

WHITE PAPER

Cloud Communications



MASERGY
Performance Beyond Expectations

Understanding Unified Communications as a Service

A BUYER'S GUIDE TO CLOUD-BASED
UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

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Unified Communications as a Service Explained

Cloud-based Unified Communications (UC) brings together multiple communications services into a single cohesive platform. By combining familiar communication services such as voice, video, chat and presence with newer services such as shared work spaces and videoconferencing – UC weaves together powerful, productive and easy-to-use collaboration tools that your business can use across all of your locations. In addition, employees can choose the communications and collaboration tools that are the most appropriate for them and enjoy a consistent user experience across of their devices.

UC solutions boost business productivity by providing anytime, anywhere, any device-type connectivity. This also improves the efficiency of your communications and increases your staff's level of engagement.

No matter the job function or location, UC is powerful. Sales professionals can use UC to locate contact information for potential customers, place calls, and share documents – all with just a few mouse clicks. Geographically distributed teams can use conferencing and web collaboration capabilities to work together and complete projects rapidly. Call-center agents can use presence-detection capabilities to find subject-matter experts fast, then use instant messaging to confer with them, all while assisting customers in real time.

But it gets better. The development of hosted, cloud-based “as a Service” solutions means businesses of every size organization can deploy UC for a fraction of the cost of legacy on-premises PBX systems. Unlike those older systems, Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) provides an entire solution from an externally hosted infrastructure. The only equipment residing on your site are telephone handsets and dedicated routing equipment. This means you can re-allocate personnel and real estate for other needs. It also means you can enjoy easier setup, less maintenance activity, lower costs, greater spending flexibility, improved agility to change capacity, and a greater range of features and functionality that can be implemented in a phased in approach as needed.

While many vendors of legacy PBX systems are adapting their products for the cloud, serious difference exist between these adapted-to-the-cloud systems and those that are truly “born in the cloud.” PBXes and hosted PBX systems often make serious compromises around flexibility and the ability to add new features. This can result in unscheduled downtime and hidden costs. Also, legacy systems typically offer only limited support for mobile workers. By contrast, cloud-based Unified Communications takes full advantage of cloud technology, and it offers complete support for your mobile workers.

“Unlike on-premises PBX systems, UC as a Service provides the entire solution from an externally hosted infrastructure.”



Business Drivers for Unified Communications as a Service

There are many compelling business reasons why your company should move from an on-premises PBX to a full UC as a Service solution. Just by moving to a basic UC solution, you can empower greater collaboration among employees, create a more mobile workforce, and improve communications with you customers (see Fig. 1 , “Top Business Drivers of UC”).

TOP BUSINESS DRIVERS OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS



¹ DATA: *InformationWeek* 2014 Unified Communications survey of 488 business technology professionals
Note: Respondents were allowed 3 choices each

Cloud Communications

Add a UC as a Service solution, and you can gain several other powerful benefits:

Lower total cost of ownership (TCO): A UC system can lower your TCO when compared with a traditional PBX. The main factors include improved employee collaboration, higher employee productivity and job satisfaction, and savings on travel costs (see Fig. 2, “Top Factors with Calculating UC’s ROI”).

TOP FACTORS FOR CALCULATING UNIFIED COMMUNICATION'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)



By moving to UCaaS, you can gain even more benefits and enjoy the latest technology-driven communications features without breaking your budget. No expensive telecommunications equipment is needed; you supply only VoIP-ready handsets. And you can save even more, since you no longer need to support either traditional telephone or data lines.

Because cloud-based services are charged on a monthly, usage-based model, you pay for only the capacity you actually need. A full-featured UC system can also reduce your need for costly and time-consuming business travel. Finally, while an on-premises PBX system requires costly training – estimated at more than \$4,000 per year per employee – hosted UC systems are easy to use and require far less training.

