

THE ERA OF THE DESK PHONE IS OVER

The CIO's Guide to Modern Business Communications



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THE ERA OF THE DESK PHONE IS OVER *Introduction*

Since its invention nearly 150 years ago, the telephone has repeatedly undergone rapid transformations and technological upgrades, each enhancement making it easier than ever to connect people across the globe.

In recent years, the rise of digital networks, mobile devices, and even WebRTC have further streamlined how we communicate with anyone, anywhere in the world. Through all this progress, from its advent to the present, the phone has reaffirmed time and time again the power of the voice for connecting people.

And yet, for all this evolution, there is one setting where the phone has stagnated for decades: in the workplace.

When it comes to doing away with landlines, businesses are keeping up with ordinary households in the U.S. According to preliminary results from a [National Health Interview Survey](#), nearly one-half (47.4%) of American homes only use wireless telephones. That parallels our survey finding that 47% of workplaces (across all industries) don't provide desk phones for every employee.

But businesses have more complex needs than the typical household. They need to connect more individuals and they need to offer more than voice calls. Modern businesses require tools that provide voice as a means of communicating, but they increasingly need ways to integrate those conversations with every other aspect of the business, including its sales and marketing process, its HR management, and beyond.

The desk phone is ill-equipped to meet these growing needs. That's why it's no surprise that 62% of respondents in our survey said they believe desk phones are an outdated piece of technology. Whatever the reason—overwhelmed IT departments, complex plans from providers, or financial worries from executives—it's obvious that phones in the workplace have not kept up with the latest technological capabilities.

Still worse, workplace communications significantly lag behind progress made by organizations in other areas, including sales and marketing management, resource planning, and more.

With the aim of elucidating some of these issues and establishing a way forward, this report is broken down into three sections:

BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS *Today*

The state of business communications and a look at some of the trends influencing where we're headed.

THE CLOUD CONTINUUM *of Business Communications*

Introducing and elaborating on the concept of building a complete cloud stack, from CRM software to cloud-based communications.

THE MODERN BUSINESS *Dialogue*

An exploration of what organizations can achieve once they have advanced through the cloud continuum.

We hope you will find this ebook insightful. If you have questions or want to learn more about modern business communications, please feel free to get in touch.

Morgan Norman

Vice President, Marketing



BUSINESS PHONE SYSTEMS *Today*

As suggested in the introduction, communications in the workplace have not kept up with other advancements across the enterprise. While sales, marketing, and other business units have upgraded to cloud solutions in order to streamline activities and processes, communications tools remain outdated, clunky, and/or impractical. Here, we identify some of the factors holding businesses back and, with the help of millennials, get a glimpse of where we're headed.

"The [Unified Communications as a Service] market is poised for critical mass in 2016 [...] [A]s the workplace becomes increasingly decentralized and mobile, businesses are finding that legacy communications tools cannot support their collaboration needs.

In many ways, cloud-based platforms are the best solution, and as businesses learn about these options, the UCaaS market will truly become demand-driven."

— [Jon Arnold, Principal, J Arnold & Associates](#)

Incumbents profit from complexity

Ultimately, every company's executive team, let alone the IT department, should always aim to unify communications across the enterprise. After all, communications is the bread and butter for getting business done. It's not just a side project that may have some tangential benefits, but rather serves as the actual underlying infrastructure that makes every business unit capable of doing what it needs to do.

In the most recent [Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications](#), published in 2015, Gartner analysts Bern Elliot and Steve Blood write, "The primary goal of all unified communications (UC) solutions is to improve user productivity and to enhance business processes as related to communications and collaboration."

That is to say that communications is not an end to itself but rather a way to ensure that the business is efficient in everything it does. And yet, though analysts consider UC to be an "early mainstream" sector (meaning one can find a number of vendors offering a variety of solutions), many gaps persist:

"Key solution deficiencies include lack of important features, lack of integration options, lack of client functionality or missing functions on mobile devices, or lack of scaling for more-demanding environments," write Elliot and Blood.

