

How to build a successful, sustainable unified communications strategy



According to a 2022 Salesforce survey, 73% of customers expect companies to understand their unique needs and expectations, and 85% expect consistent interactions across different departments.¹

With the shift to a more distributed work-anywhere workforce, seamless communication technology is more important than ever.

The ability to connect people seamlessly across phone, mobile and desktop devices is critical to employee productivity, customer satisfaction and operational success. Unfortunately, many legacy voice infrastructures lack the flexibility for today's needs, while piecemeal applications for sharing content often provide a disjointed experience for employees and customers alike.

Collaboration shouldn't be an add-on or an afterthought. It should be an integral part of your technology strategy. With the shift to a more distributed work-anywhere workforce, seamless communication technology is more important than ever. Businesses that don't embed a comprehensive unified communications (UC) solution into their processes will risk falling behind in an intensely competitive environment.

This brief explores the benefits and considerations that IT leaders should take into account when modernizing their UC solution to meet the needs of a more dispersed, mobile and remote workforce.

The potential of superior collaboration

Technology should make life easier. When done right, it can accelerate and transform the way individuals and businesses operate, communicate and collaborate. An effective unified communications solution is a powerful tool that allows employees and the IT teams supporting them to focus on their work — rather than connectivity challenges.

Increase efficiency and engagement

Many organizations rely on a mix of proprietary systems, over-the-top (OTT) collaboration apps and older voice systems to manage internal and external communications. The result is often a siloed and fragmented experience with employees manually switching between applications to complete tasks.

A comprehensive UC solution eliminates the barriers between apps and data. A single, end-to-end experience helps employees focus on value-added collaboration and customer service while offering easy integration with third-party applications like customer relationship management (CRM) systems. Frictionless voice and video calls, messaging and virtual workspaces also keep team members engaged with their colleagues and their projects, which helps support employee retention.

Today's employees demand more flexibility in where and how they work. Whether remote, in-office or on the road, people need access to the same set of tools. A modernized UC solution that can operate on a range of devices delivers a consistent experience no matter where team members are located. IT administration also becomes easier. A fully managed, cloud-based

solution can eliminate the need to maintain equipment, voice systems and collaboration platforms.

Freeing IT from managing unified communications can have a positive effect across the organization. Fully managed unified communications can eliminate these types of IT headaches by providing comprehensive system design, project management, implementation and integration, training and ongoing support.

Deliver a consistent, secure experience

People spend a greater amount of time online managing more aspects of their lives than ever before. When customers need to connect with your organization, staff must be equipped with the right tools to deliver quality services and customer support. A powerful UC solution with CRM integration keeps up-to-date account information at employees' fingertips so customers won't have to repeat the details of their issue across calls, emails, chat and other touchpoints, or worse, suffer from being transferred to multiple representatives.

For both voice and data, security has become another leading priority as the workforce becomes more distributed. Recent surveys show that the rise in remote work and concerns about employee and customer safety rank the highest among security challenges created by the pandemic.² The right UC solution can automate critical updates and keep data safe with end-to-end, built-in encryption.

The right UC solution can automate critical updates and keep data safe with end-to-end, built-in encryption.



Considerations for an effective UC strategy

Develop a strategy that delivers the most value from your investment, based on your individual business goals. Keep the following in mind as you approach the modernization of your UC capabilities:

1. Pinpoint exactly how your business needs to communicate and collaborate

A successful UC deployment can enhance the experience of both your workforce and your customers. Where can technology make the most impact? A solution that can connect individuals to the right business processes natively across work streams, for example, can make employees more productive while supporting flexibility and mobility.

If you hope to improve the digital customer experience, identify solutions that support easy CRM integration so you can offer customer insights and analytics to create a more personalized, collaborative and consistent experience. Whatever capabilities you adopt, be sure they are flexible enough to evolve alongside your business.

2. Assess your needs for bandwidth, reliability and security

Once you determine the role your collaboration solution will play, it's crucial to evaluate how it will fit into the operation of your network as a whole. A new UC solution often requires increased bandwidth to meet performance expectations. Assess how this will affect your resources for internet and/or Ethernet, including whether it makes sense to adopt a solution from the same partner that provides your connectivity and voice services.

