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RINGCENTRAL'S GUIDE TO UCAAS FOR ENTERPRISES

THINKING GLOBAL, ACTING LOCAL

When it comes to business communications, diversity and flexibility are the major trends shaping the way we work. Contract and remote work is increasingly common, offering enterprises the agility to be responsive as well as strategic in order to maintain an edge in the marketplace. Over 90% of UK enterprises currently employ contractors, with that figure set to increase over the coming years. Moreover, 96% of enterprise employees work remotely for more than two days per week. Again, the number is likely to increase over the next two years.[1]

These trends create a more disparate, even fragmented, workforce, posing challenges for businesses to address in order to remain competitive through the evolution of the digital age. Driven by the disruption, the B2B market has seen an influx of communication tools to cover every type of interaction conceivable. Companies use a range of different communication platforms and performance measurement tools to connect and align their diverse global workforce. While the platforms are effective, the number of communication tools available is overwhelming to the general user base and the in-house technicians who install and maintain them. Some form of consolidation is needed.

This is where unified communications as a service (UCaaS) comes in. Thanks to cloud capability and UCaaS, businesses don't have to worry about switching between different apps to accomplish their goals.

1. Cavell Group, UK Enterprise Insight Report 2019

UCAAS FOR A DIGITAL WORKFORCE

UCaaS uses cloud capability to connect different communications systems and collaboration tools so that employees can access them from anywhere and at any time.

Given cloud's capacity for scaling and establishing virtual connections across a dispersed workforce, UCaaS is an ideal way to address the growing popularity of mobile communications: over 60% of UK enterprises provide mobile communications to at least 30% of their staff.[2]

We used to say we can't be everywhere at once—digital tools are helping us achieve the impossible. As businesses grow to cover multiple locations, operating in multiple markets with multiple audiences, alignment becomes more complicated.

UCaaS bridges the physical gaps in a dispersed workforce, allowing flexibility in the way work is conducted. It enables collaboration between colleagues and departments and ensures that no matter where you work, you can still access the same secure system.

Some of the features that help to do this are:

- Voice and video communication
- Team collaboration
- QoS reports and analytics

- Cloud ecosystem
- AI built in
- A single global platform

2. Cavell Group

WHAT UCAAS CAN DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS

The obvious benefit of cloud-based UCaaS over an on-premises private branch exchange (PBX) is the space saving on storage requirements. Maintenance and upgrades are all managed by the UCaaS provider, saving time, money, and skills requirements. Multiply those savings by numerous locations, and the case for UCaaS is compelling.

KEY REASONS ENTERPRISES ADOPT UCAAS:

Global

UCaaS supports flexible working and keeps a disparate global workforce connected, maintaining high productivity regardless of geographical location. The centralisation of tools and services provides consistency in functionality and company communication, which together create a consistent employee experience.

Future-proof

The UCaaS cloud-based platform features built-in redundancy to provide a robust and reliable infrastructure. Global access to centralised systems allows upgrades to be rolled out across the entire platform without requiring additional investment. These features mean UCaaS is a product purchased today that is prepared for tomorrow.

Seamless integration

UCaaS works in collaboration with existing workplace applications such as video calling and messaging, and integrates with a range of tools. Whether it's CRM, project management, file storage or workflow tools, you can augment their functionality with additional options such as click-to-dial, call recording, real-time reporting, etc.

Strong remote control

Accessing a centralised platform means it's easy to keep control of the administration across the global system. Remote access allows administrators to enable users instantly, set permissions, and access reporting and billing information from anywhere.

Enhanced UI

Through UCaaS, businesses can provide employees with the tools they want to use, helping to avoid the influx of shadow IT. The communication tools available make it as easy to work as it would be to message a friend, which helps to match the expectations that are brought in from employees' personal lives.

Consolidation of services

Rather than running contracts for multiple vendors who deliver products with overlapping services, UCaaS provides one consolidated product that fits all business productivity requirements. This consolidation simplifies the everyday experience for users and helps businesses to deliver better employee experience.

