Your future is calling

Choosing the right hosted communications partner
The communications paradigm is shifting. Technology has fundamentally reshaped the way we interact.

We live in an era of constant, multimodal connectivity. Millennials entering the workforce have grown up as digital natives with instant access to a rich mosaic of touchpoints that have changed the very nature of communications. Seamless communication across any device is becoming the norm.

The simple phone call remains an essential component of communications, but the way we use our phones is not what it once was. Voice contact is now just one part of a much larger, integrated picture. We talk. We text. We email. We chat. We use collaboration platforms and video conference with our team, partners and clients. Sometimes we do all of these at once. Our expectations of how phones fit into the communications landscape have changed. And that means we need communications solutions that can keep up.

Colleagues, partners, suppliers, customers…all should have the means to connect instantly, reliably and easily. Anytime. Anywhere. It’s what they expect. It’s not always what they get. Poorly integrated user experiences, dropped calls and sub-par audio quality are all too common.

It doesn’t have to be that way.

“The way young people engage…is hugely dependent on technology. They form relationships and share experiences all without physical engagement. As they increasingly enter the workforce, this shift in social engagement will further influence the way we operate at work.”

John Riccio, Partner, Digital Services Leader, PwC Australia

An evolving workplace calls for new thinking about communications

Today’s workers want the ability to work wherever they want, whenever they want, however they want and on the device of their choice. As a result, workplace models and communications platforms continue to evolve to accommodate the growing preference for flexibility. In many organizations, the “office” is wherever the worker happens to be.

The rewards of adapting to this new style of work are undeniable. When everyone works in a single, always-accessible virtual space with access to the same information, ideas and solutions can quickly rise to the top no matter where they come from — senior leaders, developers, clients, teachers or students. Innovation can happen faster thanks to higher levels of collaboration.

Along with the benefits, these new ways of working and collaborating bring a host of unexpected challenges. Businesses and IT departments are racing to keep up. Interactions need to be supported across all workflows, inside and outside the office walls. The outcome must be a seamless mix of people, information and applications that is reliable, secure and centered around productive conversations taking place across a variety of channels. It’s a set of interactions that is increasingly digital.

Despite this ongoing digital shift, the voice channel remains a critical part of an enterprise collaboration strategy. Sometimes you just need to talk to a person. Maybe what you’re looking for hasn’t been posted in your online team workspace. Perhaps there’s no response to your email or Slack question, or it’s unclear. So you pick up the phone and call someone.

Voice solutions must be reliable, high-quality and simple to manage in a complex digital communications landscape.

There are three key elements to get right:

1. An infrastructure foundation you can count on
2. Communications that adapt to you
3. A partner that empowers you

A recent contact center survey found that 80% of consumers preferred to reach out by phone, far outpacing other channels such as email or chat.
Cisco predicts that global IP traffic will reach 3.3 zetta-bytes by 2021, a 127x increase since 2005.

1 Infrastructure
A foundation you can count on

Virtualization of the workplace and the accelerating shift to the cloud are increasing IT complexity at a rapid rate, straining existing networks and IT resources. Increased reliance on cloud-based applications, collaborative work on shared documents, sharing large files, VoIP and video conferencing all consume precious bandwidth. All of this places a premium on the performance and reliability of the underlying network infrastructure.

Over-the-top (OTT) offerings are making it easy to leverage existing networks for richer communications such as voice, messaging and video calls. Yet OTT services accessed via the public Internet compete for bandwidth, which can compromise quality, performance and reliability. In a recent survey on the use of OTT communication apps in the workplace, users reported that the top two issues for VoIP apps were poor voice quality and slow Internet speed.

Meeting the expectations of a connected workforce requires absolute reliability and clarity. The unified communications experience needs to be seamless, making quality essential. But quality is just one hurdle that IT leaders face when looking to modernize their communications infrastructure. Cost, lack of staff expertise and security concerns also rank as critical issues.

Private branch exchange (PBX) systems built on the traditional public switched telephone network are immune to OTT network quality issues but require a lot of hardware and software maintenance. Mapping out an ecosystem that includes traditional reliability, quality and security as well as the right mix of communications channels is not an easy task. That’s why IT leaders are increasingly looking for partners that can provide both leading technology and a full breadth of solutions and services.

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Case study

Unreliable VoIP service was putting Tomoka Eye Associates’ call center at risk. Frequent outages impeded operators’ ability to handle the high volume of incoming calls. With Spectrum Enterprise Hosted Voice, the voice network now operates on its own fiber circuit, enabling other critical applications to deliver top performance, even with hundreds of calls a day coming into the call center. Call center staff now reliably handle 7,000 to 8,000 calls a month—a key factor in seeing patient visits increase five to seven percent per year despite intense competition.

