

As communications platforms shift to AI-driven, data-rich ecosystems, organizations must modernize legacy systems, overcoming migration and cost challenges by adopting cloud-native, integrated, secure solutions for enhanced collaboration and agility.

Across the Communications Landscape: Engagement Demands a Platform

December 2025

Written by: Denise Lund, Research Vice President, Worldwide Unified Communications and Telecom

Introduction

While many businesses continue migrating to the cloud — and most new organizations begin their communications journey within cloud-native environments — some still choose to maintain or invest in on-premises systems. This is often driven by the specific demands of their operations and possible security and financial concerns. Organizations relying on outdated communications systems encounter significant challenges in resource allocation, ongoing maintenance, and escalating costs. Ultimately, all communications journeys should be designed for desired employee and customer experience outcomes while balancing the broader organization’s operational and strategic risks and benefits.

Today’s cloud communication platforms are designed to integrate voice, video, messaging, and contact center capabilities, enabling seamless collaboration and customer engagement. Best-in-class features include AI-powered analytics, UCaaS, omnichannel CCaaS, and secure, scalable cloud infrastructure, with SIP trunking as an option to address hybrid on-premises and cloud communications environments. Ultimately, the effectiveness of a communications platform depends on how seamless, well-designed, and thoughtfully integrated its ecosystem of technologies and solutions is. Risks to an organization’s desired outcomes from the implementation and use of modern cloud communications solutions include:

- » Integration complexity between UCaaS and CCaaS: Merging unified communications (UCaaS) and contact center (CCaaS) systems creates significant technical and operational challenges. Without careful planning, integration efforts can lead to system incompatibilities, workflow disruptions, and delayed deployments.
- » Insufficient technical expertise: Many organizations lack the necessary internal skills to implement and manage advanced cloud communications solutions. This shortage of technical talent can result in configuration errors, inefficient system use, and increased reliance on external vendors.

AT A GLANCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- As platforms shift to AI-driven, data-rich ecosystems, organizations must assess readiness to adopt and scale modern solutions.
- Outdated systems create resource, maintenance, and cost challenges; 45% of legacy voice users struggle with migration, 44% report repair issues, and 35% face rising local voice charges.
- Cloud-native architectures enable integrated collaboration and agility.

All data in this report refers to IDC’s *Lumen Cloud-Based UC&C Survey*, July 2023.

- » Vendor fragmentation and platform silos: Maintaining disparate UCaaS and CCaaS platforms — or managing multiple vendors — undermines efficiency, increases operational costs, and creates data silos that hinder seamless communication across the organization.
- » Overlooked AI implementation challenges: Although AI-powered tools such as real-time transcription and predictive collaboration enhance productivity, integrating them effectively requires strong data governance and user adoption strategies. Poor execution can limit ROI and create user frustration. Additionally, without the option to leverage AI integration at the network level, optimized outcomes may be at further disadvantage.
- » Legacy infrastructure constraints: Migrating from legacy systems to cloud-based communications platforms can expose hidden dependencies, outdated integrations, and incompatible hardware. These obstacles can increase project costs and slow transformation efforts.
- » Cost and operational pressures: Organizations facing cost constraints may underinvest in planning, training, or change management — critical components of successful cloud communications implementation — leading to performance and adoption issues post-deployment.
- » Security vulnerabilities: Legacy voice systems, built at a time when there were less sophisticated cyberthreats, often lack the advanced security features needed to defend against today's attacks, leaving organizations vulnerable to financial loss and reputational harm.
- » Change management and user adoption risks: Even when the technology functions as designed, a lack of user engagement and training can reduce productivity gains. Resistance to new workflows and tools is a common barrier to realizing the full benefits of unified, AI-enhanced platforms.

Implementation or selection recommendations

When considering unified, AI-enhanced communications platforms, organizations must focus on change management and user adoption, driving engagement and providing targeted training to overcome resistance and unlock productivity gains. Integrating UCaaS and CCaaS is essential for streamlining operations, reducing vendor complexity, and enabling seamless collaboration across teams. As AI capabilities become increasingly central, organizations should assess their current position on the AI integration journey; evaluate platform features such as smart meeting summaries, real-time transcription, and predictive analytics; and determine the level of investment required to fully leverage AI for both productivity and customer engagement. Network-level AI integration can further enhance operational efficiency and outcomes for employees and customers.

Security and compliance remain critical, with the need for platforms to address cybersecurity threats and meet regulatory requirements through robust security measures and adherence to industry standards to safeguard sensitive communications and data. Scalability and flexibility are also key because solutions must support business growth and remote and hybrid work models and offer deployment options across public, private, and hybrid cloud environments. Organizations should evaluate providers' managed services, technical support, and partner ecosystems, particularly if internal expertise for migration and ongoing management is limited.

The impact of aging legacy communications technology on operational continuity cannot be overlooked; migrating to modern cloud communications platforms helps maintain business operations, reduce downtime, and support future growth. At the end of the day, to remain competitive and agile in a rapidly changing market and meet evolving customer

expectations, organizations must select platforms that enable seamless communication, efficient transactions, and responsive service.