UCAAS AND MULTIPLE TOUCHPOINTS

The plethora of communication and collaboration tools available to businesses creates a new customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX), which in turn affects business productivity and profitability. Employees are frustrated with disjointed communications technologies that prevent them from providing great customer experiences.

Over 90% of employees say a seamless communications and collaboration platform would make it easier to keep customers happy, improve customer satisfaction scores, and improve both the employee and customer experience. Around three quarters of customer service agents toggle daily between apps to resolve customer issues, some using anything from two to 12 apps on a daily basis to do their jobs.

Enterprises undergoing digital transformation have transitioned their communications stacks to the cloud to consolidate their tools and take advantage of improvements in efficiency.

UCaaS provides businesses with the capacity to better speak to the needs of their customers and to be more competitive in the market.

UCaaS is much more than a suite of channels: the unified nature of those channels is what allows employees to collaborate and share information in consistent, structured, and inclusive formats to encourage collaboration between users regardless of department or geographical location.

The right UCaaS platform gathers everything your employees need to connect, share, and work together on ideas in the same streamlined interface.

WORKING AS ONE

The explosive growth of communication apps equipped with collaboration tools illustrates how communication and collaboration are complementary concepts. Successful collaboration in the workforce relies on effective communication.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY COMPANY

As the means of communication multiply in digital channels, a strategic approach is essential for business to ensure it is getting the right message to the right people at the right time via the right means. Business needs to be strategic with communication in both directions: internally and externally.

External communications strategy:
This covers the who, what, when, where, how, and why of communicating with audiences external to the company. Every audience segment and the timing of every message should be considered in the strategy.

When customers are involved, it must be easy for them to interact with the business on their channel of choice. The tools in place should enable delivery of a seamless experience when people from outside communicate with the company.

External communication plans should be omnichannel, stretching all the way from VoIP to social media, SMS, and more.

Internal communications strategy:
In today's complex, multi-generational working environment, an effective internal communications strategy is critical. Today's workforce includes people with varying levels of familiarity to different tools and levels of digital exposure.

All these levels must be considered in choosing a strategy to engage an entire workforce. When all employees communicate across a single platform, this improves the EX and fosters a greater sense of connection amongst employees.

Businesses must not underestimate the impact of the tools that employees use and how this enablement improves productivity and happiness at work by allowing employees to be at the cutting edge of technology at work.

PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESSES USING CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS

The chart below shows the most popular external communications channels used by UK enterprises:[3]