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We turn digital technology into business progress

Dense fiber reach nationwide
- $2B+ annual revenue
- 32 metros across 41 states
- ~200,000 fiber-lit buildings
- 230,000+ fiber-route miles

Next-generation technology and expertise
- Fiber, cloud and IT infrastructure solutions and managed services
- 1450+ IT certifications
- 20 years of managed services

Committed to delivering quality experiences
- One team = one experience
- Unparalleled SLAs
- Self-service online portals
- Network Operations Center

Award-winning industry leader
- 2017 Frost & Sullivan award-winning Ethernet
- CRN Coolest Cloud Vendor
Key attributes to look for in a partner

Attributes to look for
- Network technology that delivers reliability, scalability and performance
- Service level agreements that meet business requirements
- Ability to provide secure infrastructure
- Level of support and time to restore service in event of an outage

Key questions to ask
- How reliable is the network?
- How is the voice quality?
- How often are calls dropped?
- What type of security is implemented?
- What type of IT skills/resources are required to support it?
- How quickly can you get me back up and running if there’s a problem?

Disadvantages of OTT apps in the workplace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>% who rank issue at No. 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor voice quality</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow Internet speeds</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other users unfamiliar</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited functionality</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slow to update</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration problems</td>
<td>8%</td>
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Real-world issues, real-world answers

IT manager

Issue
Our product development team is having a hard time hiring data scientists. The best and brightest are not interested in the traditional work model — how can we attract and retain them?

Approach
Let’s try embracing the shift from full-time to freelance workers to attract candidates from short term job platforms like Upwork. We’ll set up a virtual workspace with community, collaboration and personal development opportunities built in.

Consideration
How are we going to ensure that the freelancers with BYOD are able to collaborate with our team in a way that’s seamless and reliable?
“A custom training plan is part of our process for each client. At the time of installation, we either have trainers onsite or Webinar-based training that’s specific to that client. We also generally have an open audio and web conference that any end user can call into to ask questions.”

Doug Knight, Senior Director of Unified Communications, Spectrum Enterprise

2 Simplicity
Communications that adapt to you

Technology enables communication to happen faster, easier, and in a way that makes the most sense for the organization and its stakeholders—but only if the solution is seamless, integrated, easy to use and simple to manage.

Users just want things to work so they are able to collaborate without much of a learning curve. They also want technology that adapts to their lifestyle. For example, being able to take a call in the car while stuck in traffic, then walking into the office and hitting a button to transfer the call to their desk phone. Or, starting a call at their desk but moving it to their mobile phone so they can make their kid’s soccer game in the evening. Features like these should meet real-world needs and be intuitive enough that it’s not necessary to refer back to a user manual.

IT administrators are no different. They also want things to work in a way that doesn’t add to their workloads. Maybe an employee is moving their desk from one end of the office to the other, or the company is growing and needs to add new extensions. The administrator can log into a portal and make those changes effortlessly. On the other hand, simple user questions on things like password timeouts on voicemail can take a lot of time. Having a managed services partner that can handle those end user calls can be a big time-saver for IT teams.

Case study

Nonprofit Alphapointe partnered with Spectrum Enterprise to bring new locations into its network and existing infrastructure quickly. Alphapointe’s IT Director, Stan Wright, said “our current solutions with the fiber and… voice… did not require any adjustments or changes so it enabled us to focus on just getting the [New York] site migrated and rolled in.” Meanwhile the solution provides dedicated bandwidth for voice calls and a real-time portal for managing usage details and reporting capabilities.²

Real-world issues, real-world answers

LOB executive

Issue
We have 30 different physician’s offices we need to roll into one organization. Right now, every office has a different phone system. They don’t work alike: call logs aren’t compatible and call tracking isn’t consistent.

Approach
Let’s standardize all the offices onto one communications system so usability will be the same and we can get a better handle on why patients are calling.

Consideration
What if every physician’s office is getting multiple routine calls for similar routine items such as prescription refills or setting appointments? Would call analytics help us centralize some tasks for better productivity?
Scalability is also a major consideration for enterprises, which need the ability to expand or contract infrastructure to align with business priorities with minimal disruption to operations. Business change is unpredictable — today it can mean expanding call centers in multiple locations. Tomorrow it may mean switching focus to a new niche market with work-from-home freelancers using video conferencing and virtual workspaces.

Technology is changing even faster. Businesses have to adapt quickly to remain competitive. How can an IT team engineer a communications network that can handle all these changes while still maintaining high reliability, security and performance? One that adheres to all the latest standards? Having the right partner can help them stay ahead of the game, so they can maintain a fresh perspective on their business.

