



UCAAS:

A Communications Technology You Can't Afford to Ignore

There is an ever-growing number of communications technologies, and it seems that for each one there's a breathless article touting how vital it is that your business acquire this technology. It sometimes seems that if you don't have this particular technology, you might as well start readying your "going out of business" sale. Unified communications as a service (UCaaS) is one of the latest such technological buzzwords to land — but is it actually just a buzzword? Or is there more to this technology than just a polished acronym?

WHAT IS UCAAS?

UCaaS is, on its surface, exactly what the name suggests: unified communications tools that are provided on an as-a-service basis as opposed to being a function of your own internal operations. UCaaS is provided to the end user using a cloud-based model and can offer a wide range of individual options.

UCaaS services are offered commonly over one of two architecture styles: single-tenancy and multi-tenancy. Single-tenancy systems are typically limited to one company's use at a time, and, as such, customer data is kept separate. It's considered more secure and more reliable because the separation of users basically gives each user their own spur. That security and reliability comes at greater cost, because the costs for upgrades are placed on the customer.

Multi-tenancy systems, meanwhile, are more cost-effective yet less secure and reliable. On a multi-tenancy system, users share one common software platform. This means that the provider handles all the upgrades, but because multiple users are sharing the system, flexibility isn't the option that it is on a single-tenancy system.

WHY SIZE MATTERS IN UCAAS OPERATIONS

Small businesses benefit from simplicity

While UCaaS — whether single-tenancy or multi-tenancy — represents some great opportunities for businesses to get ahead in the market, there are some benefits that are unique to the small or large business. There are common benefits for both sides, of course, but it's worth taking a closer look at the benefits for both large and small businesses.

Trying to set up UC operations on a business's premises can be a challenge no matter what. For a small business, which often operates without the resources of a larger business, any complexity can be a deal-breaker because they simply can't handle it with the resources available. UCaaS, meanwhile, operates on a cloud basis, which means someone else handles the heavy lifting. Small businesses can, therefore, access UCaaS services and take advantage of all those valuable features with comparatively little hardware.

Small businesses benefit from scalability

Scalability in a larger enterprise is nice to have, because such businesses can afford to have the largest amount of capacity needed in any place at any time. Small businesses, which need to watch budgets much more closely, benefit a great deal from scalability. Scalability is the ability to move capacity up and down readily as needs on the ground require. Instead of paying for all the capacity a business would need in the "busy season," it can simply pay for that capacity when it's needed, and then scale back when it's no longer needed. Large businesses can benefit from this too — cost savings are cost savings, after all — but large businesses don't have the same urgency to obtain cost savings that small businesses do.

Small businesses benefit from reliability

Large businesses have the great advantage of being able to engineer a Plan B for most any contingency. Whether it's backup systems or redundancies specifically built in, large businesses usually have a plan if something goes wrong with one tool. Small businesses, however, don't often have that

luxury and have to count on the systems they have working correctly until they can get some kind of backup solution in place. Most UC tools come with a backup measure built in. Because cloud providers have so many competitors in the field, the only way they can keep your business is to be as reliable or better than others. Throw in the quality of service (QoS) agreement that many cloud providers offer, and you're guaranteed a certain amount of uptime with remedies prescribed in case of failure.

Large businesses benefit from improved business continuity

While every business could stand to have a Plan B for what happens in a disaster, small businesses commonly have an easier time of setting up such a plan. If a business with five employees has a power outage or gets hit by a tornado, it's a short closure, or people work from home for a while. It's not hard to set up telecommuting for five using commonly available over-the-counter software. A large enterprise doesn't have that luxury and needs business continuity measures. With UCaaS, users have a better capacity to work remotely and can keep engaging in normal business activities from a backup site or even from their homes using the same tools they had at the physical office.

Large businesses benefit from "vertical-specific applications"

While many small businesses may not have even heard of a "market vertical," large businesses commonly operate in verticals or specific market niches that have comparable needs. Since large businesses often offer multiple product lines, each targeting a different vertical, they can better put to UCaaS to use by staying connected to customers. Each division of a company that addresses a different vertical can be more rapidly connected to its own customer base, making for better customer service and an increased chance that the customers in question will come back to do business later.

Large businesses better overcome the drawbacks

While everyone can benefit in some way from UCaaS, small businesses are a bit more susceptible to certain drawbacks. Overall internet bandwidth available, wiring issues, access to some specific features like brand-promoting messaging on a call, and so on might not be as readily available to the smaller business. Larger businesses, meanwhile, can more readily work around these smaller issues with their greater resource availability and make an even more trouble-free switchover turn out just how they want it.

WHAT UCAAS CAN DO FOR BUSINESSES

Improved costs

While some benefits of UCaaS are specific to their particular class of business, some benefits are realized regardless of the business's size.

It doesn't matter how big you are; saving money is a good plan. Small businesses must save money where possible to ensure an appropriate level of cash flow. Large businesses, however, will likely welcome cost-saving moves as well. Not having to buy equipment is a capital expenditure savings for every business, and reducing communications expenses down to a predictable monthly bill instead of having phone expenses, videoconferencing expenses, and so on makes for easier accounting, which also improves expenses on that front.

Improved productivity

Greater productivity is good news for any business — a business that produces more makes more money. There are limits, of course, but generally, improving productivity leads to improved profitability, so improving productivity is a desirable first step on the path. UCaaS improves productivity by making it easier to get hold of people regardless of where they are. Whether it's a find-me-follow-me system making it easier for customers to connect to sales reps, or a videoconferencing system that more readily connects employees within a campus or at separate facilities, communication is improved, which allows more to get done

because less time is spent looking for someone.

Better security

We know that there's a difference in security when it comes to a comparison between single-tenancy and multi-tenancy systems. But, in a sense, that comparison is like asking, "What's more secure, a vault made of iron or a vault made of steel?" Both systems will provide significant security protections for their users; they have to. Cloud-based operations providers know the onus under which they labor. If they can't offer a secure solution, their customers will go to a competitor who will make a better show of providing security. Cloud services providers, therefore, have a vested interest in keeping their systems as secure as possible.

Better customer interactions

Your customers want access to your business around the clock, and they want access by the measures they prefer. They don't just want to dial your phone number or send an email. Customers want live chat, videoconferencing, screen sharing, and a host of other options. Adding UCaaS systems helps provide many of those options, and, in so doing, improves the overall customer experience and your chance of seeing those customers again the next time they're looking to make a purchase.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR BUSINESS IS READY FOR UCAAS

UCaaS provides a wide range of opportunities for its users, no matter what size business they operate or even what field they're in. From general benefits like cost savings and improved efficiency to specific benefits like scalability and improving business continuity and disaster planning, it's hard to find a reason to not like UCaaS systems. Bringing such tools into your business can be as simple as getting in touch with us at (651) 450-7900. Contact us today to get started.



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