Security poses another concern when UC traffic relies on the public internet. Alternatively, an advanced telephony system with a modernized, dedicated network can provide more secure connections for voice, video conferencing, messaging and collaboration applications in the cloud.

3. Match your solution to your resources

Different UC strategies require varying levels of capital investment and ongoing operational costs. Upfront investments for an in-house solution may include desktop telephones and other end-user devices, networking servers and hardware. A managed solution can eliminate capital costs while incorporating ongoing maintenance, support and system upgrades into a predictable monthly expense.

A UC strategy should also be manageable for the IT team. Do you have the resources to plan, implement and maintain a new collaboration system? Will your IT personnel have adequate time for staff training and ongoing user support? Even if your organization has the capacity for a do-it-yourself approach, is that the best use of your limited resources in the context of your broader digital transformation goals? A managed solution can supplement a lean IT team and allow technology leaders to focus on more high-priority objectives.

A UC solution integrated with your wider network can avoid the limitations of OTT systems related to reliability and security.

Different approaches to UC

There is not a “one-size-fits-all” UC solution or strategy for every business. Choose an approach that meets the unique needs of your organization.

Network-based provider

For the most reliable, secure and high-performing solution available, look for a cloud-based, end-to-end managed service.

- Utilizes one provider for design, installation, maintenance and support.
- Provides integrated voice and collaboration capabilities in a single platform.
- Is delivered over a private, secure network.
- Supports business continuity goals.
- Offers a service-level agreement (SLA).
- Delivers scalability and flexibility as your business grows.
- Can include end-user devices as part of the service.

Hybrid solution

A part cloud/part on-premises solution works well for those who want to leverage existing resources and take a phased approach to UC in the cloud.

- Offers options to keep existing on-premises equipment, such as voice and contact center servers.
- Moves capabilities to the cloud where it makes the most sense, including file sharing, chat and web conferencing.
- Allows businesses to explore the benefits of a managed service before fully investing.

Over the top

Self-managed, OTT solutions sometimes offer low-upfront investment and a wide range of applications from which to choose. They also come with additional IT complexity and a potentially disjointed employee and customer experience.

- Often delivered with low upfront costs.
- May be scaled easily in some cases.
- Restricted to SLAs that only cover OTT apps or service platforms.
- Often requires additional agreements with a third-party ISP to meet bandwidth requirements.
- May be difficult to guarantee QoS, reliability and security.
- Offers limited installation support for included hardware.

On-premises only

These solutions are deployed and managed in-house and are mostly appropriate for large enterprises with sufficient IT infrastructure and staff to manage deployment, ongoing maintenance, training and support.

- Limits the amount of system flexibility.
- Is challenging for teams to scale.
- Requires a reliable, low-latency WAN connection or high-speed internet.
- Requires IT to perform management and maintenance, upgrades, updates and support.
- May require additional training for staff and IT.
- Makes business continuity goals challenging to accomplish without additional resources in the cloud.



Find a provider that understands your communications strategy

Given the critical role of collaboration in today's digital enterprise, organizations need a unified communications partner that understands their needs for today and tomorrow. Look for a solution that can deliver high performance and consistent service all the way to the endpoint device, backed by local technicians and 24/7/365 support.

Spectrum Enterprise offers flexible, integrated and fully managed collaboration tools that adapt to accommodate any work environment. We have partnered with industry leaders RingCentral and Webex to deliver seamless experiences for your teams in the office, while working remotely or on the go. We make it easy for you by delivering a reliable and secure solution inclusive of system design, management and support — so you can focus on running your business.

Learn more about how Spectrum Enterprise can help you tailor a solution that fits your unique strategy for communications and collaboration.

Learn more

enterprise.spectrum.com/collaborate

1. "[State of the Connected Customer — 5th edition](#)," Salesforce, 2022.
2. "[Communications and Collaboration Investment Priorities](#)," Frost & Sullivan, March 2021.

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions](#): [Internet access](#), [Ethernet access and networks](#), [Voice](#) and [TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise 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.

Not all products, pricing and services are available in all areas. Pricing and actual speeds may vary. Restrictions may apply. Subject to change without notice. All other logos, marks, designs, and otherwise are the trademarks and intellectual property belong to their respective third-party owners. ©2023 Charter Communications. All rights reserved.