

ESG SHOWCASE

Platforms to Support a Modern Employee Experience

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic forced organizations to figure out how to support the entirety of their workforces working remotely overnight. Now that hybrid work has become the norm, organizations need more from their telephony or unified communications and collaboration (UCC) platforms. Lumen is uniquely positioned to provide a next-generation UCC or telephony deployment with dedicated account teams, user support services, and proven interoperability solutions.

Supporting Hybrid Work in Current and Future Production Environments

Prior to the pandemic, remote work was a low or non-existent priority for many organizations. Often, employees who traveled regularly or were not in a physical office had to figure out on their own how to be productive using a wide range of technology solutions. With just a small percentage of employees having that need, and only a few of those requiring an advanced functionality, most IT departments were hands-off and grateful that most of the road warriors were technically literate and self-sufficient.

That changed overnight with the COVID-19 lockdowns. Nearly every organization's IT team had to scramble to address new needs, adding a few point products and better support for the use of legacy communication tools. But although there has been plenty of time to move to more stable and robust systems, the same array of point solutions and legacy communication and telephony tools that were rigged together more than two years ago are still in use at many organizations. ESG research sheds light on why organizations have hesitated to upgrade, as 42% of respondents reported that their organizations support multiple meeting and collaboration platforms to be able to meet service-level agreements, and 40% of respondents support multiple platforms due to the organizational preferences of employees and managers. In addition, functionality differences needed to meet various use cases (38% of respondents) make the continued use of a wide array of point products inevitable, even though many of these are consumer-grade products.¹

However, as hybrid work (i.e., in the office on some days and remote on others) becomes the norm, and as more workers log on from multiple locations, organizations need more from their telephony or unified communications and collaboration (UCC) platforms. They need technology that is industrial-grade and designed to be the primary mode of interaction between workers. This transition will be welcomed by workers when new solutions provide greater reliability and improved features. The capabilities of the current generation of telephony and UCC services are compelling and offer the feature improvements workers desire.

¹ ESG Complete Survey Results, [End-user Computing Trends](#), February 2022. All ESG research references in this showcase have been taken from this survey results set.

The starting point for upgrading telephony and UCC platforms is deploying new solutions that deliver the “ities”: usability, reliability, scalability, availability, flexibility, and productivity. Working with suboptimal technology solutions is no longer an option. The penalties to both the employee and the firm are too substantial.

Of particular importance is the need for a modern platform that delights and engages employees. When employees feel as if the technology the organization provides is making it hard to be productive or that poor technology solutions inhibit their success, they are much more likely to leave. This is particularly true of younger workers who are entering the workforce with a different perspective and experience of technology that is used in a corporate environment. And for workers who are primarily remote, their digital employee experience *is* the overall employee experience. When the company’s systems don’t measure up and feel slow, dated, and cumbersome, turnover increases. This is a key reason why modern telephony and UCC platforms are critical to success.

The Reasons to Migrate to a Modern Platform Are Compelling

Numerous imperatives are leading organizations to modernize the platforms that support employee communication and interaction. A prime reason for this is all those competing and siloed solutions that were thrown together at the dawn of the pandemic, which have caused tremendous inefficiencies for both IT and employees. Recent ESG research shows that over half of organizations (53%) have three or more meeting and collaboration platforms in use.

Many organizations contend with communications and information-sharing platforms in addition to meeting and collaboration platforms, which can escalate that management burden, increase IT support costs, and cause confusion and frustration for employees forced to work across conflicting tools that silo information.

A proven strategic approach is to upgrade the UCC and telephony platforms in a synchronized manner that enables tighter integration of these two foundational components of hybrid work. Organizations that use many point solutions for tasks such as file sharing and collaboration find that it is nearly impossible to integrate them with the telephony system. A better plan is an upgrade to a solution that offers integration of these two platforms from the outset. Leading vendors provide this integration out of the box.

The new generation of solutions also gives IT the ability to quickly deliver new features as organizations gain experience and see the need for new capabilities to support hybrid work. Businesses need technology platforms that are agile and provide a path to the future.

And of course, security and compliance are now mandatory. Modern platforms deliver enhanced security and better support for compliance regimes. Systems today face a far more virulent threat environment than just two or three years ago, and legacy products are more vulnerable. Telephony and UCC platforms that support broad access but contain personally identifiable information or private corporate data need effective protection, and not just from attackers. As compliance requirements become more rigorous and employees access more sensitive data, a platform that makes compliance reporting and management simpler is vitally important.

However, the single biggest reason for deploying modern, full- featured UCC and telephony platforms is to deliver a better digital employee experience. ESG’s survey asked what KPIs are actively tracked for UCC systems, and the top two answers—a better employee experience (35%) and improved productivity (34%)—reflect this focus on the digital employee experience. This is not surprising, as the quality of digital systems directly impacts the ability to recruit and retain workers. The current generation of UCC and telephony platforms offers the kind of modern user interface that employees want and is often missing from older products. Workers won’t tolerate systems that they feel inhibit their success.

This is especially relevant for workers under 35, the digital natives who demand platforms that are on par with their consumer experiences. This same ESG survey found that one of the most important technologies to support a firm’s UCC

strategy, cited by nearly one-third of respondents (31%), was providing endpoint hardware that workers want to use and that supports this improved user experience. This goes beyond PCs and smartphones to include meeting room equipment, cameras, health monitoring devices, and other devices that are often not supported by older technology.

IT teams that successfully stepped into the breach two and a half years ago when the nature of work changed in less than a week can feel rightfully proud of their accomplishments. But now that organizations have time to plan and build optimized digital platforms to empower employees, moving to cohesive, comprehensive, dependable, and efficient UCC and telephony platforms is the best path forward.

Lumen Offers Organizations the Best in Modern UCC and Telephony Solutions

Lumen is a proven provider of best-in-class technology solutions. The company has decades of experience in providing solutions that enable its customers to both transform and thrive. It offers a range of telephony and proprietary UCC solutions, as well as from vendors such as Microsoft, Cisco, and Zoom, augmented by a highly trained, dedicated services team. In addition, the firm has approximately 500,000 global route miles of fiber, more than 2,200 connections to public and private data centers, and more than 50 edge nodes covering 97% of U.S. enterprise demand.

Lumen is uniquely positioned to provide a next-generation UCC or telephony deployment with dedicated account teams, user support services, and proven interoperability solutions. The firm combines people and technology to meet the unique needs of a business with comprehensive solutions that range from design through operation. For more information, please visit [Lumen's website](#).

The Bigger Truth

Of organizations that support hybrid work, it can be said that telephony and UCC platforms are now the glue that holds things together. They depend on virtual environments and cloud consumption models to fully replace what used to be physical.

This new dependence demands technology that is up to the challenge. It must be industrial-strength, resilient, performant, secure, agile, and complete. The platforms must have comprehensive feature sets, putting an end to the days of each individual or team having its own tool of choice despite the costs, vulnerabilities, and lost productivity from this approach. Further, without any sort of management or control of these critical services, the organization is at much higher risk and the potential for data loss or misuse grows exponentially.

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