Many of the shortcomings of legacy providers come back to their reliance on the desk phone, an outdated piece of technology. The features noted by these Gartner analysts—specifically integration options and the ability to scale—would be easily solved by a more advanced system of communications, but incumbents benefit from their complex offerings.

Making things worse, existing vendors aren't just "deficient" in their offerings; they're also perpetually introducing additional costs (to puff up their revenue streams) and complexities (to make it difficult for CIOs to understand what they're paying for). In the same Gartner report, the analysts allude to a couple changes made by Microsoft that confused their customers and muddied up the overarching goal of unifying communications.

With all this complexity—and the unwieldy amount of time and money it would take to figure it out—it becomes a little clearer why CIOs and their organizations have moved so slowly. Providers haven't made it easy because it's not in their interest to endanger their legacy revenue streams. So the incumbents are happy and their customers are playing it safe, but all the while productivity suffers.

The Future is *Bright and Clear*

LEGACY TELECOM CORPORATIONS THRIVE FROM CONVOLUTED, MURKY PRICING. OFTEN, YOU'LL SEE ONE PRICE, ONLY TO LEARN THAT THE "LOW PRICE" IS ACTUALLY MUCH HIGHER.

WE'VE ALL FACED THIS FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE. FORTUNATELY, THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS IS CLEAR, TRANSPARENT PRICING—SO YOU ALWAYS KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PAYING FOR.

The flaws and failures of BYOD

With legacy providers reluctant to rock the boat of their revenue streams and CIOs too overwhelmed by the complexity of those providers' tools to improve things themselves, something unexpected occurred: the industry latched onto the vision of BYOD.

Fundamentally, BYOD (short for "bring your own device") refers to a policy whereby companies allow employees to bring their own mobile devices (and/or computers) to work and to use them for professional purposes.

The policy, which only entered common usage in the past decade, grew out of the mobile revolution: today, over two-thirds of adults in the U.S. own a smartphone, according to [Pew Research](#). In 2016, 85% of telecom and IT professionals in the U.S. and Canada say their organizations have at least some BYOD users, according to the [Cass BYOD & Mobility Study](#), while over a third say they have 1,000 or more.

It's obvious, thanks to the numerous advantages afforded by mobile devices, why the vast majority of organizations have BYOD users: it's just efficient.

Whether you're en route to work, sitting at your desk, away from your desk, or traveling elsewhere, you can always be reached if you're carrying your own device. You can check and respond to emails, you can make calls, you can, in short, communicate and collaborate with colleagues and customers effortlessly.

Unfortunately, as has been brought up again and again, the promise of BYOD has only taken us halfway to realizing modern business communications. The first problem, and perhaps foremost to the minds of CIOs, is that there aren't enough security procedures to safeguard private company data and information on a personal device. Many organizations over the years, however, have sought ways to limit this problem through secure email protocols and other methods, but the broader issue has not yet been fully resolved.

BYOD done right

1. Allow your employees to use their own devices.
2. Put security protocols in place to protect email and other sensitive data.
3. Integrate communications app that allows employees to use a different business phone number on their same device.
4. Make sure employees have access to all their work tools and data through mobile.

Additionally, a bigger and still looming problem is the same one plaguing legacy providers: BYOD (by itself) does nothing to unify communications with the rest of a business' activities. Even though an individual can be accessed at anytime, there's nothing bridging those mobile conversations with, for example, sales activities, project collaborations, or other tasks. It's a conversation in isolation, fragmented and unrecorded.

Thus, BYOD has solved many problems for individuals by making it more convenient to connect with their peers, but it has done nearly nothing for the broader organization in unifying communications and increasing efficiency.

Millennials demand modern business communications

Millennials (adults aged 19 to 35) last year surpassed Generation X to become the largest age group in the U.S. workforce. With baby boomers retiring in droves and Gen X at last outpaced, we're looking at a changing world. Every business that wants to succeed today and for the years to come must quickly understand the broad, underlying characteristics that define millennials.

