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HOW A UCaaS SYSTEM DOES MORE THAN JUST COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

INTRODUCTION TO UCaaS

When WorldHotels started thinking about integrating a new telecommunications system into its business operations, the company knew it needed a system that was mobile, flexible and easy to integrate with third-party applications such as Skype for Business. The hospitality company ultimately implemented a Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) solution using Mitel's MiCloud Connect[1], an integrated cloud communications, collaboration and contact center service platform.

WorldHotels' decision[2] makes perfect sense. Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) tools have become the gold standard for facilitating business interactions with customers, as well as for fostering employee collaboration. Today, UCaaS is the backbone of enterprise-level telecommunications, including voice, data, video conferencing, online meetings and webinars.

"The UC market is making a fundamental shift from premises-based UC to cloud UCaaS," notes Gartner Research, which publishes the annual *Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service, Worldwide* report.[3] "Digital workplace application leaders should deploy UCaaS when possible, because virtually all vendor R&D investment is going to cloud solutions, with little investment for premises-based UC."

This trend is in part due to the multiple advantages that UCaaS poses over legacy telecommunications systems. For one, UCaaS enables businesses to resolve communications pain points and bottlenecks by shifting services to the cloud. That shift is gaining momentum in the marketplace.

According to the *Unified Communication as a Service (UCaaS) Market* report[4] by Transparency Market Research, the Unified Communications market is projected to grow from about $8 billion in 2015 to a staggering $73.9 billion by 2024. Ultimately, UCaaS solutions provide three major benefits for enterprise-level users:

FLEXIBILITY • FUNCTIONALITY • AFFORDABILITY

An integrated cloud-based solution can also facilitate real-time connectivity to improve customer experiences. For instance, UCaaS supports presence capabilities that enable a customer service rep to instantly see which experts are available in real time to help a customer. Presence functionality shows whether an expert is available and which modes of communication that person is connected to at any given moment, such as instant messaging or email.

Staying ahead of the competition in a rapidly evolving marketplace requires working in tandem with a telecommunications partner that can handle the complexity of implementing a multimodal solution for voice, data and internet traffic. Companies also want—and need—more than just voice-related services. Bolstered by third-party support, users relish the ability to focus on their core business without having to worry about system maintenance or downtime.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:
Embrace UCaaS by replacing a patchwork of legacy communications tools in favor of one solution that is purpose-built for collaboration, customization and scalability.

FLEXIBILITY TO CUSTOMIZE COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS

Every enterprise has its own unique communication needs, but one common denominator across business sectors is the need for flexibility. A UCaaS solution offers the flexibility to customize tools and services to align with business needs.

"More than anything, enterprises are seeking better and faster communications and collaboration tools," notes the report *Hot Vendors in UCC, 2016* by Aragon Research.[5] "Today, it is an imperative to be able to offer voice, video and mobile messaging as key capabilities that are interconnected."

One example of a tailor-made UCaaS solution is Frontier AnyWare™. The cloud-based platform can be customized to meet the needs of a specific industry sector and/or use case. Among the leading users of Frontier's solutions are companies in manufacturing, retail, professional services, finance, insurance, real estate and healthcare.

UCaaS solutions for retailers[6], for example, provide a platform for instant communication between vendors and customers across both physical and digital channels. This translates into enhanced experiences for customers, both in-store and online. Thanks to UCaaS, retailers can facilitate "buy online, pick up in store" or "buy online, return in store" processes, which require seamless communication relating to inventory assessments, return authorizations, installations and customizations.

In addition to streamlining business communications, UCaaS lowers capital costs for equipment and cabling. Shifting to the cloud also reduces the need to manage an in-house network and makes it easier to scale telecommunications services across a retail enterprise.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:
When migrating from a legacy communications solution to a UCaaS system, start by identifying must-have features and functionality. Companies that have a well-defined communications strategy are in the best position to implement a UCaaS solution that aligns with their specific user needs and business objectives.

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FUNCTIONALITY FOR MEETING TODAY'S NEEDS AND SCALING FOR THE FUTURE

Ensuring that UCaaS functionality aligns with business goals requires a company to make communications part of a holistic approach to integrating people and technology. When WorldHotels was thinking about its new telecommunications platform, for instance, the company had to consider both its immediate needs and how the system would scale in the future: Would it support expansion into new locations? Would it keep customer data and internal communications secure during the system migration?

"The increased emphasis on globalization among different enterprises has resulted in rising demand for enhancing their internal, as well as external, communication process, and to remain well-connected with their employees located in different locations."

-Reports and Data, 2019[7]

With UCaaS, the answer to these questions is a resounding yes—and it can additionally support a company's operations and growth potential in a number of ways, including:

- **Support:** Communications is mission-critical, and 24/7 assistance needs to be just an email or a phone call away.
- **Scalability:** Growing businesses need to meet today's demands while ensuring their systems can keep pace with future growth.
- **Business continuity:** Another important benefit of cloud-based communications solutions is that they support business continuity. As a company grows, its communication infrastructure should be supported by redundant UCaaS data centers that protect against system outages.

