

SME Guide

The Effective use of Communications for SMEs

Presented by



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Introduction

Organisations today are faced with many challenges. It's a highly competitive world in which our customers have many choices when it comes to buying any goods and services.

Retaining existing customers, controlling costs and seeking competitive advantage have always been difficult goals and a challenging economic environment only adds to that difficulty.

Many companies and organisations however, thrive in such circumstances and this guide seeks to show one way of achieving those goals through the effective use of communications.

There can be no doubt that the pace of technological developments and change within the communications world has accelerated in recent times – the Internet alone has demonstrated this to us all and opened up a myriad of commercial opportunities – and threats for business.

For small to medium enterprises (SMEs), often without in-house technical skills and experience to determine which communications products and applications are best suited to their business, the prospect of using technology for commercial advantage can be daunting.

Get it right and the business could be transformed. Get it wrong and it could be an expensive mistake that could have more than a financial cost.

In this guide we will be seeking to identify the key components of an integrated communications infrastructure for SMEs, by being light on the jargon and with more focus on what these products can do for your business.

We will also provide advice on where to buy these products and applications, how to implement them and how to measure what you are getting as a return on investment. This is definitely not all about technology for technology's sake.

Contents

- **Introduction** Pg.1
The pace of change and the competitive landscape
- **Communications** Pg.2
Voice, data and the benefits of integration - convergence
- **Communications** Pg.3-4
Systems as a platform
- **What to look for** Pg.4-5
Buying tips and features
Scale, accreditations, purchase options
- **Leveraging the investment** Pg.6-7
additional applications
- **Applications** Pg.7,8,9,10
Call Management
Call Recording
Mobile Recording
Contact Management
Wallboard
Unified Communications
- **Applications integrations** Pg.11
Joined up communications
- **Implementations** Pg.11
- **Staying ahead of the game** Pg.12



Communications

An Integrated Working Environment

Integrated Communications

The most significant development within communications in recent years has been the move towards an integrated, or converged working environment.

Essentially, voice and data communications were two very distinct applications within an organisation; the phone and the computer never 'talked' to each other. The advent of IP (internet protocol) based communications has meant however, that the two most powerful business tools on the desktop can now talk a common language allowing them to be more powerful together than they were apart.

We'll provide some examples later but this integrated communication strategy also allows business to save money. By having just one converged voice and data network within a business it saves money on cabling and time on management.

Instead of forever having to call up your supplier to come and change the location of a phone or add further phones you can plug them in yourself to the integrated communications system – that's a big saving for you and your supplier given the dynamic nature of many organisations.

More Benefits

In recent times IP based communication have become ubiquitous within the data communications sector but voice systems are catching up fast with VoIP (Voice over IP).

IP based communications has also enabled more cost effective voice and data connectivity between distant offices. For example, an estate agent with say five branches, can share property details and exchange data more easily as well as have free inter office voice calls which would otherwise have been charged on the normal time and distance basis by their network operator – e.g. BT.

Having a common and standard form of communications has spawned many new applications and made others far easier to use. Developers of such applications are no longer constrained by proprietary systems that mean producing individual products for each and every type of communications system. They have the freedom to produce 'best of breed' solutions that can be integrated across disparate manufacturers' communications platforms.

This makes for better products with increased productivity potential for business and we'll examine some of these key applications later in this guide.



The Communications Platform

The Communications Platform

The modern communications system can be viewed as a platform from which to drive a business. It's no longer realistic to just call it a telephone system or by its old name, a PBX, as it is a very different piece of equipment.

Today's communication system will of course allow you to make and receive calls as you would rightly expect but it can do much more than that, and it can be as simple or as complex – some prefer to use the description sophisticated, as you want and your budget allows.

It would not be unfair to say that a very high proportion of features are common amongst most modern communications platform – after all the manufacturers are all seeking similar goals themselves.

However, like most major purchases, there's no real point in over specifying a communications system where you end up only using five per cent of the features. Better to get the features you need immediately but at the same time ensure that other features you may want in the future, can be added by a simple upgrade process.

Every company and organisation is different so specifying what you need is a key part in the buying process. Here, for many SMEs, reliance on what they need is often placed in the hands of a trusted supplier.

If you don't have such a supplier then we'll cover what to look for in selecting one later.

There's little point changing out an old telephone system for a modern communications platform if it's working, can still be cost effectively maintained and all you want to do is make and receive calls.