The single most important thing to know is that this generation grew up with technology. Whether that meant playing video games on increasingly common home consoles, staying up late to chat online with friends, or even owning a cell phone in middle school, the bottom line is that millennials are no strangers to technology. On the contrary, they take it for granted as a part of life and work.

That alone should be a wake-up call for those organizations that don't seriously consider their workers' needs when implementing systems and processes. If intelligent, user-centric technology is not part of the way an organization does business, one of two things can happen: the workforce will be perpetually dissatisfied or workers will simply find ways around the established processes. Neither is a win for any business.

For the dominant and growing millennial workforce, technology must play a role in how information is shared and people connect with each other.

One study, conducted by Upwork, found that 92% of millennials agreed with the statement, "I can access info whenever and wherever I need it." A statement that that may have sounded outlandish and idealistic a decade or two ago is now seen as universally accepted among the fastest growing segment of the workforce. And thanks to the ever-increasing resources of the Web, the millennials are right about access to information.

The Mobile *Revolution*

**IT'S CLEAR THAT THE DESK PHONE
AND OTHER LEGACY MODES OF
COMMUNICATION **DON'T PLAY**
ANY SIGNIFICANT ROLE FOR THE
MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE.**





73%

of millennials agree with the statement, "I am expected to be contactable at all times."

What else do they get right?

In the same study, 73% of millennials agreed with the statement, "I am expected to be contactable at all times." Again, something unthinkable to prior generations makes intuitive sense to this one because of the mobile revolution. Over two-thirds of adults in the U.S. own a smartphone, according to [Pew Research](#), but that figure is closer to total saturation for millennials, with 98% of that group owning smartphones.

As such, it's clear that the desk phone and other legacy modes of communication don't play any significant role for the millennial workforce.

Over the next decade, the trends touched on here will only continue to accelerate.

Millennials understand these changes because they're naturally drawn to those ways of living and working that make the most sense.

Businesses are becoming increasingly globalized, workforces are growing more distributed and remote, and the need for mobile solutions to connect everyone is going up.

Businesses, however, will need to catch up. Those that want to succeed and excel in this changing world must meet the demands for modern business communications.



>2/3

of adults in the U.S. own a smartphone.



98%

of millennials own a smartphone.

THE CLOUD CONTINUUM

of Business Communications

People today treat “working in the cloud” as if it were a binary question. According to this perspective, your business is either in the cloud or it’s not. But as evidenced by the vast array of cloud services and tools available for business today, different organizations can have varying levels of immersion in the cloud. For example, can a Fortune 500 company that uses Salesforce (a cloud-based sales solution) but traditional on-premise solutions for everything else truly be considered to be “working in the cloud”?

And, by the same token, are they as much “working in the cloud” as a startup that uses cloud-based services for everything, from sales and marketing to communication and collaboration? Obviously not. That’s why, instead of a binary, it’s more accurate to perceive an organization’s experience and usage of cloud tools on a continuum: on one end, you’re completely on-premise, and, on the other end, you’ve built a complete cloud stack.

When we speak of the “old world,” we’re not talking about the time when everything was on-premise.

The old world

It’s true that there was a time when organizations had everything established completely on-premise, including CRM, email, communication systems, databases, virtual machines, and so on. But those were ancient times.

What is increasingly known as the old world today is the way many of the largest companies still do business. These are companies that have shifted a minor portion of their systems into the cloud, most commonly email and CRM. In short, these are the companies that have explored the possibility of using cloud solutions, but have not yet undertaken a systematic transformation to integrate all their resources and systems into the cloud.

This “old world” way of working succeeded for a reasonable period of time because it accorded with individual ways of working. For example, people still worked at their desks most of the day, alongside most of their colleagues in the office. Spot solutions in the cloud may have made things a bit more convenient here and there, but there was no comprehensive impetus to completely shift everything into the cloud.

A transitional period

Increasingly, with the proliferation of mobile devices and completely new ways of working, we're starting to see organizations bravely wading a little deeper into the cloud. Notably, however, the need is arising because people are seeking out more effective solutions on their own.

