



THE FUTURE OF COLLABORATION

HOW TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION AND A CHANGING WORKPLACE ARE DRIVING A NEW PARADIGM IN ENTERPRISE COMMUNICATIONS

By using a cloud model for unified communication and collaboration, organization can significantly lower costs reduce complexity, and improve productivity and the user experience.

For many forward-looking IT and business leaders, it's not just the future of communication that is in the cloud – it's the present.

A paradigm shift is taking place in how organizations support communications and collaboration through unified communications and web and video conferencing technologies.

The era of expensive on-premises PBX and video conferencing equipment and hardware is giving way to new models that are much more cost efficient and accessible.

These new models, leveraging network software and broadband connectivity, are permanently reshaping the nature of corporate communications for now and the future.

Sales of traditional premises-based telephony and video conferencing are in steady decline.

According to the research firm, infonetix, “the enterprise telephony market continues to struggle as companies are evaluating cloud alternatives and investing in UC applications instead of PBXs”.

It's not that demand or interest in using unified communications is slipping – in fact, it's just the opposite.

The technologies and tools are moving from premises to the cloud.

As noted by Infonetix, “There has been a rise in cloud multi-point conferencing services adoption, which has led to a decline in infrastructure sales”.

There are several interrelated factors driving this shift, in particular:

- **Changes in the workplace:**

Workers are more mobile and more likely to be working out of the office from home, on the road, from a local coffee shop, etc. They have near-ubiquitous connectivity to the company through the Internet and are typically using more than one type of device to communicate.

At the same time, workplaces are “always on” and global so workers need tools that enable fast, simple, secure, and effective collaboration from wherever they are located, using whatever device is most convenient.

• Changes in the workforce:

It's not just the workplace that's changing rapidly; it's the workforce as well.

Workers have expectations for technology that are driven largely by their experiences in the consumer world. They want solutions that are agile and adaptable to their needs. Most important, the solution just has to work – with no hassles and no complications.

• Advances in technology:

Legacy premises-based telephony platforms are expensive to purchase and maintain and are not necessarily welcoming to manage.

On the other hand, innovative cloud-based solutions built on software transform the enterprise, driving new levels of simplicity, accessibility, and cost-efficiency that is better aligned with the needs of today's workplaces and workforces.

WHY THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND COLLABORATION IS IN THE CLOUD

Organizations are increasingly relying upon video conferencing and unified communication as vital tools in enhancing collaboration and improving productivity.

In a recent survey of business decision-makers, respondents reported that video was used in 45% of all their conferences.

At the same time as video is becoming increasingly critical, the dynamics of collaboration are changing quickly.

According to the survey cited above, 54% of meetings already include remote participants attending via audio, video and/or Web conferencing, and that percentage is likely to grow. Again, for those who said they collaborate most frequently, 80% of their meetings involve remote participants.

For business decision-makers, the new reality is that they must modernize their unified communication and collaboration solutions in order to support the changing workplace.

That means deploying solutions that connect across platforms, increase user participation, improve the quality of meetings, support mobility, ensure security, and drive improvements in total cost of ownership (TCO).

Legacy products were not originally designed to support mobile workers and they don't easily accommodate the myriad of ways in which people prefer to collaborate now that they can be more agile and mobile.

For example, many users want to seamlessly launch a collaboration session instantly – when instant messaging a colleague or on a call, but because of the ways this technology have typically been deployed, legacy platforms do not offer this sort of flexibility and usability.

On the other hand, cloud-based services deliver several

• Predictable costs:

Costs are not just lower with a user-based subscription model, but they are also more predictable, which helps with budgeting, scaling and cost control.

The screenshot displays a Zoom meeting window. At the top, the meeting ID is 000-123-0000. Below the title bar, four video thumbnails of participants are shown. The main area displays a PowerPoint presentation titled 'ZamBlast-Marketing-Presentation.pptx'. The current slide, titled 'THE GAIN', features a line graph comparing four categories: Custom Hardware (red), COTS Hardware (blue), Virtualized (purple), and Cloud / NFV (green). The graph plots these categories against four metrics: Price, Perf., Efficiency, and Flexibility. The Y-axis ranges from LOW to HIGH. The Cloud / NFV line shows the highest values across all metrics, while Custom Hardware shows the lowest. The background of the slide shows a person skateboarding down a set of stairs. The bottom of the Zoom window shows a toolbar with icons for Audio, Settings, Invite, Manage Participants (2), Share Screen, Chat, Record, and End Meeting.

- **Less travel:**

Because mobile and remote workers are supported more easily in a cloud environment, people will not need to physically attend meetings as often, reducing travel expense

- **Business improvements:**

Enhanced productivity through simpler collaboration will lead to better business performance – driving profitability and competitiveness

- **Unified Communications:**

Some providers offer standalone web conferencing or video solutions, but to optimize the user experience and ease user support.

It's best to look for a provider who can integrate these services along with PBX telephony services and other UC functions like Instant Messaging and Presence.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CLOUD PROVIDER

When evaluating moving to a cloud, businesses need to consider the following:

- **Support for mobile workers and mixed devices:**

Your solution should support the changing workplace, enabling employees to easily use and access real-time communications like video and instant messaging on any device from any location.

- **A comprehensive set of collaboration tools and features:**

Users on any device and at any location should have access to the same set of feature-rich voice and collaboration tools, including instant messaging, screen sharing, and multi-party video.

- **High quality, reliability, and security:**

Communications, particularly real-time, is mission-critical, so you need solutions that offer the highest levels of quality, reliability, and security.

You don't want users exposing your company to risk by turning to consumer-oriented products just because they are convenient and easy to use. Your cloud solution should be just as convenient and easy to use, but it should deliver a user experience of the highest quality and security.

- **TCO:**

You should be looking at solutions that offer cost savings over on-premises solutions or disparate cloud providers. In moving to the cloud, a user-based subscription model can help you scale quickly and have a predictable cost structure as your deployment grows.