78%	76%	58%	54%
PHONE CALLS	EMAIL	FACE-TO-FACE	ONLINE CHAT
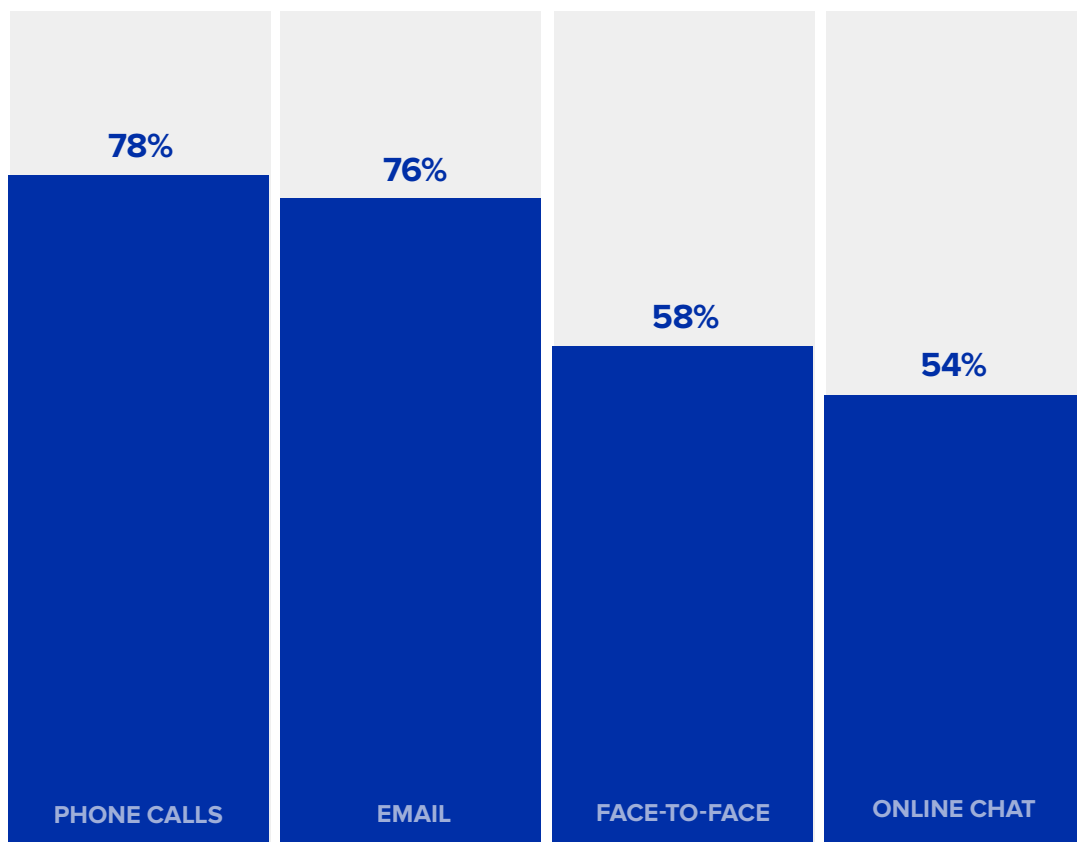
Enterprises tend to employ a broad variety of communication channels. While phone calls and email are significantly more popular than face-to-face and online chat, there is a relatively equal preference for numerous other channels such as instant messaging, web conferencing, chatbots, and SMS.

As business size increases, it's no surprise the likelihood of adopting unified communications (UC) tools increases. In fact, 84% of UK enterprises use some form of UC tools for external communications. With so many tools playing a part in the process, unification needs to be a priority in order to maintain consistency.

Faced with rolling out systems to large numbers of employees, enterprises demand easy-to-manage communications tools that are intuitive and simple for many different employees to adopt and use effectively. Given the variety of communications tools already in use, unified communications systems for enterprises must include advanced integration and collaboration functionality in order to meet the various needs of an expanded workforce.

3. Cavell Group

PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESSES USING CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH COLLEAGUES

The chart below shows the most popular internal communications channels used by UK enterprises:[4]