On the other hand, if you want to explore how the effective use of communications can transform your business then it is absolutely the starting point for that journey.

Buying a Communications Platform

Put to effective use a modern communications system can transform the way your organisation can conduct business, service existing customers, manage communications costs and much more.

Basic Functionality

Reliability, functionality and ease of use must be at the heart of any communications system in order to fully exploit the investment and derive business benefits. All of these factors can be established by taking customer references – better still, by talking to users about their experiences of the candidate products. Most suppliers will facilitate this for you – after all what would they have to hide.

Some prospective purchasers may consider that all they need is basic functionality based upon their ideas of how they can communicate internally and externally and often based upon their fear of costs associated with more sophisticated functionality.

In truth, today's modern systems have hundreds of features built in as standard so core functionality of making and receiving calls, putting them on hold or transferring them internally or externally are there along with options, for example, to divert calls, conference calls etc. and the list goes on.

Desirable Features

Today most people are familiar with using voicemail – leaving messages for people that you don't get through to on first attempt. Voicemail has become a key feature of modern communications and should be on a list of desired features but also check whether you can remotely dial in and get your messages easily as well.

Automated Attendant is the ability for calls to be answered automatically with a company greeting and then directed to the correct department or person via a series of voice prompts. Some organisations use this feature to replace an 'operator' whilst others use it at lunch breaks, when their operator is overloaded with calls or out of hours. In each case, it means callers are answered by your company rather than ringing off and calling a competitor.

Music on hold is a great feature too. Think beyond the music to placing product or company information 'messages' so that you don't miss opportunities to tell your callers what you can do for them. It works!

Advanced Features

It's useful to remember that the standard built in features of today were the advanced features of yesterday and that tomorrow's features are literally always just around the corner.

The more advanced features available today are often based around networking and mobility functionality.

An informed, mobile workforce has become a key feature of a successful organisation in recent years. It enables business agility and a swift response to customer needs that can differentiate you from a competitor – it can also level the playing field between large and small organisations.

Mobile extensions for example, where a mobile device is in effect an extension of the main telephone system, enables calls answered by your organisation to be transferred to the right person wherever they happen to be – somewhere else in the building, their car, an airport or literally wherever. Likewise the remote user can receive direct calls and transfer them back to another person in the central office just as though they were at their desk.

Today this feature is becoming a 'must have' although we term it 'advanced' and the functionality is increasing at around the same pace that the cost is decreasing!

This is largely due to the introduction of IP based networks and the use of Voice over IP (VoIP). Using VoIP for mobile extensions means that the call cost is dramatically reduced as the remote phone is called over the IP network rather than a dialled (charged by distance and duration) call from your telephone system.

This has transformed the way in which many organisations can conduct business. Consider the executive in a hotel room in, say Germany. With VoIP the executive has communications options that were hitherto almost impossible or impossibly expensive!

Using a smartphone, typically a Blackberry or Apple iPhone, the executive has the ability to make and receive calls as though in the office, access directories and voicemail systems. Another option would be for that executive to have a VoIP 'softphone' application loaded on their laptop and use the local Wi-Fi or hotel room broadband for telephony via a simple headset such as you would use in the car. Furthermore, the same connection would enable secure access to company information held of remote file servers.

So the executive needing to close that deal in Frankfurt has all the tools at their disposal in their briefcase to access all the latest information they need and talk to the right people.

That's competitive advantage!

A Remote Office

For the organisation wishing to set up a remote office VoIP has also transformed the ease of which communications are enabled between head office and branch offices as well as sliced the inter-company communications costs to a mere fraction of the old 'legacy' ways of communicating.

Of course a big enabler of this functionality has been the now ubiquitous availability of fast, reliable and cost effective broadband type connectivity available from all the major operators.

Branch offices need no longer order telephone lines for voice and a broadband circuit for data. By using fast broadband they have the potential to do both with just the one circuit. And it's faster to install too. Just plug in IP based deskphones to your network or use wireless based smartphones.

Where to Buy

Since the liberalisation of the UK market in the 1980's a whole new range of companies are addressing the 'everyday' communications needs of the nation. There are over four hundred companies offering alternative telephone services to BT alone and in the communications equipment sector ten times as many again. So who do you buy from?

Choosing a Supplier

Most communications system manufacturers choose not to sell their systems directly to end users preferring instead to work through a network of dealers or resellers. This leaves the vendor to do what they do best – design, manufacture and develop, and the reseller to manage the local customer service.

