HOW TO MEET THE NEEDS OF AN ALWAYS-ON WORKFORCE

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Collaboration between employees is a critical factor to success for any business. As more business workflows and operations go digital, organizations need to adapt to new kinds of workplace dynamics. Cloud-based collaboration solutions are key to transforming the way that employees communicate — empowering them to work in completely new ways.
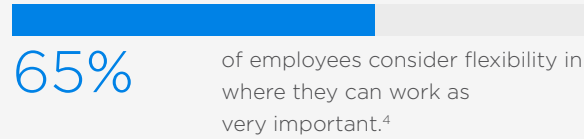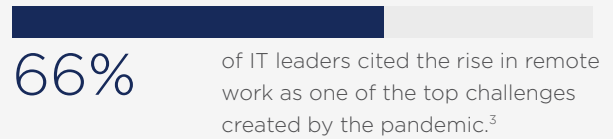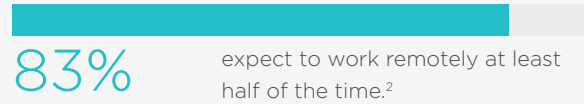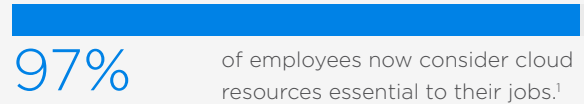
To gain a sense of how collaboration can drive business productivity in the digital era, we invite you to meet Helen, the head of customer service for a maker of automated factory equipment. While Helen is working hard to give her company an edge, she can't do it alone. Collaboration tools enable her to leverage the knowledge and skills of her co-workers, expanding the possibilities of how she works together with colleagues.

While visiting a customer's factory, Helen spots a performance issue that might soon result in a warranty claim. As head of customer service, she uses the presence capabilities of unified communications to check the factory supervisor Steve's availability. Once his availability is confirmed, Helen instant messages Steve to explain her concern and presents a diagram via virtual workspace – a space where teams can chat, meet and share content – to illustrate her problem. To drive home her point, she launches a video call with Steve so he can see for himself how the performance issue is affecting the operation of the assembly line, enabling him to instantly begin fixing the problem.

To do her job, Helen must collaborate. And she must travel. She works from three separate corporate offices and meets with 20 different customers every month. She needs to stay in close contact with experts at her own company who work in widely dispersed locations, as well as to stay in touch with customer service reps in the call center, with whom she might need to talk, email or text at any time. When not on the road, Helen is most likely to be found in her home office.

Organizations have grown more reliant on the technologies they use to collaborate than ever before. The COVID-19 pandemic rapidly accelerated network modernization to accommodate remote workforce capabilities, IT performance and resources in the cloud.

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97% of employees now consider cloud resources essential to their jobs.[1]

83% expect to work remotely at least half of the time.[2]

66% of IT leaders cited the rise in remote work as one of the top challenges created by the pandemic.[3]

65% of employees consider flexibility in where they can work as very important.[4]

To flourish in this dynamic work environment, always-connected employees across a wide range of industries require mobility and collaboration via email, messaging, voice and video. IT leaders can enable this mobile and collaborative work style by building an IT infrastructure that provides near-continual connectivity and location-independence. The ability of key workers like Helen to solve problems in real time increases productivity, cost avoidance and customer satisfaction. Helen's ability to easily and conveniently communicate with customers and co-workers anywhere, anytime speaks volumes about the commitment of Helen's company to excel in customer service.

Fortunately for Helen and many like her, there's unified communications, a cloud-based solution with telephony and additional collaboration capabilities that include calling, messaging, video conferencing, virtual workspaces and more in a single application that delivers a unified experience for today's mobile, on-the-go workforce.

Unified communications is the tool that enables it all. It provides a rich array of mobility and collaboration capabilities and brings them together in one interface across multiple devices and locations.

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Cloud-based telephony

The cloud-based telephony capabilities of unified communications eliminates the need to purchase or upgrade on-premises equipment like a private branch exchange (PBX). As a cloud-based service, ongoing management, maintenance and upgrades are performed in the cloud, allowing IT resources to focus on other strategic business initiatives. For organizations with multiple locations, moving to the cloud overcomes the complexities of managing disparate PBX models.
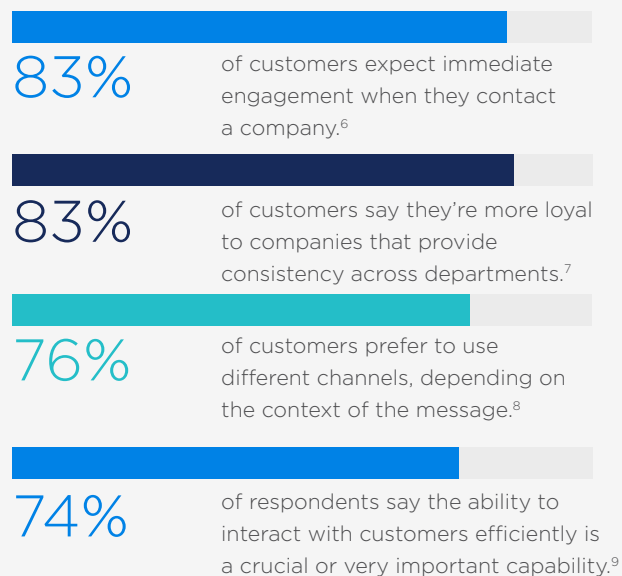
Cloud-based collaboration