The most obvious example of this is mobile, as we discussed in the section on "BYOD." Again, over two-thirds of adults (and 98% of millennials) in the U.S. own a smartphone. These are droves of people bringing their devices to work and using them for work purposes regardless of company policy.

Another example is chat. While email revolutionized communication in the 1990s by allowing people to communicate more quickly, the rise of employee-to-employee chat soon after proved that even lighter-forms of communication tools could be in demand.

Yet another example is Google Apps. While Microsoft Office has been the business standard for productivity tools for decades, rising expectations around cloud collaboration tools increasingly led individuals to use Google Docs and similar programs for everything from casual brainstorming sessions to long-form, official reports.

Again, even if not fully sanctioned by the organization, the temptation to more easily collaborate trumps any established policies.

But even in these cases where individuals and certain organizations start using more cloud solutions, we still haven't reached the most efficient end of the cloud continuum.

We continue to live in a changing world.

The complete cloud stack

Today, 37% of U.S. workers telecommute for some portion of their work, according to Gallup's [State of the Workplace Survey](#). Additionally, PGI's recent State of Telework research reveals that 75% of telecommuters leverage video, real-time virtual meeting tools with webcams, screen sharing, the cloud, file sharing, and social media as part of their business solutions.

And while these individuals are finding increasingly effective ways to get work done and engage with their colleagues, CIOs are pulling their hair out: according to a recent survey by Robert Half Technology, 30% of CIOs report that communication is the greatest challenge they face in managing a remote workforce.

The common thread binding these figures is cloud communications. Somehow, after email trumped the phone and chat trumped email, people and businesses are still struggling to sort out the best way to communicate and collaborate.

That's precisely because we live in a fast-moving, dynamic world. Unlike a decade or two ago, most workers are rarely at their desk. They're moving around conference rooms, editing presentations from the back of an Uber, and working from their home or hotel. The cloud revolutions of the past several years brought most organizations a new way of managing sales databases, marketing automation, and human resources, but no one ever fully figured out the larger problem of connecting people efficiently. That has bigger implications because it means all those other cloud solutions are less effective, as communications is what necessarily connects all the disparate parts.

So much more is possible when you complete the cloud stack by bringing the phone system into the cloud.

Think about the most fundamental need: connecting a caller to an employee at your company. Instead of hoping they call the right desk phone or appropriate mobile number, cloud software makes it possible to ring several of that employee's devices, including their desktop or laptop, smartphone, tablet, and desk phone. Or you can even route the single call to an entire department, ensuring that the business never misses an opportunity.

Imagine what becomes possible when you then integrate the voice channel into other cloud tools, including productivity software, CRM, and social media. With productivity tools, you can tie voice conversations directly to documents, emails, and conversations that have previously occurred on other messaging platforms. When it comes CRM, you can automatically log calls in Salesforce. An advanced cloud communications tool should also automatically bring in social insights about colleagues and customers to make conversations more efficient.

And all of this doesn't even mention how much easier a cloud solution would be to set up and maintain.

Companies that will thrive in the coming decade will be those who have reached the far end of the cloud continuum by completing their cloud stack. It will be those companies that do sales in the cloud, marketing in the cloud, and customer service in the cloud. They will do their accounting and human resources management in the cloud too. And, most importantly of all, they will have an enterprise-wide cloud solution for communications, binding the phone, email, chat, and all the previously mentioned cloud tools in order to best connect people.

BETTER TOGETHER

How cloud communications + business apps changes everything

Over the past decade, business apps have had a powerful impact on the way people work. When you augment those business apps with cloud-based voice and messaging communications, so much more is possible. Here are a few examples of how cloud communications and business apps are better together.

Voice & Messaging + *CRM*

Combined with customer relationship management software like Salesforce, cloud communications tools can automatically log calls and notes, while letting employees simply click a contact's name to call.

Voice & Messaging + *Productivity*

Through native integrations, cloud communications software makes productivity tools like Google Apps and Office 365 even more useful by offering easy access to edit documents, presentations, spreadsheets, and emails as well as detailed context so you know exactly where to pick up each project.