Dealers are appointed on the basis of their capability to professionally sell and support the vendors products and this process is normally formalised by the vendor running 'accreditation' schemes that these companies must adopt to maintain their status.

Our advice would therefore be to:

- 1. If you have a trusted reseller or supplier, then talk to them in the first instance.**
- 2. Ask a vendor for contact details of more than one accredited reseller local to your business.**
- 3. Check with the reseller that they have a number of engineers accredited to support the communications solution you are seeking.**

Demonstration

Ask for a product demonstration of the features you are interested in, not just to see they work but also to see how they work and how you could implement them in your business. Many of the larger resellers will have their own local demonstration service and some will offer to bring a demonstration system to you or take you to the vendor's own facilities.

References

Remember a demonstration is just that – it is not the real life mission critical business that you are running so ask to see systems up and running in a business of a similar size to your own. Be flexible, there may not be one in the next road but probably one in the next town.

Purchasing Considerations

There are a number of considerations to be taken in to account when purchasing a new communications system for your organisation. Here are our top five.

Objectives

There is little point in buying new technology for technology's sake. Many existing communications systems and platforms will serve your business satisfactorily for years to come. However, if you are seeking to gain competitive advantage through increased productivity, expanding your business or relocating to new premises then now is the time to consider upgrading your existing system or changing it entirely for one that would better suit your business in the future.

Type of System

Many traditional communications systems are based upon hardware which generally has an upper limit in terms of capacity – the number of lines and users that can be supported before additional or replacement hardware is needed. Other systems, based upon communications software can be 'infinitely' expanded to whatever size you may require.

Scale

Whichever type of system you choose it is advisable to know that it will easily and cost effectively scale to meet your future planned requirements.

Purchase Options

Getting a new communications system for your organisation can involve several cost elements. Some providers will break this down in to key components of the project such as;

1. Installation of equipment and network services, e.g. lines, broadband and local area network.
2. Equipment costs for the communications system.
3. On-going service agreement costs.

These costs can be met through one off capital expenditure or, as is common today, lease rental or lease purchase options. Most resellers have the facility to provide all these options.

Return on Investment

Your initial objectives for getting a new system should be examined in terms of whether they were met. For example, are all the features you wanted working satisfactorily and if on-going cost reduction was a purchase driver then measure the return on investment the new system is likely to deliver, as a means of determining value for money.

comms
uni
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more than a PBX



Leveraging The Investment

It's fair to say, that modern communications systems and platforms come equipped with a multitude of features built in and for many companies these standard features can suffice their business needs.

However, every business is different and all too often they discover a need for more from their telephone system than it can deliver.

It is here that the role of the independent software vendor (ISV) comes in to its own. ISVs can supply third party application software that has been proven, tried, tested and often approved by the original manufacturer of the host telephone system. It's a simple case of the phone system vendor doing what they do best and the ISV applications providers doing what they do best, combining to make the investment you have made in a communications platform go the extra mile.

There are many ISVs and even more applications so for this guide we will focus on some of the more frequently requested and used application types and the features and benefits they can add to a business.

Here's a short list to consider and we'll explain these in more detail on the following pages.

1. **Call Management**
2. **Call Recording**
3. **Mobile Call Recording**
4. **Contact Management**
5. **Activity Status Wallboards**
6. **Computer Telephony Integration**

Call Management

The old maxim that 'You can't manage what you don't measure' has proved to be so true when it comes to communications.

Call Management applications software is a simple to use, yet highly sophisticated management tool that lets a company see what is happening within their business when it comes to telephone usage and much more.

Quite simply, Call Management can help you run your business better, increase productivity and save you money.

How?

Well, let us examine just a few of things that Call Management systems can do and how they could transform your business.

Cost Control

When your monthly or quarterly phone usage bill arrives from your supplier do you often wonder how you could have spent so much money? Even in these days of cheaper call rates organisations get caught out by unauthorised calls to distant locations or, heaven forbid, to premium rate numbers. With Call Management you can reconcile your phone bill by seeing reports that show the phone calls you actually made, by number, call duration, which extension made the call. More significantly, you can block calls to unauthorised numbers so you don't get caught out again.