- **Communication clarity:** When it comes to optimizing customer experiences, speedy responses are key. To seamlessly collaborate across multiple locations,employees must be able to connect with little to no latency or lag time.
- **Multifaceted security:** A UCaaS system offers multiple layers of security to protect a company's data from hackers or hardware failures. Using a secure and inherently encrypted cloud-based solution safeguards sensitive internal communications from prying eyes.

A UCaaS partner can also help users collect and interpret analytics related to its communications channels and productivity. The ability to harness usage data lets a company evaluate operational efficiency, measure which channels are producing the best results and ensure that customer service experiences are optimized.

To help companies with both implementation and ongoing operations, Frontier has developed a UCaaS solution that runs on the Mitel platform—the same platform that WorldHotels relied upon for its upgrade to UCaaS. Mitel has been recognized in Gartner's UCaaS Magic Quadrant report[8] for its ability to facilitate integrated telecom solutions.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:
Choose a cloud-based UCaaS system that enables users to decide where calls are routed—between desk, web and mobile. Users also should have the option of having their calls automatically converted from voicemail to email. Instantly pushing voice messages to emails improves efficiency and saves users time.

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AFFORDABILITY BASED
ON TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Among the key benefits of moving to a cloud-based UCaaS solution are lower equipment and hardware costs, reduced overhead for on-site IT staff and the elimination of ongoing software costs. From a productivity perspective, an integrated communications platform eliminates the dreaded "swivel-chair effect," in which employees lose time and focus because they are forced to toggle between different applications or platforms.

Reducing overhead by facilitating remote work environments for employees is another financial benefit of UCaaS. It's important to make it as easy as possible for employees to connect to a company's network and to work from anywhere. Bring your own device (BYOD) support, for example, makes it simple for employees to use their personal devices in addition to those provided by their companies—a practice that has become commonplace.

A UCaaS system can also reduce travel expenses because remote collaboration tools such as chat, instant messaging and point-to-point video enable face-to-face communication across geographical locations. In these situations, a cloud-based solution enables employees to collaborate across devices and applications— whether they're in the office, working remotely or on the road.

Overall, working with a UCaaS partner reduces equipment expenses and incremental operating costs, making it easier to budget and manage cash flow. Moreover, a cloud-based UCaaS platform makes it simple to add additional phone extensions to a company's telecom network—without the need for expensive technicians, who might take days or weeks to get a job scheduled and completed.
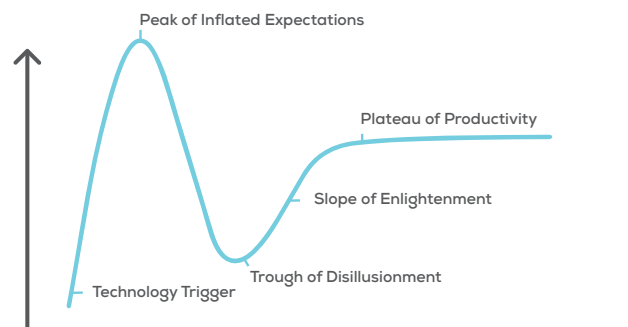
UCaaS DELIVERS
FUTURE-PROOFED RELIABILITY

One way to think about UCaaS technology is based on a Gartner methodology called the "Hype Cycle." This is a graphical representation of the life cycle stages a technology goes through, from conception to maturity and widespread adoption.

"New digital tools, cloud services, technologies and platforms, coupled with digital workplace initiatives and employee engagement programs, are extending the scope of UCC," notes Gartner's *Hype Cycle for Unified Communications and Collaboration* report, 2018.[9] "Enterprise application leaders responsible for UCC can use this Hype Cycle to future-proof their technology investments."

The key to future-proofing a company's UCaaS investment is a cloud-based system that delivers reliability, functionality, security and, ultimately, better customer experiences.

HYPE CYCLE

Peak of Inflated Expectations

Plateau of Productivity

Slope of Enlightenment

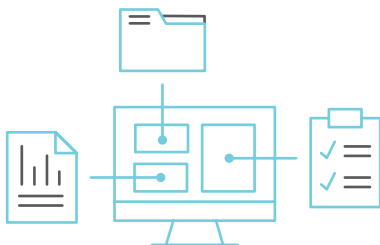Trough of Disillusionment

Technology Trigger

THE BOTTOM LINE:
As a company grows, its communications platform must evolve alongside its footprint to facilitate meaningful collaboration wherever business occurs—from the headquarters to the home office, from the manufacturing floor to the point of sale. The power of UCaaS travels across zip codes, time zones and devices, making it the true Swiss Army knife for enterprise connectivity to flourish.

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