Optimization strategies

As organizations modernize their communications strategies, the integration of AI into cloud communications platforms, including the integration of unified communications and contact center capabilities, is rapidly transforming both employee and customer experiences. Contact centers are leveraging AI to boost productivity and customer satisfaction through a range of advanced capabilities. Real-time transcription enables agents to focus on customer interactions rather than manual notetaking, while predictive routing ensures that customers are connected to the most suitable agent based on their needs and history. Sentiment analysis provides supervisors with actionable insights into customer emotions, allowing for immediate intervention and improved service quality. These AI-driven features are not only streamlining workflows but also enabling more personalized and efficient customer engagements. The rise of agentic AI — capable of reasoning, memory, and autonomous task orchestration — further promises to automate complex workflows, reduce manual data entry, and empower agents to deliver higher-value interactions, driving better business outcomes and competitive differentiation in the market.

The shift to cloud-native models is central to simplifying workflows and enhancing collaboration, as well as improving and sharpening responsiveness. Cloud-native architectures support seamless integration across messaging, video, and voice platforms, enabling real-time collaboration and streamlined business processes. This unified approach allows organizations to consolidate disparate communication tools, reducing IT complexity and administrative overhead. As businesses migrate from legacy on-premises systems to cloud communications platforms, they gain access to continuously improving AI-powered capabilities, which are essential to supporting hybrid work environments and distributed teams. The flexibility of cloud-native platforms also enables organizations to tailor solutions to specific vertical industry needs and user types, driving productivity and agility while ensuring compliance with regional and industry standards.

To further reduce operational burden and control costs, organizations should consider managed services as they migrate to and fully use cloud communications environments, such as unified communications and collaboration. The managed services of cloud communications platform providers offer end-to-end support, from migration and integration to ongoing management and optimization, allowing internal IT teams to focus on strategic initiatives rather than day-to-day maintenance. This approach not only streamlines operations but also provides predictable cost structures and access to specialized expertise, which is particularly valuable for organizations lacking in-house resources. As the unified communications and collaboration market continues to evolve, managed services are becoming a critical component for businesses seeking to maximize the value of their communications investments while maintaining operational continuity and scalability.

Worksheet section

Organizations must proactively consider their practical and strategic needs for communications engagement solutions. They should work with a communications platform provider to ensure their solution is designed and managed to support both immediate needs and long-term strategic goals — controlling what they can to drive successful outcomes in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

As organizations shift to AI-driven, cloud-native communications platforms, they must consider the suggestions described in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Questions to ask when evaluating cloud communication platforms

Questions to ask when evaluating cloud communication platforms	Comment
Does the platform leverage network capabilities for today, with a path to the future?	Providers with control over both the network and the platform can effectively deliver today while designing for future omnichannel communications that leverage integrated security and AI capabilities.
How does the platform address cost concerns?	The platform should offer clear benefits for businesses transitioning from CAPEX-heavy investments to agile OPEX models and managed services.
Does the platform integrate UCaaS and CCaaS for unified communications?	A unified platform streamlines operations, reduces vendor complexity, and enables seamless collaboration and customer engagement.
What AI-powered features are available, and what further investment is needed?	Assess current AI capabilities (e.g., smart meeting summaries, real-time transcription) and determine the level of additional investment required to fully leverage AI for productivity and customer experience.
How does the platform address security and compliance risks?	Ensure robust cybersecurity measures and compliance with industry standards to protect sensitive communications and data.
Is the solution scalable and flexible to support future growth and remote work?	The platform should offer flexible deployment options (public, private, hybrid cloud) and scale with your business needs.
What level of managed services and technical support is provided?	Evaluate the provider's support ecosystem, especially if your organization lacks internal expertise for migration and ongoing management.
How will migrating from aging technology impact operational continuity?	Consider the risks and benefits of moving from legacy systems to cloud communications, including potential downtime and long-term operational improvements.
Does the platform help you stay competitive in meeting customer expectations?	Look for features that enable efficient transactions, responsive service, and seamless communication to meet evolving customer demands.

About the Analyst



Denise Lund, Research Vice President, Worldwide Unified Communications and Telecom

Denise Lund's 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Lumen delivers communications services that help organizations connect, collaborate, and share information efficiently. Our offerings support seamless voice, messaging, and unified communications, enabling teams to work together across locations and devices. With a focus on reliability and security, Lumen Communications Solutions are designed to meet the needs of modern businesses and support their operational goals.

Discover how our communications services drive productivity and innovation - helping your teams connect, collaborate, and succeed anywhere.

[Learn More](#)



The content in this paper was adapted from existing IDC research published on www.idc.com.

IDC Research, Inc.
140 Kendrick Street
Building B
Needham, MA 02494, USA
T 508.872.8200
F 508.935.4015
blogs.idc.com
www.idc.com

IDC Custom Solutions produced this publication. The opinion, analysis, and research results presented herein are drawn from more detailed research and analysis that IDC independently conducted and published, unless specific vendor sponsorship is noted. IDC Custom Solutions makes IDC content available in a wide range of formats for distribution by various companies. This IDC material is licensed for external use, and in no way does the use or publication of IDC research indicate IDC's endorsement of the sponsor's or licensee's products or strategies.

International Data Corporation (IDC) is the premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications, and consumer technology markets. With more than 1,300 analysts worldwide, IDC offers global, regional, and local expertise on technology and industry opportunities and trends in over 110 countries. IDC's analysis and insight helps IT professionals, business executives, and the investment community to make fact-based technology decisions and to achieve their key business objectives.

©2025 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved. [CCPA](#)