Hacking

It's a sad fact that the hacking of phone systems is on the increase again. Criminals can hi-jack un-protected systems – usually at night or over a weekend – and use them to redirect calls to overseas locations or very expensive premium rate numbers they own. The first users general know about it is when they get the bill, often tens of thousands of pounds – and be warned, you are liable and you have to pay up. Call Management can protect you against this fraud by identifying any irregular call patterns and stopping the calls before damage is done.

Major Accounts

OK, so you know who your major account customers are but what time are you actually spending on the phone to them making sure they are your accounts and not your competitors? No idea huh? Well with Call Management you can list out your major accounts and identify calls to and from them in simple to read reports. How many calls did you miss last month from your biggest customers? No idea on that either? I think you need Call Management.

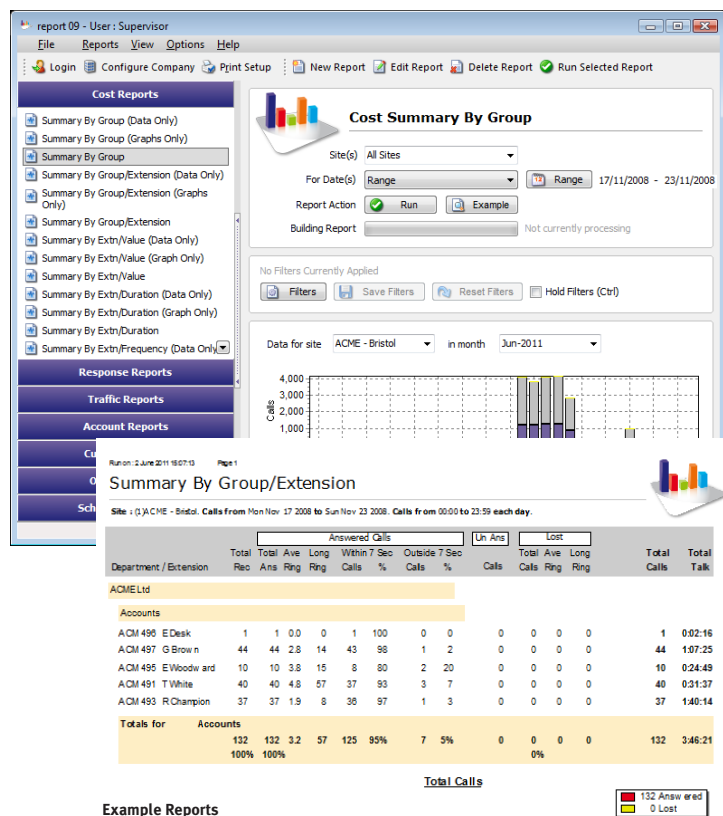
Sales Calls

If you have a telesales team canvassing for business or just appointments then how do you know how effective they are? Who really is your top performer? Who needs training? Call Management can identify which of your staff is making the right number of calls.

Service Desks

Do you know which of your customers is tying up your expensive customer service desk? Are 80% of your service calls coming from just 20% of your customers? Worse still, are those 20% of customers really spending any money with your business? If you don't know then perhaps you really should find out so you can take action. Once again, call management will identify the issues and provide the reports you need.

Call Management software can really help your business identify weaknesses in operations and turn them in to strengths. The return on investment is very quick too.



Call Recording

The ability to record calls is often regarded as the preserve of large companies with big budgets but for some time this myth has been well and truly dispelled by the number of excellent, cost effective, yet fully functional call recording systems now available for the SME.

There are some key issues to consider when purchasing a call recording solution.

1. Ease of installation and use.
2. How easy is it to find and playback a call recorded some time ago?
3. Does the call recording software integrate with other applications? For example, with Call Management, so that if you click on a call record you can also play the call recording? That's what 'joined up' applications should do!
4. How secure are the recordings and their archives?
5. Can the call recordings be securely accessed by remote staff or branch offices?
6. Can the recordings be saved in a format suitable for email attachments between colleagues?
7. Is the call recording system suitable for use as a staff training tool to improve individual performance?
8. Does the call recording system comply with legislation?

This last point is interesting and significant. In the UK, call recording is legal and there is no need to tell a caller they are being recorded although many companies do so out of politeness.

The legislation surrounding which type of calls MUST be recorded is however more complex.

In essence, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued guidelines which state all calls where money is transacted must be recorded. This is not just about City Stockbrokers but is also required when you are selling any form of product or service. And, if you are taking customer credit card details then further rules are in place but you can check these rules and guidelines yourself on line at www.fsa.gov.uk.

Benefits

Call recording today brings benefits to most companies and organisations.