² DATA: *InformationWeek* 2014 Unified Communications survey of 343 business technology professionals who are deploying or planning to deploy UC

Note: Multiple responses were permitted



More focus on your business — not your technology: With a cloud-based UC system, the complexity, hassle and cost of running a complex telecommunications system is shifted from your site to your supplier's. You still get all the great features of UC, including voice, video and wireless. But now you're free to focus on what really matters — your business.

Higher employee productivity — anywhere, anytime: A cloud-based UC system is the perfect solution for today's mobile workforce. Older, on-premises PBX systems essentially tether workers to their desks. By contrast, a cloud-based solution frees your staff for the connectivity and productivity they need, wherever and whenever they choose to connect. Whether they're in a meeting room or on factory floor, visiting a customer's office or inspecting a supplier's warehouse, your staff stays connected and productive. And they can now use powerful videoconferencing tools to host collaborative online meetings, webinars and training sessions.

BYOD: UCaaS paves the way to implementing your successful "bring your own device" strategy. Ideally, BYOD is more than just a way to grant access to consumer devices. Because smartphones and tablets offer a rich experience and makes great collaboration tools, UCaaS gives workers the ability to collaborate, even when they're working remotely.

Strengthened business continuity: Creating communications resiliency has been difficult with traditional PBX infrastructures. The UCaaS model is not tied to a single location and as a result is inherently resilient and redundant.

Improved Telecommuting: Managing remote workers is a challenge for many organizations. The collaborative capabilities of UCaaS help by improving interactions among workers whether they're working in a corporate office, branch, customer site, home office, or anywhere else.

Simplified Deployment, Faster Time to Market: Historically, communications infrastructure has been deployed on a node-by-node basis; each location, no matter how small, has had its own system. By contrast, UCaaS is delivered from the cloud to any global location, regardless of size. So you can consolidate your communications service across all locations. This makes system management easier. It should also lower your costs significantly.

The Customer's New Need for Speed

Speed is of the essence when it comes to the customer experience. So finds two sources, a study by Harris Interactive and LivePerson's "Connecting with Customers" report. Among their findings:

- **71%** of customers expect assistance within 5 minutes
- If they don't get it, **48%** will abandon the process
- **82%** rank "getting their issues resolved quickly" a top priority
- **56%** say getting resolution on the first interaction is important

Technology Benefits of Unified Communications as a Service

There are also many technological advantages to switching from an on-premises PBX to a full UCaaS solution. These include:

Lowered IT-support requirements: Moving to a cloud-based UC system helps you shift the task of supporting complex telecom systems to your managed service provider. This can also lower costs by dramatically lowering the number telecom experts you need to keep on staff, as well as the amount of floor space you need to dedicate to networking boxes.

Capital expenses shifted to operational expenses: Cloud-based services are paid for on a monthly basis, with the fee based on the current number of users. That helps you eliminate the capital expense of acquiring telecom switches and routers. It also means you'll have no capital equipment to depreciate over time. Monthly payments, as opposed to a single large payment, can also improve your cash flow.

Greater scalability: How many employees will you have next year, or five years from now? The honest answer is, nobody knows. For today's highly uncertain business environment, cloud-based UC system is the perfect solution. You allocate only as many connections as you have employees. When you need to add or subtract staff, your UC supplier can change the number of lines. The same is true for peak seasons or events; your cloud-services supplier can easily accommodate spikes, and just as easily lower your capacity once peak times are over.

Added functionality: Business-grade IP-enabled voice calls are just the beginning. Cloud-based UC systems also offer:

- **Unified messaging:** giving each employee just one inbox for all their voicemail, email, fax and voicemail transcriptions
- **Mobility:** seamless, consistent communication across disparate devices, regardless of location
- **Business applications:** easy integration with leading CRM, ERP and office-productivity applications Business-line texting
- **Video calls:** with exceptional clarity and reliability
- **Conferencing:** bridges for both scheduled and ad-hoc meetings
- **Collaboration:** integrated over the Web
- **Presence:** see the real-time status of team members, avoid "phone tag"
- **Instant messaging:** integrated with office phones



Automatic upgrades: A cloud-based UC system frees you from the hassle of upgrading hardware, updating software, and keeping up with the onslaught of security patches. Instead, those upgrades are all handled by your supplier. From your perspective, upgrades happen automatically and in the background. You're running the latest, most reliable and secure hardware and software systems. When new capabilities are made available, you'll be notified so that you can share them with your customers and employees, essentially "future-proofing" your business. It's yet another way that cloud-based UC can simplify your telecom needs and free you to focus on the business.