**Key attributes to look for in a voice solution**

**Attributes to look for**
- Easy to use
- Easy to manage
- Easy to own
- Easy to scale

**Key questions to ask**
- How easy is it to use for end users?
- What kind of end user training and support is provided?
- What type of end user lifestyle features like mobility are included?
- How easy is it to manage for IT teams?
- How will IT administrators make changes on the system?
- How easy is it to own and scale up or down?
- What’s the cost for scaling up or down?

“The good news for IT staff is that they have access to a portal to manage simple user changes like name changes. At the same time, they can route end user technical support questions directly to our enterprise care center. Users can just dial *6-1-1 to get help directly from a Spectrum Enterprise care person. This really helps IT teams add more value by focusing on their core business rather than the chores of their business.”

Doug Knight, Senior Director of Unified Communications, Spectrum Enterprise
3 Partnership
A partner that empowers you

Case study
The Orlando City Soccer Club needed to equip its stadium with a high-engagement digital platform capable of handling 25,500 fans using WiFi and replace an old PBX system that didn’t scale well. Providing fully managed solutions for Hosted Voice, Ethernet Private LAN, WiFi and Security, Spectrum Enterprise is now the club’s IT team, managing every aspect of voice and data applications, including network and software upgrades, freeing club personnel to focus on growing the satisfaction of their fans and the success of their franchise.

Technology helps a business collaborate faster, smoother and more efficiently. However, the equipment and software needed to power those communications can become more of a distraction than an enabler.

As the workforce continues to become more distributed and virtualized, there is growing pressure on IT teams to adapt quickly. Unfortunately, skilled technical resources can be hard to come by. Just keeping up with the latest technology advances or security threats can be difficult for even the most adept IT teams.

Having a capable, outcome-oriented technology partner can help enterprise leaders focus to what matters most—growing their business—rather than dealing with IT challenges. A communications vendor should offer the assurance that users will be able to connect when they need to, that the business will meet its objectives and that the solution will deliver on its promise. The end results of worker productivity, business agility and cost-effectiveness should be the overarching goals.

For this reason, enterprises should look to the fundamentals that underlie a vendor’s offering. These include initial installation, management of the solution, ongoing service and support, performance on key metrics such as time to restore service, service level agreements, system functionality and ability to adapt to the needs of the business. Intangibles, too, such as overall client satisfaction and the vendor’s overall approach can be very important. The lowest cost option may not be able to deliver on these crucial requirements.

Key attributes to look for in a partner
Attributes to look for
• Experience and expertise with local presence
• Breadth of managed services in terms of equipment, installation, service and maintenance
• Quality of service and technical support
• Software and security upgrades/patching
• SLAs and rapid response times, with rapid restoration of service when an outage occurs

Key questions to ask
• How will your experience and expertise help my business, now and in the future?
• What is included as a standard part of the fully managed solution?
• How will the solution be kept up to date with the latest software and security?
• What type of support and service levels are provided and what are the response times?
Answer the call
It’s time to think strategically about how communication works

Human interaction is constantly evolving, and the workplace is no different. As collaboration becomes more distributed and untethered, technology needs to adapt. The approach, however, is often fragmented and nearsighted. The process itself is typically focused on sorting out technical complexities to best fit current business needs. It’s more about solving for the now than looking ahead.

Moving beyond that tactical view is the key to unlocking the potential of communications technology to empower people and change lives. At every level, it’s ultimately about making a human connection no matter what the medium, from digital exchanges to the simple sound of a voice on the telephone. Those connections should always be reliable, clear and easy to make. And they can be.

Having a trusted partner with the technology, knowledge and strategic vision to take care of the now frees businesses to focus on strategic priorities for the future. With the right foundation, scalable flexibility and a strong vendor relationship in place, teams can concentrate on working together to advance business interests and make innovation mainstream.

“Your staff can focus on the franchise while Spectrum Enterprise manages the WiFi, Internet, voice and video tools we’re using to grow the club’s success.”

Rob Parker, Vice President, Corporate Partnerships, Orlando City Soccer Club
Resources


3 “Contact Center Satisfaction Index (CCSI) 2017,” CFI Group.

4 Sutton Fell, Sara. “How and why Millennials are shaping the future of remote working.” workplaceinsight.net, April 2016.


7 Ibid.


12 Ibid.
About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, is a national provider of scalable, fiber-based technology solutions serving many of America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions, including Internet access, Ethernet and Managed Network Services, Voice and TV solutions, Managed Application, Cloud Infrastructure and Managed Hosting Services. Our team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.