The range of uses to which call recording is now being applied has expanded greatly. Users can now opt for solutions that record 100% of calls – essential in businesses that need to record calls for legal or compliance reasons.

The functionality of call recording solutions today goes beyond the simple recording of calls. You can now automatically analyse what is going on in those calls: from assessing the effectiveness of call handling scripts, to identifying customer service trends or spotting product mentions in calls.

Call Recording Benefits

1. Staff performance monitoring
2. Campaign and promotion evaluation
3. Training support
4. Improve customer service
5. Regulation and code of practice compliance
6. Record transactions
7. Provide helpdesk replay reference



Buying Tips

If you have an IP PBX system and are making calls using voice over IP (VoIP) make sure the call recording system you choose is capable of recording IP based conversations as well as 'regular' calls.

Pricing: Simple, easy to use call recording applications for small and SOHO (Small Office Home Office) organisations range from around £250 to £2,000. Thereafter, they scale up quite quickly as the number of users rise and the degree of sophistication follows. Most high end vendors have adopted a modular strategy meaning that the basis call recording, retrieval and playback is supplied as a more cost effective 'platform' upon which further application options can be built. This is useful for budgeting purposes.

1. Ask for a demonstration – see how easy it is to use.
2. Ask for reference sites – customers of a similar size and functionality to your own business. Don't be afraid to speak to them and ask questions.
3. If your business is growing then make sure that the system you buy today, has the capacity to expand to meet your future needs.

4. Check out not only how and where calls are recorded but also how they are archived. Using tapes should be avoided; most will record to hard drives so ask if anyone on the network can play them back – with security clearance, of course.

Call Recording For Mobile Phones



The use of mobiles phones in offices is growing exponentially. It's a fact that users would rather use their smartphones, Apple iPhone and BlackBerry for example, to make business calls than they would their deskphone.

Demand for call recording on mobile devices has increased since the Financial Services Authority enforced the recording of all transaction conversations in the equity, bond, derivatives market and, in the autumn of 2010, removed the exemption on mobile phones.

Additionally, as financial austerity continues, many organisations across the private and public sectors will be generally looking to improve efficiency and nullify disputes by having the ability to record phone conversations on all devices.

Buying Tips

1. Look for a solution that can record mobile and fixed line calls together in a single user interface.
2. Products and applications should be able to capture and retrieve calls with the minimum of fuss for regulatory compliance or for business improvement through higher levels of customer satisfaction.
3. Solutions should be able to work with all network technologies - ISDN, SIP and VoIP - in whatever combination and includes high level encryption.

Key User Benefits

1. **Dispute Resolution** - Calls can be found quickly and an extract of the call can be emailed to a client to confirm contract details.
2. **Compliance Demonstration** - It is quick and easy to show that compliance rules have been followed.
3. **Quality Monitoring** - Calls can be reviewed to ensure that all clients have been dealt with professionally at all times.
4. **Performance Improvement** - Recorded calls help staff to develop their telephone and telesales techniques.
5. **Conference Facilities** - Share conference calls and online meetings with business colleagues.

Contact Management

It would be fair to assume that every organisation would like to improve the service they offer their own customers - all they need is the right tools to do the job.

A common factor amongst most businesses is the need to maintain or improve customer service levels to ensure the customers you have remain with you – after all it is cheaper to look after the business you have, than it is to seek out and gain new business.

In the past, many organisations have shied away from implementing customer service and contact management applications, as they had a reputation for being unwieldy in the extreme and the degree of difficulty in implementing those applications effectively, was only matched by the high cost associated with their purchase.

As a result most SME users were bypassed in the scramble to sell customer management systems as they would not have had the budget or the internal resources to implement them.

One problem with this type of top down user strategy is that the smaller customer is not entirely well catered for when the vendor starts to scale their product for the SME. Feature sets remain complex, implementation times are still lengthy and the skill sets required internally by the SME to manage and run the applications, are a frightener for most small companies. Shoe horning rarely works.

However, some software application developers have now catered specifically for the customer and contact management needs of the smaller business and developed systems that are cost effective, easy to implement but yet fully featured.

Simple Questions Easy Answers

Contact Management software should be simple to use. ‘Do you really know who you are talking to on the phone?’ If you don’t then you need a solution that can tell you the answer and a whole lot more information you need to retain customers.

Here’s a check list of desirable features for Contact Management systems.