With unified communications, modern collaboration capabilities, such as instant messaging, video calling and desktop sharing, enhance how employees interact with one another. According to Omdia, now, more than ever, employees need tools that allow them to communicate more effectively to remain productive.[5] The consistent user experience provided by unified communications enables employees to easily exchange ideas and information regardless of location or device. As a cloud-based collaboration solution, unified communications eliminates barriers between mobile and desktop environments, keeping teams connected and ready to collaborate from anywhere.

Another element of unified communications is "presence." Presence is the ability of the unified communications system to identify a user and his or her status so individuals can make a more informed decision about the most effective way to contact a person at a given time. Presence enhances employee collaboration by showing which employees are available via their current status e.g. presenting, in a meeting, out of office or available.

Unified communications also helps organizations expand customer service capabilities through cloud-based call center solutions. Such solutions are often an add-on offering to a unified communications service. Cloud-based call center solutions accommodate call center locations with the option to extend the service to remote and mobile call center employees.

Today's customers want fast, personalized experiences over the device and channel of their choosing.

83% of customers expect immediate engagement when they contact a company.[6]

83% of customers say they're more loyal to companies that provide consistency across departments.[7]

76% of customers prefer to use different channels, depending on the context of the message.[8]

74% of respondents say the ability to interact with customers efficiently is a crucial or very important capability.[9]

The various integrated communications methods supported by unified communications makes it an optimal collaboration enabler. Let's take a closer look.

As discussed previously, Helen is able to leverage unified communications technology to quickly reach colleagues through the medium of her choice, including voice, text and video conferencing to resolve pertinent production issues on the factory floor. Luckily for Helen, the technology decision makers at her company had the foresight to implement a unified communications solution to boost staff efficiency. In order to understand the benefits of cloud-based unified communications technology, it's important to examine two aspects of unified communications: simplification and collaboration.

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Collaboration

IT leaders recognize the necessity of collaboration for today's employees. According ZipRecruiter, more than 60% of job seekers say they hope to find remote opportunities.[10] Along with machine learning, the future of enterprise collaboration brings together easily accessible and usable tools to better guide employees and teams to the most optimal method of accomplishing their tasks.

A cloud-based unified communications service enables a collaborative workforce by delivering tools that help people work together more efficiently. Unified communications meets the needs of organizations by connecting multiple communications channels into a single easy-to-use and secure service.

Reliability

High uptime is dependent on the quality and capacity of the physical network. Typically, uptime relies on the quality of the connection, the unified communications platform, hardware and bandwidth. When the solution includes dedicated voice bandwidth, voice traffic never competes with data traffic and vice versa.

The superior capabilities of unified communications are particularly beneficial for call centers. A cloud-based call center can provide unified communications functionality to enhance internal communications and customer service. An integrated unified communications call center enables agents to chat with colleagues to quickly address customer inquiries. Cloud-based call centers may also include productivity-based call routing, allowing calls to be redirected to a backup agent in the event that the primary agent is unavailable.

With high levels of functionality and reliability, cloud-based unified communications is an outstanding workforce collaboration enabler. To get the most of these benefits, you'll need a partner with exceptional service and expertise.

Learn more about how to keep your workforce and clients connected with a world-class unified communications solution from Spectrum Enterprise.

1. "Ride the Remote Revolution to Future-Proof Your Business," Lenovo, March 22, 2021.

2. Ibid.

3. "Communications and Collaboration Investment Priorities," Frost & Sullivan, March 2021.

4. "State of Remote Work Report," Owl Labs, July 2022.

5. Diane Myers, "Unified Communications (UC) Strategies and Vendor Leadership North American Enterprise Survey - 2021," Omdia, March 31, 2021.

6. "State of the Connected Customer — Fourth edition," Salesforce, 2021.

7. "State of the Connected Customer — Fifth edition," Salesforce, 2022.

8. Vala Afshar, "New Rules of Customer Engagement: Key Findings from Global Research," Salesforce, 2021.

9. "Investing in Communications and Collaboration Tools to Empower Frontline Workers," Frost & Sullivan, May 12, 2021.

10. "ZipRecruiter monthly Job Seeker Confidence Survey," ZipRecruiter, 2022.

About Spectrum Enterprise

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