Voice & Messaging + *Social*

Drawing social media insights from Twitter and LinkedIn into your cloud communications tools gives everyone the context they need for every meeting, leading to richer conversations.

THE MODERN BUSINESS *Dialogue*

It's one thing to imagine reaching the ideal end of the cloud continuum, and it's another to actually realize it. But many organizations today are well on their way to doing so. Companies like Uber and Percolate have committed themselves to cloud infrastructure, not just for a single business unit or specific task but for everything.

Sales, marketing, communications, and beyond—completely cloud-friendly companies are already engaging in the modern business dialogue.

Connect everyone. Work anywhere.

What a company can achieve through a modern business dialogue is not obscure. It's actually quite simple: it means that people can work anywhere, connect with anyone, and create anything. Breaking that down into its individual pieces reveals some important points.



23%

of American are
completing all or some of
their work from home.

Work *anywhere*

Remote working and the freelance gig economy have accelerated in recent years thanks in large part to many of the convenient, cloud-based technologies discussed earlier. Today, 23% of Americans are completing all or some of their work from home, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, up from 19% in 2003.

For individuals, the benefits of remote working are self-evident. The flexibility, independence, and potential cost savings (from lack of commute) that go along with working from home make the experience uniquely empowering for individuals.

For businesses, the advantages are even greater. Remote employees are nearly twice as likely to work over 40 hours per week, according to Inc. Magazine. A typical business that lets individuals work from home half the time can save \$11,000 per year, according to Global Workplace Analytics. And businesses that give workers the opportunity to work remotely at least three times per month have a greater chance of growing revenue at least 10%, according to the Wall Street Journal, compared to firms that don't have these policies.

Modern architecture, supported by the full cloud stack, allows teams no matter how large or small to free themselves from physical tethers. You can go global, open remote offices with ease, and still make sure that people who need to be connected stay connected.

Connect *everyone*

Modern architecture lets you toss out desk phones and bypass carrier costs and complications. We have already seen some of these changes taking place over the past decade, as organizations and individuals have rapidly adopted evolving technologies in mobile, web conferencing, video chat, and other communications and collaborations tools.

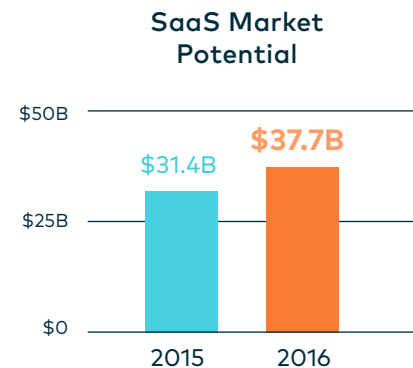
But because every business understands the power of voice, we still haven't left the desk phone behind. Applications that connect large groups quickly in real-time, like chat modules and task management programs, are incredibly useful for internal teams, but they aren't designed for reaching out to external individuals, like customers or partners. Communications tools that leverage voice will always be around for these situations.

Now, engaging in the modern business dialogue, every organization has the opportunity to move voice into the cloud, making the desk phone optional.

Create *anything*

Finally, modern architecture lets you increase the value of the rest of your cloud stack. Cloud-based tools for sales or marketing management are very effective already, as evidenced by the voracious appetite customers have for these solutions: SaaS was a \$31.4 billion industry in 2015 and could grow another 20% this year. But these solutions are still not perfect. From a sales and marketing perspective, companies have been dreaming of a "complete" or "single" view of the customer for decades. But as long as communications take place on a different plane than the other SaaS tools, it will remain a dream.

With communications integrated into the cloud stack, however, organizations will suddenly see those same CRM and marketing automation tools enriched with information they'd been missing all along. That means greater insights on calls and messages by integrating data from other business apps. As a result, employees will stop worrying about data management and other trivial tasks, and instead focus on connecting with customers, creating better products, and growing the business.



IT that inspires people

Modern CIOs—those that share in the vision of the modern business dialogue—are rebranding IT and fundamentally changing the way people work across teams, departments, and physical locations with the goal of creating a more connected, collaborative, and productive workforce.