“A cloud-based UC solution frees you from the hassle of upgrading hardware, updating software, and keeping up with the onslaught of security patches.”

The Sizes and Types of Companies That Can Benefit

Cloud UC solutions can help organizations of all sizes, from small businesses to large-scale global enterprises, in virtually all industries:

- **Midsized companies** can benefit the most from Cloud UC's mobility, agility and scalability. In the past, on-premises solutions were too complex and expensive for most midsized companies. But today's cloud-based UC solves that with lower costs and greater simplicity.
- **Small companies** can eliminate the costs of owning and operating a traditional phone system while accessing enterprise-class tools that help improve competitiveness. Despite their limited IT resources, these small businesses can more easily manage internal and external communications systems with Cloud UC.
- **Large organizations** can use Cloud UC to make their business processes more efficient, improve collaboration among geographically distributed teams, and reduce telephony costs.

By consolidating the infrastructure required for multiple modes of communication, Cloud UC can help organizations of all sizes access a broad range of tools while streamlining IT administration.

Industries of all types can benefit from cloud-based UC. Masergy's customers include global enterprises in manufacturing, professional services, education, legal, financial services and media. Here are a few examples:

- **RealD**, a licensor of 3-D technologies, initially rolled out cloud-based UC for its UK office only. But company officers were so impressed by the early results, they quickly added the system to RealD's other offices in the U.S., Japan and China.
- **Land Home Financial Services**, a provider of diversified funding options, runs a cloud-based UC solution to significantly simplify its operations. After an initial launch with 450 users, the company is now integrating the system with its CRM solution.



Implementation Strategies

Your business is unique. So is your path to a Cloud UC infrastructure. The most effective UCaaS solutions will empower your company to use advanced UC features — even if you have a legacy infrastructure.

A hybrid delivery model lets you keep your current infrastructure while gradually easing onto the cloud on your timetable and your terms. Consultants can help by creating a strategic migration strategy for your company, and a seamless integration of UC for your global workforce.

A managed service providers can help you migrate your voice systems to the cloud with our three-step process:

Step 1. Strategic evaluation: The providers engineering team, in partnership with your own staff, assesses your current setup. They will examine your current voice contracts, number and location of office sites, threshold for change, and more.

Step 2. Customized solution: Next, the service team will develop your migration strategy leveraging any of our three main approaches:

- **Hybrid solution:** Have an existing PBX and want to slowly migrate toward a hosting solution? This path leverages a SIP Trunking solution while letting you migrate selected users to UCaaS.
- **Intelligent SIP Trunking:** If you've already invested in an on-premises phone system, this option lets you merge voice and data systems using a feature-rich Session Initiation Protocol trunking solution.
- **UCaaS:** Ideal if your company wants a cloud communications solution that eliminates maintenance costs, and provides the flexibility to adapt and scale to your business needs.

Step 3. Successful implementation: Once your solution is live, your service provider can help you create a communications migration roadmap, optimizing your solution for today and future-proofing it for tomorrow.

Whichever option you choose, you should be sure that your cloud-based UC infrastructure is embedded in the fabric of a high-performance global network. This will ensure high-quality audio and video.



About Masergy

Masergy is the largest independent provider of hybrid network, managed security and cloud communications solutions for global enterprises. Our patented technology, customizable solutions and unmatched customer experience are why a growing number of leading organizations rely on Masergy to deliver performance beyond expectations.

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