1. **The software should integrate easily with existing software such as Microsoft Outlook for example, and be intuitive to use.**
2. **The customer contact system should integrate with call recording and call management software so that all the elements are ‘joined up’.**
3. **The system should be able to recognise who is calling and use this information to search through your database or application to find the matching contact. It will then screen-pop the contact details, all before the caller has been answered.**
4. **The system should be capable of working with outbound calls to dial clients automatically.**

Benefits

1. **Reduce Costs - Call handling time is reduced because you have all their details to hand and don’t need to ask for them again.**
2. **Improve Service - By knowing who the caller is before answering the call you can offer a more personalised service.**
3. **Increase Sales - Telephone calls can be made automatically from your database or application thus speeding up connection and avoiding mis-dialling.**
4. **Improve Productivity - By opening your application or database on the correct screen, you can enter notes right away without losing seconds finding the correct screen or tab to use.**
5. **Share - If a call is transferred, all the caller’s details are shared with the next person.**



Wallboards Activity at a glance

Have you ever walked through a busy sales or service office and wondered, 'What's happening in this business right now?'

The staff may look really busy but what is the real story?

'How many calls have been missed, how many callers are in the queue waiting to be answered – and how many of them are our major accounts that we REALLY need to prioritise and look after before they call our competitors?'

Wallboards, whether actually mounted Plasma screens on the wall for all to see in an office or PC based for individuals and supervisors, can provide instant answers to these questions at a glance.

Such as:

- 1. Measure Performance - Define your own performance objectives and have them monitored automatically and continuously in real-time.**
- 2. Set Alarms - Set alarms for unwanted or unexpected events and be informed visibly and by email. For example, when any call waiting to be answered exceeds 30 seconds.**
- 3. Increase Sales - Set targets for individuals or teams for the number of calls to be made or answered in a given time, and see progress towards their goals visibly in real time.**
- 4. Improve Performance - Drive positive change in your business by aiming to meet or exceed performance targets and by reacting quickly to any alarms that have been raised.**
- 5. Share - By sharing both business and external content (such as news feeds) with your teams, you can keep staff involved and highly-motivated to achieve common goals.**

Modern display wallboards should be able to integrate fully with your other applications such as Call and Contact Management systems as well as your core communications platform to give the widest possible choice of information that individual companies and users want to see.

Going a step further, some display wallboard systems can mix live call data and XML output from any business database, along with the relevant RSS feeds, web pages and IPTV/video output all completely under the control of the user.

Unified Communications

In today's challenging environment, organisations need to get more work done with less resources and time.

One solution many successful companies have considered and deployed is Unified Communications.

Unified Communications (UC) is the integration of real-time communication services such as instant messaging (chat), presence information (seeing who is online), video conferencing, call control and speech recognition with non-real-time communication services such as unified messaging (integrated voicemail, e-mail, SMS and fax). UC is not a single product, but a set of products that provides a consistent unified user interface and user experience across multiple devices and media types.

UC also refers to a trend to offer business process integration, i.e. to simplify and integrate all forms of communications in view to optimise business processes and reduce the response time, manage flows, and eliminate device and media dependencies.

In its broadest sense, UC can encompass all forms of communications that are exchanged via IP network.

UC allows an individual to send a message on one medium and receive the same communication on another medium. For example, one can receive a voicemail message and choose to access it through e-mail or a mobile phone. If the sender is online according to the presence information and currently accepts calls, the response can be sent immediately through text chat or video call. Otherwise, it may be sent as a non real-time message such as email that can be accessed through a variety of media.

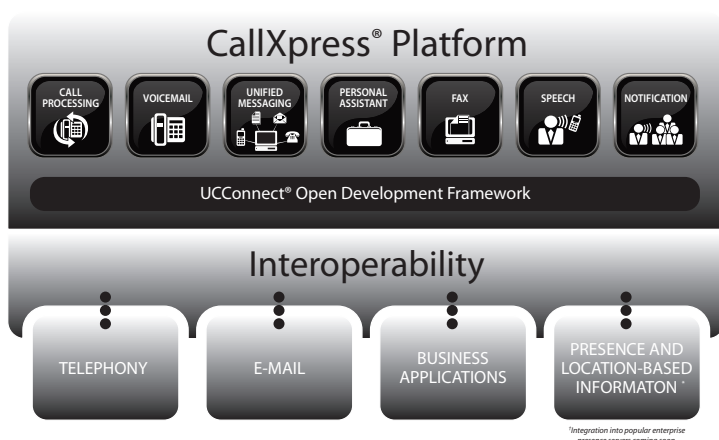
Key Considerations

Some UC solutions are all encompassing monolithic products that require not only very sophisticated deployment and integrations skills but also a high degree of in house skills to maintain and leverage the investments made.

