



Success with UC: Integrated Solutions with a Forward-Looking Partner

COMPANIES OF ALL SIZES TODAY

are grappling with increased opportunity as well as increased complexity in their industries. Complexity comes from the realities of the fast-changing global economy—requiring speed, constantly updated information and instant communications to compete. Opportunity, always the partner of complexity, means that companies can grow quickly and expand into new markets like never before. Those progressive companies that are taking advantage of new, web-based technologies have the upper hand.

IT departments burdened by massive, legacy applications and large server rooms are now making way for the three pillars of corporate IT: mobility, cloud computing and social/web applications. Logically, these three technology areas, sometimes called SoMoClo, make perfect sense together. Mobile apps and devices provide anywhere, anytime connectivity; cloud infrastructure delivers the underlying fabric for scalable

information sharing and data processing; and the social web delivers the powerful tools that run on mobile applications.

We're not there yet, however. Integrating and managing these technologies has proven costly and difficult for IT departments. Many companies have built their communications platforms in an ad hoc manner over the years, and now face a mishmash of disconnected applications, phone systems and tools. This is why unified communications (UC) is becoming a pivotal technology suite.

UC technologies such as IP telephony, instant messaging, web conferencing and presence awareness bring together people, data and devices seamlessly. When integrated, UC can simplify business processes and improve enterprise collaboration. People connect with stakeholders to exchange information and ideas faster, using the devices they prefer, from any Internet-connected location.

8x8's vision for hosted UC is helping bring this promise to reality. The company has been developing enterprise-class VoIP solutions for 10 years, with a focus on reducing the cost and complexity of UC by delivering and managing these integrated tools as a service. Many companies start with a hosted Internet phone service, taking advantage of the remarkable cost savings of IP telephony. Once VoIP is in place, a company can instantly add other services on top of the voice platform, including web conferencing and call center capabilities—all with UC functionality like presence and chat included.

According to Frost & Sullivan, 8x8 has delivered a visionary approach to UC through



8x8, Inc.

its in-house technology innovation: "It properly utilizes its internally-developed platform to put the company in full control over the functionality; this also ensures tight integration across its services suite. Over the years, 8x8 has evolved its platform and hosted applications in line with both market demand and competitor product enhancements."

Excellence in UC solutions requires three critical areas of focus: integration, a rich feature set for customers to build upon, and the vision of a technology leader offering both breadth and depth in IP-based communications. By offering UC as a service, 8x8 provides real value to small and midsize customers that in the past, couldn't afford an enterprise-class UC solution.

» Integrating UC to Boost Performance

Many companies have built their communications infrastructure by layering together tools, such as Outlook, web mail, collaboration and social media sites and smartphones. As a result, IT departments are struggling to integrate these tools cohesively so that people can share information and connect as if using a single system.

The need for integrated communications comes from an overriding desire to improve enterprise productivity and collaboration, according to the Aberdeen Group's 2011 report, "Business Optimization through Integrated Communications in the SoMoClo Era." By making it easier for employees to work together, an integrated UC system can improve lead generation, sales, product development, customer service and more, according to the research firm. Aberdeen goes on to state that telephony is just a starting point, and that the ultimate collaborative environment includes presence, web conferencing, videoconferencing, data management and endpoint (device) management.

Through this infrastructure, companies

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can achieve some impressive measures of success. Those companies deemed "top performers" according to Aberdeen, took an average of five minutes to directly contact an employee, and an average 32 minutes to directly contact a new customer, compared with an average of 76 minutes to contact an employee and 563 minutes to contact a new customer, among lower-performing companies. As well, a pre-integrated solution takes the burden away from IT to manage and maintain all those integration points and troubleshoot issues.

8x8 Virtual Office Pro is an affordable service priced per user per month. Enterprise-class VoIP services is the foundation of this service. IP telephony can save a company up to 50% on phone bills and even more by avoiding capital investments in PBX equipment. Virtual Office Pro also includes integrated online meetings, call recording and online fax capabilities. These services are all available through a single online interface, accessible from a desktop PC or mobile phone. The beauty of this bundled solution is that employees can make calls, start meetings and find colleagues using one application.

Beyond integrating the core UC technologies, many companies require third-party integrations with CRM and productivity software. 8x8 provides this type of flexibility through integrations with popular business applications including Microsoft Exchange, Google Contacts, Salesforce.com, ACT!, NetSuite, SugarCRM and others.

Call center integration is another way to extend UC functionality to support and nurture customers. The 8x8 Virtual Contact Center requires no hardware, software, or technical team and enables agents to receive telephone calls, e-mails and chat interactions all through a single screen. This not only makes the agent's job easier, but enables quicker resolution for customers and ease-of-use, since they can contact the company in multiple ways. Scalability is also critical for growing companies: One 8x8 customer has deployed a UC system for 1500 users, including 75 call center agents.

» Defining a Rich UC solution

Customers of 8x8 operate in a highly mobile and distributed world. Managers and their employees are frequently on the go and working from home or other locations outside of the corporate office. They require the same functionality and availability on their mobile devices as they have from their PC. They want to continue using applications that they prefer, such as Outlook, within the VoIP infrastructure. Branch office employees do not enjoy feeling left out of the communications loop, which often happens in a traditional PBX environment. These are the challenges that a comprehensive hosted UC service provider can meet, even for a small company with limited IT budget. From the cloud, 8x8 connects employees wherever they are, across multiple communications tools and on any device they prefer.

Start small: The beauty of 8x8 is that a company can start small, and add new services and features as the business demands. Many customers begin with the standard package of IP-PBX, unlimited local and long-distance calling, messaging, conference bridge, auto attendant, and a web-based dashboard for users to manage their own settings. From there, a company may add other services, such as online fax, call recording and web conferencing.