As CIOs aim to achieve this vision, they will note that there is nothing inherently wrong with the idea of a desk phone. At the end of the day, nothing replaces picking up the phone and talking to someone. But the desk phone is limited in two fundamental ways: it's physically tethered to the desk and it doesn't capture important insights that could help you be more productive or provide better customer experiences.

In other words, the modern business dialogue requires IT more than ever, but it demands IT that puts people first.

From a communications standpoint, that means questioning everything and answering those questions from a real person's point of view. For example:

Do I use a desk phone, a personal smartphone, or both?

Can my communications tool capture data and insights and weave these into other collaborative systems?

Does company-sponsored technology restrict my freedom or does it inspire me to innovate?

In previous decades, when employees still had little say in adopted technologies, nobody took a moment to ask these questions. Technology was imposed upon workers with the assumption that they would boost efficiency, but in too many cases those same workers saw technology as a burden that did the opposite. In the past decade, thanks to the mobile and BYOD revolution, individuals themselves selected technologies that would help them work done.

But that only gets us halfway to unified communications. Individuals cannot get us there alone.

It is now on CIOs and their teams to first understand which technologies restrict and which inspire, and then to commit themselves to the latter. Only then can it be repeated across the enterprise—the first step to truly unified communications.

In spite of the vast array of changes that have already transformed work and the workplace, the rate of change hasn't slowed. If anything, we're at a turning point.

A new era of business communications

As the world continues to transform, as individuals come to expect different things from their employers, and as technologies rapidly advance, it's plain to see that the businesses that succeed in the coming decade will be those that truly achieve unified communications. Not just in the sense of chat, IM, text, voice, and video, unified communications must also increasingly encompass other business apps and tools regardless of platform or device.

Bob O'Donnell, president and chief analyst of TECHnalysis Research, LLC, predicts in a recent [Fast Company](#) article that we are quickly accelerating toward a "post-device" future. PC manufacturers have already noted that worldwide shipments already peaked in the fourth quarter of 2011, and tablet and smartphone shipments have also appeared to already hit their peak quarters. Looking at these data points and broader technology trends, O'Donnell suggests what computing will look like in the coming decades:

While we can't predict the future of devices, we do know that the power of voice isn't going anywhere. Business communications of the future will need to simply work—and work with voice—no matter what technology is put in use. In other words, no matter the manufacturer of the pane of glass, no matter the size of the pane of glass, no matter the platform displayed on that pane of glass, devices (whether personal handheld computers or mass-integrated installations) will need to respond to voice. "[T]he future of computing seems to be about a set of platform and device-independent services. Specifically, voice-based interactions, driven by large installations of cloud-based servers running deep learning-based algorithms are what's hot these days."

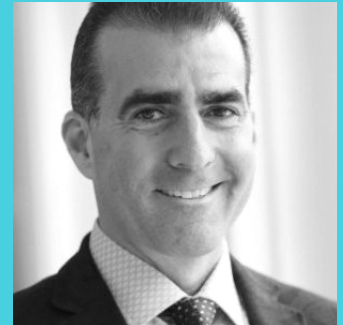
Ultimately, work is not a place you go, but a thing you do. This has always been true, but it has taken on a new level of truth thanks to trends in technology advancements and remote working. The convergence of traditional communications and data across business applications will fundamentally transform productivity and culture. Travel time and costs will plummet. Meetings will become more effective. Dispersed workers will feel as supported as those at the flagship office. Efficiency will be baked into every single communications and collaboration system.

With communication tools that give them the flexibility to work anywhere and connect with everyone, people will feel empowered to literally create anything.

**And that's the fundamental vision of
the modern business dialogue.**

Insights from the Experts

WE REACHED OUT TO INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS SPACE TO CAPTURE THEIR INSIGHT ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN WORKPLACE. FROM REMOTE WORK TO BYOD, THEY EXPLORE THE BIGGEST COMMUNICATIONS TRENDS AND CHALLENGES THAT ARE IMPACTING THE WAY WE WORK TODAY.



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MOHAMMED NASSER

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF IOT & M2M, SPRINT



What are the top three elements of a modern business communications strategy?