Our advice, unless you are prepared for this eventuality, is to consider with your chosen supplier the type of applications that you use today, those you may want to use in the future, and the real benefits your organisation will derive from unifying those applications.

For most organisations a list that includes the unification of applications such as advanced call processing, voicemail, unified messaging, personal assistant, fax, speech, and notification has been proven to transform productivity.

Please also consider interoperability with your existing infrastructure of telephone system, e-mail system and data systems. Leverage these existing investments and still increase productivity, rather than spend money to replace parts of your existing communications infrastructure.



Joined up Communications

One technology trap that many organisations fall into is to individually purchase ‘best of breed’ single issue applications that turn out not to ‘talk’ to each other. It’s like having many little island or pools of information that whilst useful in their own right would be so much more powerful if they worked together. For example, there’s little point in having a Call Management product that cannot ‘talk’ to or integrate with a call recording application.

Usually by the time this error has been discovered it’s too late and the money has been spent.

A far better strategy for the applications you need to enhance and/or augment those that come as a standard part of your telephony communications package is to consider interoperability – the full integration with existing investments and potential other applications required in the future.

One solution may be to consider a ‘suite’ of applications developed by a single supplier that has tested and proved them to be able to work not only together but on the widest possible range of core communications systems and platforms.

Benefits

1. Typically a suite of applications can provide the building blocks that will support your business - growing with it and changing with you and with the times.
2. You can install and deploy the applications at a pace that suits your business and your budget.
3. A similar ‘look and feel’ for all applications builds user confidence.
4. Often a general configuration in one application will be applied throughout the suite, for example, a security setting for access to information.
5. With integration and interoperability comes combined power for additional productivity benefits and management information.

In today’s highly competitive markets the effective use of technology can deliver competitive advantage – get it wrong and it could be expensive in more ways than one.

Implementations

Once you have made the decision to invest in a new communications platform and a set of applications to meet the current and future needs of your organisation the next steps to take are installation, training and ultimately realising the return on investment you have made through increased productivity or whatever the driver for the purchase was.

Installations

Tell your staff what is happening and why the communications systems are being upgraded. You will need their ‘buy-in’ to realise all the benefits downstream.

Agree a schedule of works with your chosen supplier. Be aware that not all suppliers employ their own installation and implementation crews and rarely do they have their own product trainers. Most outsource these tasks to specialist organisations who are experts in these fields. It’s just another example of the diversification of labour.

Make a check list of all the features of the new systems that you agreed with the supplier so that everyone knows what you are expecting on day one of the systems going live and what you are expecting to be implemented subsequently.

Make sure you are thoroughly trained on the systems and applications. Even though products today are highly intuitive to someone say versed in Microsoft Office, you won’t get the best out of the new products if you are unsure what they are capable of.

If you are expecting to see a return on investment make sure you are in a position to measure it. It's a fact that most end users do not actually measure the results they are getting from new applications purchased.

If you were promised a 30% increase in say calls answered in under 30 seconds then find out what you are achieving and if it is less than the target figure, ask why.

Staying Ahead Of The Game

As we said at the beginning of this guide, developments in communications happen at an ever increasing pace. Nothing stands still, at least not for very long.

Working with a good local supplier that keeps you up-to-date with developments and how they can positively affect your business is crucial to maintaining a competitive edge in the market today.

Technology has the potential to provide a cutting edge for your business. Whether that is through being able to handle more calls more effectively, enable an informed mobile workforce that can respond quickly to your customers demand or tell you where your organisation is wasting money, technology can provide those answers and solutions.

It's very hard with technology to second guess what developments are just around the corner. However, most SMEs are more concerned over immediate day to day and month to month issues than trying to deploy 'bleeding edge' technology. For SMEs the key issues are proven capabilities for new products and cost effectiveness.

Here the current products on the market will perform well at reducing costs, retaining customers and giving a competitive advantage.

Our advice is simple; select products from proven vendors and suppliers with a track record of continual product development and excellence in customer service and you take most of the risk out of the purchase decision.

Your Trusted Telecoms Partner



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