EMAIL	PHONE CALLS	FACE-TO-FACE	WEB CONFERENCING TOOLS
80%	72%	66%	54%
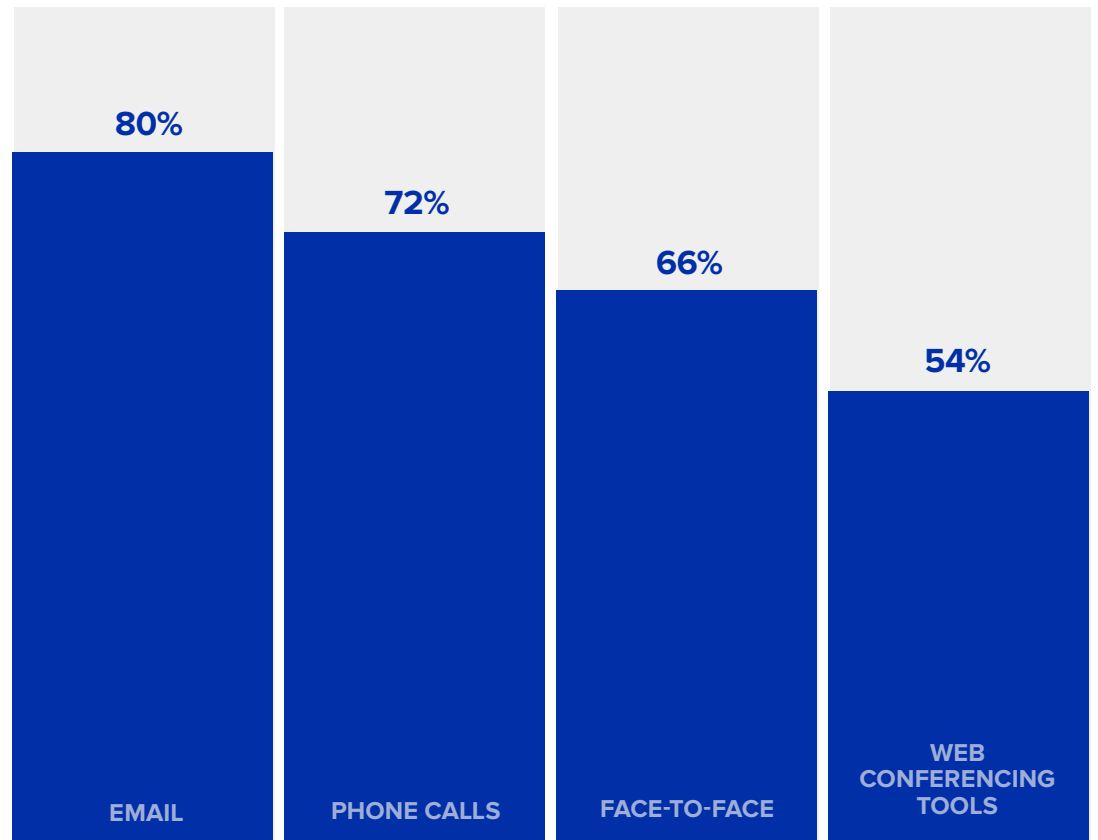
While email, phone calls and face-to-face encounters are clearly the favourite internal communications channels for enterprises, many other tools share a lower prominence, with 40–50% of enterprises using instant messaging, video conferencing, SMS, consumer messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp), and other tools.

As businesses grow and expand their workforce, functions diversify and specialisations develop, increasing the demand for specialised tools. This puts pressure on larger businesses to empower their employees with the full range of tools needed to do their work. If this issue is ignored by a business, the risk of shadow IT increases. Enterprises seeking to avoid this form of unregulated infiltration adopt UCaaS and are able to provide consistency in their internal and external communications.

In the case of UK SMBs, more businesses use advanced UCaaS tools for internal rather than for external communications. With enterprises, however, that trend is reversed. Given the scale and complexity of enterprise internal communications, it is surprising that still 30% of UK enterprises have yet to adopt advanced UC tools.

Growth in the use of video conferencing has been significant over the past five years. Remote working has become more common, video tools have become more reliable, and enterprises are investing more heavily in employee engagement. The role of video in portraying a company's values and activities, and engaging a workforce around meaningful contributions through audio, visual, and experiential platforms, will become even stronger this decade.

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4. Cavell Group

THE PARTNERSHIP OF COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

While communication is about the sharing of information, collaboration is about enabling people in the workforce to contribute and work together on a project. Get communication right, and you'll create a natural partnership: if communication is clear, accessible, and easy to use across a range of touchpoints, it helps collaboration work.

As physical location matters less thanks to virtual connectivity, the need for flexibility increases and collaboration comes to the fore.

Collaboration tools increase team efficiency by as much as 20%, and among UK businesses as a whole, the most common reasons to adopt collaboration tools are improved flexibility and increased productivity. Over three quarters of businesses find collaboration tools make it easier to track and manage projects and allow them to deliver a better customer experience, and 80% agree that using such tools leads to higher employee engagement.

ENTERPRISE ADOPTION OF UCAAS

Scale isn't always a good thing. Larger scale often gives rise to the challenge of geographical and contextual diversity. It's easy for business groups to settle into silos. Messages can become so localised that consistency is lost, collaboration is impeded and operations become inefficient. Enterprises face the challenge of remaining responsive, giving rise to oil tanker metaphors and descriptions of bureaucratic behemoths.