The concepts of automation, productivity, and mobility are three things that are really making today's businesses hum. Back in the day, things were stationary. You went to the office, and you did everything from your desktop. The computer was not a major product in your life. Today, everything is mobile. We depend on our smartphones to enable us to work from anywhere. Work is now a location-independent act.

Mobility is enhancing much of how we do business, followed by automation and productivity. Employees and business owners now have access to tools that streamline workflows so they can focus on their core business. As a result, the workplace is becoming far less operational, and far more automated.

How is the remote work trend impacting the communication requirements of today's businesses?

The modern workplace is increasingly reliant on the M2M experience. Workers are mobile, flexible, and always on-the-go. As a result, businesses are adapting to these needs and deploying communications solutions that enable their employees to work from anywhere, across any device.

What role will the Internet of Things and Machine-to-Machine (M2M) play in the future of business communications?

We've become so interconnected. It started out with just connecting things, but ultimately it's going to evolve into connecting people and then connecting everything. This will ultimately enhance and revolutionize how we operate businesses.

Let's say you're a retailer. Imagine automating every aspect of your business. With the advent of M2M and IoT, your customer engagement model will change dramatically. Now, you can present customers with a loyalty program that allows you to know when they come to a store, how much they spend, and automate digital signage as they peruse. You'll have sophisticated and intelligent decision-making mechanisms in place during product creation, and a mobile point of sale attached to the customer experience.

Then, in the backend, your inventory is also 100% automated and managed, so the moment you sell something, you know exactly what to order and how much of it. With M2M and IoT, automation is going to come fast and furious.

Communication will also become very enhanced because now, you're no longer bound by a phone that only sits at a desk, you're connected all the way through with mobile devices.

When we stop to think about the role M2M is going to play in our world, in our lives—it's huge. It's not automation for the sake of it, it's automation designed to enhance people's lives.



JASON RUGE

PARTNER, ENTERPRISE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MAVEN WAVE



What are the top three elements of a modern business communication strategy?

In today's day and age, I think it's required for employees to be able to choose their own devices, and for the IT strategy to be device agnostic. Modern workers are accustomed to picking up the nearest device and communicating in the manner that's most efficient and beneficial for that particular situation. Sometimes it's going to be a voice call. Sometimes it's going to be a quick video hangout. Whatever that is, allowing the users to have a selection that will fit their needs, whether they're at an airport or sitting at their desk, is crucial.

Number two is from an enterprise perspective. By embracing the cloud, you're cutting out the infrastructure cost, maintenance, and headache of legacy hardware, and re-purposing the people and dollars that have traditionally been spent in this area for more useful purposes within the company i.e. driving additional revenue or data analytics. All of our customers are going in this direction, some faster than others, and so we work on this journey with them. Everybody understands that a cloud-based future is a matter of when, not if.

Number three is understanding that the traditional idea of business communications is evolving and making way for new channels of integrated collaboration. Within a Google Apps environment, for example, you have co-editing

and co-authoring. This is an entirely different means of communication. A barrage of informal communication happens as you build content together and you comment or edit. These processes allow for efficiency speeds that never used to be possible. I think understanding this efficiency, and how it fits into the new equation of business communications, is important.

How are enterprises evolving their technology to address the modern workplace?

Old school enterprises have always been broken down by functional departments, with specialization within them. It's formal, and it's hierarchical.

In today's workplace, digital forces demands a multidisciplinary approach. Hierarchy is broken down, since the collaboration world now values the person with the best ideas, not just the person with a title. As long as companies are enabling this and not shutting it down, it's a process that technology can support.

With our more progressive customers, we're seeing that they want to transform the way people work. They know there's this need, and they recognize that tools out there can enable it. While a cultural shift doesn't happen overnight, technology can spur change over time. Some of our larger customers have really been pushing the envelope via technology to help support a cultural transformation in their workplace.

JASON RUGE

PARTNER, ENTERPRISE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, MAVEN WAVE

How do you think mobility will shape the way companies collaborate and innovate?