Go mobile: All customers have access to both a desktop soft client (softphone) and a mobile client. In today's world, mobile functionality is a requirement, as companies are increasingly running their business through the flexibility of mobile apps and devices. Extension mobility and a unified number for mobile and desktop phones topped the list for mobile UC features desired by survey participants, according to Aberdeen. 8x8 customers can use their office number as a single number that simultaneously rings their mobile phone, desk phone, and PC softphone, so they are always reachable without having to give out multiple numbers. Employees can also place mobile calls through the 8x8 service, taking advantage of the substantial VoIP long-distance savings.

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colleague, she can look up the individual in the corporate directory and quickly view his or her contact preferences through presence technology, right from their PC portal or mobile app on their phone or tablet.

Meet virtually: Many 8x8 customers opt to add online meeting services, so that employees can review documents and presentations online in real-time and avoid business travel. Compared with leading third-party online meeting services, 8x8 Virtual Meeting costs 30 percent less and offers other benefits. The Virtual Meeting service integrates with the corporate directory so that an employee may quickly find and invite participants to a meeting, or even transition to a web meeting from a phone call or chat. Meeting recordings are free, and in one click, a user can share their desktop with participants. This all happens in the unified client interface, accessible from any web (or even mobile) browser.

Add video: Says Frost & Sullivan, "Businesses versed in the technology acknowledge the benefits of videoconferencing and look to their providers to deliver video integrated with the rest of their communications solution." The analyst firm's research shows that 40 percent of surveyed organizations now use videoconferencing services or applications, and 47 percent of current users plan to use

these tools more extensively in the future. An Aberdeen Research study had the figure even higher: 61 percent of participants say they are current videoconference users. And in an IDG study, 56 percent of IT leaders had major investments in video conferencing tools planned for 2013. 8x8 was among the first hosted IP telephony providers to recognize this burgeoning interest in videoconferencing capabilities. Customers can include video in the 8x8 Virtual Meeting tool.

A Visionary Partner

The pressures upon companies today are enormous. Budgets are still tight for many, yet as the economy slowly improves, companies need flexible technology that will help them move forward and be more efficient. 8x8's marketplace leadership in hosted IP telephony and UC services offers a streamlined, feature-rich product suite to connect employees to each other and decision-making data without delay.

Technology innovation: 8x8 was founded with a commitment to affordable technology innovation. The company was recognized as one of just a handful of companies in the "Leaders" category in the prestigious report, "Gartner 2012 Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service." The research firm highlights the company's strength in competitive pricing, highly-automated self-service provisioning, and a broad suite of services. Gartner also recognized the 8x8 web conferencing and videoconferencing offerings as "particularly strong."

At 8x8, R&D is a core pillar and a competitive differentiator. The company has 85 awarded patents and a 100 percent internally-developed platform, used today by more than 30,000 businesses worldwide. Customers have come to recognize 8x8 as a reliable partner, even during catastrophic natural disasters. One customer, Ipreo, a market intelligence and technology provider to the financial industry, has a significant employee

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Ease-of-use: Employees and executives alike expect technology to work with the click of a button. They want to use their own devices on the job and integrate favorite applications, such as Gmail contacts, Facebook and Salesforce, into their daily workflow. 8x8 simplifies the communications tangle through delivering a simple unified client interface so that people have one app to look up an employee, send an instant message, call a customer or initiate a web conference. Whether employees are using a mobile phone or the desktop client, they can make and receive calls and faxes over the IP network and enjoy all the same functionality. From any web browser, people can change their account settings to change presence

status and record new greetings.

IT simplicity: In traditional PBX environments, IT employees spend countless hours setting up new phone lines, repairing wires and cables and making simple changes to extensions. That is a poor return on investment of top-dollar IT resources. Instead, using a hosted solution, a company may replace capital expenses on phones and hardware with operational expenses for the monthly service fees. This entails upfront and ongoing savings as well as long-term maintenance savings. Instead of capacity planning and troubleshooting, the IT department can focus on high-value IT activities, while 8x8 worries about network availability, integrations, user support and upgrades. The 8x8 services were designed for self-service by employees. The system requires minimal IT support to manage and provision the full suite of services including auto attendant, ring groups, and advanced call forwarding. Says Frost & Sullivan, in a 2012 report: “8x8 Virtual Office is quite easy for businesses to understand, deploy, and manage. It focuses on simplicity, ease of use and flexibility...and enables customers to

deploy its business VoIP services over any kind of access network.”

Affordability: 8x8 Virtual Office Pro Service is an inclusive business offering that bundles and integrates popular communications services on one platform, saving companies money and time. A business can receive hosted phone service, online meeting functionality and call recording for a monthly fee that is significantly less than third-party solutions offering only web conferencing. Additionally, bundling solutions from one provider is less risky—the tools automatically work together and there is just one number to call if something goes wrong. Even better, 8x8 has third-party software integrations with CRM and productivity applications for a fraction of the cost of using IT consultant or internal resource for the same job.

Conclusion

Companies today need creative solutions for solving complex issues in a constantly changing business environment. While technology is important, working with the right partner is paramount. Hosted UC provider 8x8 is a partner that can provide strategic guidance from concept to completion. IT organizations can integrate powerful collaboration technologies into a solution that is easy to use and support. This helps IT departments operate more efficiently, yet provides other strategic benefits. Hosted UC, with a forward-looking partner, can help a company compete more aggressively, innovate faster and delight customers. ■

» For more information, go to
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