Traditional modes of communication aren't suitable to ensure clear and consistent messages are dispersed throughout the organisation. Individual departments, or even teams, use their collaboration tools of choice, creating disparity in software applications throughout the organisation. A truly unified communications platform that seamlessly integrates with various applications, devices, and hardware solutions throughout the business can offer enterprises the agility they need in order to remain relevant in a fast-changing world.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

Providing a consolidated communications and collaboration platform, and integrating with existing tools, UCaaS offers enterprises a way to bring structure, strategy, and consistency to their communications. Staff can be engaged and informed through targeted messaging, updates can be delivered seamlessly, and remote workers can overcome the isolation of distance.

THE IMMEDIATE BENEFITS OF UCAAS ADOPTION FOR ENTERPRISES INCLUDE:

- **Improved EX and CX**: Employees are able to work together using an interconnected range of tools, bringing transparency and inclusivity to the collaborative process, which gives rise to fewer issues, and helps to solve customer problems faster.

- **Cost reduction**: Using multiple vendors for your communications channels makes it hard to keep track of all the actual costs. Cloud-based unified communications systems are more manageable and will save you time and money, freeing up resources to invest in other projects.

- **Innovation boost**: UCaaS provides enterprises that much-needed agility to respond to shifts in the marketplace, disruptive events and revelations, and newly-developed opportunities. UCaaS allows enterprises to operate flexibly and at scale.

- **Global collaboration**: UCaaS puts collaboration tools at the fingertips of every employee, regardless of the device they're using. Managing communications and collaboration via a global platform offers cross-geographic consistency without incurring any extra costs.

UCAAS IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT IN AN ENTERPRISE

When approaching a transition to UCaaS, enterprises need to have a strategy in place that assesses their process and operational needs: what the transition will look like in terms of hardware and software changes, what realistic timelines look like, and how to measure if the transition has been a success.

- **Assess your needs**
  What is your existing communication network? Where do you want to get to? What changes will need to be made in order to achieve that? Take into account any existing on-premises hardware you may have, any additional expenses in terms of licenses and hardware (e.g., new headsets for a softphone system) you need to include in your budget, and which tools you wish to take forward into your UCaaS transition.

- **Consider your workforce**
  How can you empower your workforce to perform at their best? What is their feedback regarding internal and external communication, and interdepartmental collaboration? Most businesses agree they could improve communication, but what are the specific challenges in your business?

- **Plan for deployment**
  Consider how much the vendor will support you through deployment. Does the vendor have a dedicated professional services team to onboard your workforce with full end-to-end account management including on-site visits? Does the vendor have an existing transition model, such as RingCentral's five-step process covering planning and design, project management, on-site consultancy and deployment, implementation, and ongoing support?

- **Select a UCaaS vendor**
  Be clear in your needs, research the marketplace, and articulate your wishes to several vendors to learn what solutions they can offer you. Expectations need to be set early, so try to have all your questions and specifications prepared upfront so neither party is landed with unexpected changes part way through the process.

SELECTING A UCAAS VENDOR

It's possible to find a UCaaS system that can adapt to the needs—and improve the performance—of your existing business.

> The clearer you can identify critical areas for integration and potential areas for improvement, the easier it will be to choose a cost-effective UCaaS vendor.

As you consider partnering with a UCaaS provider, there are **several vital points to consider** in your selection process:

- How easily will the system scale to support your fluctuating needs?

- Is the provider flexible and adaptable to your current and future requirements?

- Can the service enable "bring your own device" (BYOD) and mobile workers across a distributed workforce?

- Will the system make it easier for your IT, admins, and users to make small changes, updates, and fixes?

- Does the service reduce costs now and into the future?

Once you have your needs and preferences clearly defined, you'll be able to compare and contrast providers and the services they can offer you. For more information on confidently purchasing UCaaS, refer to the latest Gartner UCaaS Magic Quadrant.

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