It comes down to BYOD. Whether it's a tablet, a phone, or a laptop, we shouldn't force users to work in a specific style—we should enable them to pick the channels best suited to them. For companies, the first step is ensuring that security protocols are in place that meet their standards. Once that box is checked, they're then able to give employees the freedom to work from anywhere. Locking people down to a desk environment is a relic of the past. Mobility is critical for companies that are seeking to sharpen their competitive edge.



KIMBERLY GREEN-KERR

VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER, SMB, SPRINT



What trends excite you about the future of business communications?

The mobile ubiquity trend is very exciting. In the telecom industry, we've seen explosive growth in the last 15 years. Mobile phone penetration has jumped from 50% of the population to 90%. There are 322 million mobile subscribers in the U.S. alone and 47 million of those are corporate business users. Of that number, about 23 million are small medium businesses. The whole segment is poised for incredible growth, since 63 million people are employed by small businesses in the U.S. If you look at the 1-999 employees company-size base, that's about a 35% penetration rate.

Unified communications is also a big one. Mobile devices like tablets or smartphones are driving new channels of collaboration. Ultimately, the companies that are integrating their phone, video, messaging, texting, and email in the cloud will reap the biggest productivity benefits.

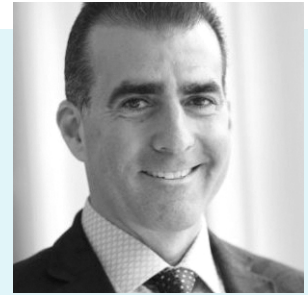
How do you see companies evolving their technology to address all generations?

Millennials now make up 25% of the workforce, and they're set to represent 50% by 2020. This is a generation that grew up in the digital world, fueled by smartphones, tablets, and mobile broadband. Millennials expect to have access to flexible workplace technology. If you don't offer an innovative IT stack, your company is not going to be viewed as bleeding edge. Modern workers are acutely aware that technology either enables them to do their job effectively or holds them back.

Satisfied employees make for very productive employees that contribute and impact the bottom line. These same employees can help drive top-line revenue with innovative ideas, if armed with the right productivity tools. Companies have to evolve their technology, eliminating legacy platforms that restrict in favor of services that empower.

How do you think the remote work trend is shaping the way companies collaborate and innovate?

Companies are going to be left behind if they don't embrace it. The global workforce is now mobile. It's a different world from years past, where you sat face-to-face in a conference room and everyone reported to the office. As companies grow regionally and globally, they inevitably cultivate a work-from-anywhere workforce. And they need the technology to support it. Cloud-based platforms that work any device with an internet connection enable people to work effectively and collaborate in real-time. You no longer have to sit in the office to connect and engage with customers and coworkers. The cloud enables users to work from anywhere, at anytime, on all devices.



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PRESIDENT & CEO, SYNCLAIRE BRANDS



How does the business technology you select impact your company's culture?

Culture is directly impacted and shaped by the business technology you select. For businesses for all sizes, it's critical to be progressive.

You have to establish an open door policy. If there's a better way to do something, employees should have the freedom to speak up and make their voices heard. As a user, the tech environment your company supports intrinsically affects how you work and live.

If companies empower employees with tools that make them more efficient, usage will naturally skyrocket alongside employee satisfaction.

What are the key elements of a successful business communications strategy?

From a high-level perspective, it's important to acknowledge that a CEO may not behave like the rest of his or her workforce. You have to be aware of the various generations within an employee base, and what their expectations are. For example, an individual in their late 50s or 60s is programmed to use desk phones, while a Millennial is accustomed to operating mobile devices.

If you were to interview a CEO in their 20s versus one in their 50s on workplace technology, chances are you'll receive very different answers. From a technological standpoint, these people are simply at different stages in their lives. In today's workplace, younger generations aren't even experimenting with on-premise hardware, they're building IT stacks that are pure cloud. It's important to be aware of these differences.

The key to a successful business communications strategy is understanding your workers, your organization, and what technologies are limiting productivity. From there, you can act upon those findings to eliminate the services that hold people back.



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