



# Meeting The Needs of the New Workforce

## COMPANIES OF ALL SIZES TODAY

are grappling with the demands of two overarching IT developments: migrating to cloud apps and managing the growing and diverse array of devices in the workplace—the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) trend. Leading IT in the transition to a flexible, service-based organization is top-of-mind for CIOs. Yet CIOs should consider the productivity possibilities arising from the intersection of cloud, mobile and social.

The workforce—how it operates, produces and thrives—is becoming unhinged from the rigid days of old. Workers are increasingly untethered. They log on to the corporate network from any location, any time and on any device. The cloud and BYOD are supporting the rapid creation of a global, distributed workforce made up of users who no longer consider going “to work” as a physical location, dictated a 9 to 5 schedule. Progressive companies are finding that employees are happier, produce higher-

quality results and better serve customers when they can work in this more free and flexible manner.

To buttress these efforts, unified communications (UC) technologies are taking center stage. UC connects Internet-based processes and tools with business applications and consists of IP-based tools such as IP telephony or VoIP, Web conferencing, presence, instant messaging (IM) and unified messaging. UC hosting provider 8x8 is helping companies of all sizes deploy these technologies with minimal IT intervention, enabling a quick transition to an integrated communications platform from which apps, devices and users co-mingle with relative ease.

CIOs need to set the proper balance between control, security, functionality, cost and freedom, when designing this new infrastructure. They don't want to sacrifice intellectual property and the required policies and procedures that keep a company in

compliance with regulatory mandates such as HIPAA, Sarbanes-Oxley, PCI and FISMA. Companies also need security assurances from third-party cloud and SaaS companies. 8x8 maintains a 24x7 network operations center that monitors for attacks such as denial of service, and has protocols to handle potential intrusions. 8x8 also offers complete private network deployments for customers demanding non-Internet routed signaling.

The first step is to determine which capabilities are most needed, before making any changes to existing technologies and processes.



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## » Redefining productivity in the mobile/cloud world

As employees have access to more devices, apps and tools than ever before, they are creating new ways of working. Telecommuting and distributed workforces are on the rise. One in six employees globally now work remotely, according to a [2012 survey](#) by Ipsos; another [survey](#) reported that 83 percent of employees work remotely for at least part of the day. Employees have also come to expect that technology is intuitive and provides powerful information in real-time. Thanks to pleasant experiences with consumer apps stores, employees are easily frustrated when business technology doesn't work as seamlessly.

Agility and instant connections are also top-of-mind; employees waste time seeking out colleagues and answers to questions. After using SMS applications and IM, people want an instant response and the rich feedback they get from their favorite social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest.

Generally speaking, employees wish to access nearly everything—data, tools and apps—from their smart phone. Today, this is becoming more realistic. In one mobile app, users can search for a contact, adjust their presence settings and send an IM to a colleague. It's now much easier to deliver CRM integration to mobile phones as well, so employees can click-to-call a customer and check on their latest order from any location.

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A good starting point for enabling these features is to integrate presence and VoIP technologies, which delivers the corporate directory to any device or location. This allows an employee to quickly search for a colleague from their mobile phone and click to connect, depending upon the individual's availability. UC technologies also enable employees to click their PC or mobile screen to launch a meeting from a chat session at a moment's notice.

Information workers crave cool tools, yet managers and corporations need to retain a level of control over their teams. UC tools allow managers to check on the progress of account managers and project groups.

Without picking up the phone, managers can view in the application how many calls or meetings took place in a given week. Similarly, UC-based call-center technology provides instantaneous Web-based monitoring and analytics to spot possible customer issues in the making.

IT departments are also redefining productivity. With small staffs and budgets, IT can't afford to spend time on rote tasks and provisioning. They need self-managing, highly automated tools and services which easily provision users, and features and deliver dashboards with a comprehensive view. The cloud, and apps that reside there, are making this happen.

## » Hosted UC: helping businesses bridge the gap to advanced communications

The aim of UC is to simplify business processes and unify communications tools to enhance collaboration. However, making this happen is difficult because of the complexity of integrating and managing these technologies.

Hosted UC reduces cost and complexity for businesses by delivering and managing these integrated tools as a service. Many companies start with a hosted Internet voice service, taking advantage of the remarkable cost savings of IP telephony. Once VoIP is in place, it's simple to add other services on top of the voice platform.

Customers of 8x8, for instance, often discover hosted VoIP is exceedingly simple, requiring minimal IT support to manage and provision professional telephony services such as auto attendant, ring groups, three-way calling and enhanced call forwarding. From here, adding Web conferencing is an easy and natural decision with an incremental added cost per user. Whereas most advanced Web conferencing services are designed for enterprise companies and carry an enterprise price, hosted conferencing can be less than half the cost. Other typical add-on services include call center, call recording and Internet fax.

