



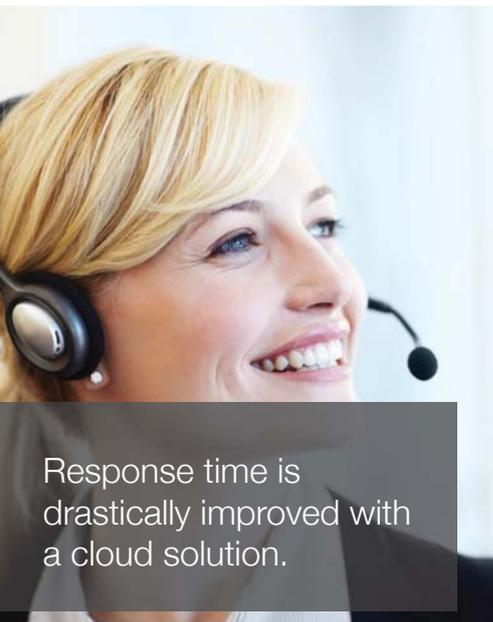
The Unified Communications Buyer's Guide to
Cutting Costs & Boosting Productivity

Introduction

Considering all the hype it's received, it's easy to assume the cloud's benefits are overblown. Even if you've seen the advantages cloud technology can offer firsthand, it's natural to think that cloud computing is good, even great, but not a lifesaver.

But recent studies have indicated that an average 600-employee company can expect to see a 182 percent return on its investment in cloud technology over three years. The payback period? Less than two months. Obviously, total cost of ownership is an important consideration, and it makes sense for business decision-makers to factor it in when deciding whether or not to embrace a new, cloud-based model in any part of their organization. But there are several equally important, though tougher to quantify, benefits to consider when trying to determine the cloud's true value.

Increased customer service



Response time is drastically improved with a cloud solution.

The cloud's financial gains came in a number of different forms. For example, with cloud UC, companies can reduce their communication costs simply by eliminating disparate on-premise systems and software in favor of a business cloud phone system. Additionally, cloud-based offerings help employees connect to customers more quickly and effectively.

As consumers' use of smartphones, instant messaging, SMS, and live chat tools has increased, so have their expectations. The average customer now not only hopes, but expects to reach a service agent or representative instantly, and will perceive any delays as unprofessional and unacceptable.

A cloud-based phone system helps businesses meet these evolving demands, putting them ahead of the curve when it comes to customer service and outreach.

Decreased Waste

According to Webster's, efficiency is defined as "the ability to do something without wasting materials, time, or energy." Though most companies share the ultimate goal of achieving efficiency, the reality is that the majority of today's employees end up wasting materials, time, and energy in their day-to-day activities. Papers—printed with good intention—are strewn across desks, their significance unclear. Phone calls are made, but seldom returned. Even emails—often considered to be the most effective use of communication in the workplace—rarely get the message across. If only all of that energy could be channeled into productive results.

Fortunately, unified communications can greatly help reduce the negative expending of energy, not to mention financial resources. By streamlining the processes your employees execute on a daily basis, UC can place you on your way to a more efficient workplace.

No more dropped calls



When using private branch exchanges (PBX), there is a distinct possibility of your call being dropped or otherwise encountering trouble. Many people endure this unfortunate occurrence everyday, as a misconfigured network can wreak havoc on business. Luckily, UC has eliminated this problem.

With failover capabilities throughout the world that anticipate network outages, UC ensures that your communications will not be interrupted by anything—from a downed tree caused by a thunderstorm to a multi-vehicle accident that takes out transmission lines.

Long wait times are a major pet peeve for virtually every consumer, so putting clients on hold is a surefire way to torpedo satisfaction rates. UC allows customers and agents to pick the most efficient channel to resolve a specific issue.

Further reach



Gone are the days when being at your desk was the only time people could reach you. Sure, the advent of cell phones—and later smartphones—helped, but many people are still unaware of how to best reach co-workers, dialing work extensions instead of cell phones, or vice-versa. With four-digit dialing that routes calls to any desired device, UC providers have figured out how to make sure you are always able to receive an important call—no matter where you are.

All mail in one place

The purpose of voice and email is the same, and now the delivery is too.



Regardless of how it's presented or how it gets there, the intention of all mail is the same—to convey messages from one person to another. The problem is that mail coming via multiple avenues can cause confusion. Take voicemail, for example. In addition to being a pain to access and rewind, until now, voicemail was located deep in the bowels of phone networks. With visual voicemail, your messages can be played on your computer as a media file. Additionally, you can read a transcript of your message in your inbox as an email.

Less Maintenance

Complex communication infrastructures can result in cacophony and high costs. Coaxial cables, not to mention the phones they link, become less reliable as they age, forcing IT departments to revamp their internal networks. Given that UC-based communications are Internet-based, you simply need to ensure that your Internet connection is up and running. The rest will take care of itself.

Is the cloud the right choice for your business? Odds are, the answer is an unambiguous yes. At this point, it's hard to find a firm that's not using the cloud in some capacity, and before long, leveraging the cloud will be absolutely essential just to keep pace.