy voice (local, long distance, and PRI ISDN) and IP voice (hosted VoIP with/without UC, SIP trunking, IP phone) as well as emerging migration and usage trends occurring in the voice market. In addition to fixed telecom research, Denise's research has a strong emphasis on the UCaaS market, particularly from the perspective of telecom and cable providers and OTT vendors.

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IDC Research, Inc.
140 Kendrick Street
Building B
Needham, MA 02494
T 508.872.8200
F 508.935.4015
Twitter @IDC
idc-insights-community.com
www.idc.com

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