These hosted UC offerings enable a small or midsize company to gain enterprise-class functionality and look bigger in their marketplace, thanks to the infrastructure of the cloud. What makes UC powerful is the seamless integration of several technologies. Imagine sitting at your desk initiating a call from your PC, inviting participants to an ad hoc conference after seeing their presence settings, and sending an IM to someone with a question—all from the same application. The 8x8 Virtual Office service extends this instant connectivity to individuals outside the company, through Google and Facebook integrations with the UC platform. This one-app-for-many-purposes approach is compelling from a consumer IT mindset.

Equally important for a small or midsize company with limited IT resources is the simplicity of working with one vendor for all communications needs. When there is a problem, there's one company to solve it and one integrated technology platform to troubleshoot.

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### » How hosted UC is evolving to support a mobile workforce

UC tools are beginning to touch every corner of the business, from phone to email to meetings and even to customer management. Consider how a technology such as Web conferencing helps bring distributed teams together quickly, in a rich, interactive workspace, reducing business travel and supporting more inclusive decision-making. Web conferencing is a powerful tool for business meetings, allowing sales and support employees to remotely demonstrate a product or service and educate customers. Another critical piece of mobility is enabling business tasks from smart phones. Because of this demand, 8x8 offers many of the same desktop PC and home office features for people working from their mobile devices, such as the popular iPad, iPhone or Android devices.

Here are a few of these mobile UC benefits:

- Access corporate directory from a smartphone: Four-digit dialing is bringing the IPBX to devices, so an employee can quickly connect to colleagues on their mobile phones, just as with their desktop phones or PC softphone.
- Make low-cost IP-based international phone calls using the Wi-Fi network, and not incur cell phone charges.
- Make business calls without revealing your personal mobile number.

- Check presence and send IMs to coworkers and customers when calling isn't practical.
- Review business faxes from your mobile device.
- Make video calls to colleagues and customers from a mobile device.

### » Customer service with UC

Growing businesses must provide world-class customer service to compete today. This means detailed information is at the ready when a customer calls, so the employee instantly knows who the customer is, what their ordering history is, and can help them without delay.

A virtual call center, integrated within a hosted VoIP system, enables excellent customer service without the expense of maintaining a physical call center. All the call-center agent needs is a headset and an Internet browser to connect to the cloud service. Agents can work from any location, including their home, which keeps operational costs low.

The virtual call center application can integrate with leading CRM solutions including salesforce.com, NetSuite, MS Dynamics, Zendesk and Zoho, so customer information pops up on the call screen. This cloud-based call center approach is perfect for

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the modern, mobile business, which needs to scale up and down with the flow of business. You can add an agent to the system with a few simple clicks from the management console. Additionally, the management dashboard highlights call center productivity, with reports that show individual agent activity and customer revenues, among other metrics. Finally, there are fewer worries about a call center going down, since the hosted UC provider has reliability and redundancy built in, with 24x7 monitoring of service levels.

### » One company's journey to hosted UC

"Ours is a very customer service-focused business that relies heavily on a highly efficient and reliable phone system," says Ron Godine, director of IT for TMW Systems, a company that delivers enterprise software

for transportation and logistics companies. Yet TMW's on-premises PBX system didn't always deliver that reliability and required significant IT resources to manage. Godine began to investigate hosted solutions, ultimately choosing 8x8 to provide cloud-based PBX and unified communications services to 500 employees in seven U.S. and Canadian locations.

The initial deployment quickly grew to broader UC capabilities including Web conferencing, Internet fax and call recording. The company, which was recently acquired by location-based technology company Trimble, realized several benefits from the hosted voice and UC system:

- TMW should achieve six-figure cost savings, from not having to purchase PBX hardware and software, and from 8x8's significantly reduced rates for

domestic and international long distance calls, says Godine.

- Reliability has improved, since the 8x8 service architecture offers multiple redundancy and rerouting capabilities. In the event of a natural disaster or outage, employees can simply unplug their phones and plug them into their home network or use 8x8's Virtual Office Online PC softphones.
- The IT department has more time for supporting the business, since changes are easy to complete through the online management console. Previously, it was not uncommon to hire outside consultants to make simple changes to employee lines.
- Employees are always connected to the corporate directory and with customers, from any device.

The needs of the new, distributed workforce are continually evolving. Companies are expected to keep pace with cloud and mobile development, so employees can continue to work untethered, and with instant access to the people and information they need. Hosted UC is becoming a sensible, centralized and business-aligned platform that supports a collaborative, mobile workplace without unleashing all control of IT and processes. ■



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