Communify Manage360°

CRA's Unified Communications Solution

# How Unified Communications Improves Business

## White Paper

CRA Transform IT

Computer Resources of America

## Introduction

Communication is the lifeblood of every business. The ability for staff to communicate quickly, cost-effectively, and fully with both one another and their customers enables every other business function, from accounting to sales to manufacturing. According to a 2011 survey, almost 30 percent of a knowledge worker's day is spent trying to contact fellow employees or customers, or searching for information.[1] This wasted time can become productive instead for businesses that implement the right communication solution.

The trend today for all corporations is toward Unified Communications (UC) systems. Unified Communications integrates all voice and data communications systems into a single, coherent platform.

UC systems work by using server-based communication software to connect and route traffic via the appropriate channels. All communication traffic passing through the UC gateway is turned into Internet Protocol (IP) packets--just like existing web or e-mail traffic.

The cost of connecting IP-traffic to sites around the globe tends to be lower than with traditional voice or video transmission.[2] In some cases, companies may be able to use internal WAN (Wide Area Network) links to carry traffic internally over existing connections, avoiding additional common carrier contracts for branch office communication services entirely.

Using an IP-based system, cloud-based UC servers are increasingly becoming the solution of choice. The cost advantages of voice cloud solutions with UC systems are as marked as other cloud-based services. The market for cloud-based UC services is expected to grow from $13 billion in 2014 to $23 billion by 2019.[3]

The broad feature sets of UC solutions and their complete integration allow users to select the best tool for the job at hand. For instance, a quick telephone call might instigate a conversation that suddenly requires conferencing in a third party, and then move onto a subject where everyone involved might want to view a shared online whiteboard where complex problems can be sketched out and discussed. UC systems allow all of those progressions to occur seamlessly and immediately as they are necessary.

## Services Options

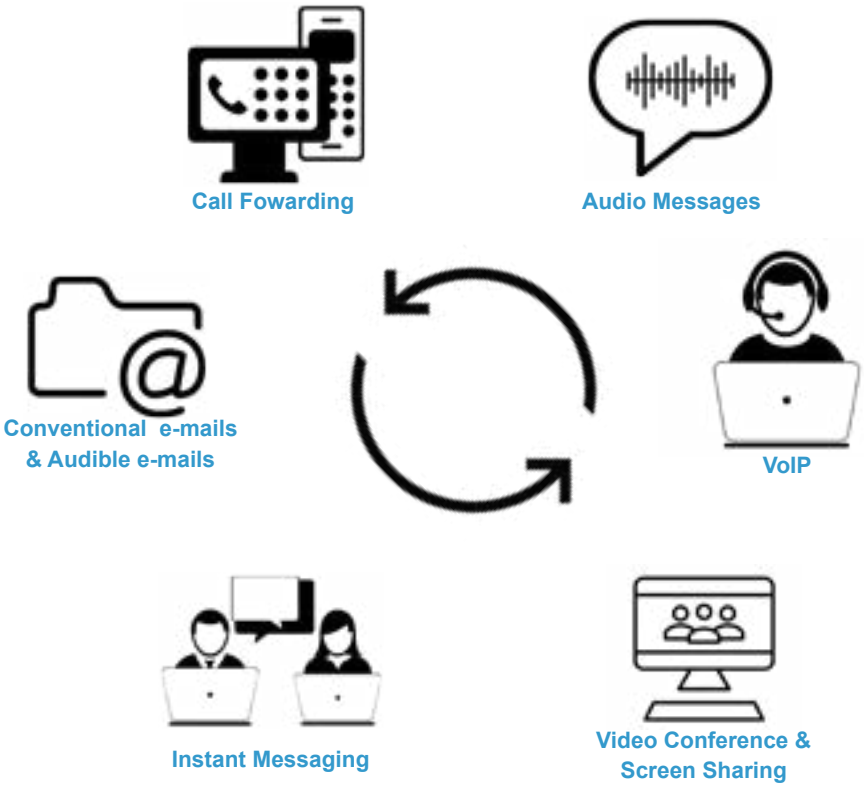
The typical unified communication system offers all of the common communication tools expected in the modern office[4] and often new ones that have not yet been widely adopted.

1 Metzler, Jim, and Steven Taylor. Unified Communications and Cloud-Based Services Yield Exponential Savings for SMBs. Whitepaper. Webtorials. Greensboro: Webtorials, 2011. 2-3. Print.
2 Gareiss, Robin. “VoIP by the Numbers.” Network World. N.p., 03 Nov. 2003. Web. 07 June 2016.
3 Manzoori, Dean. “Understanding Cloud-based Unified Communications.” Masergy. N.p., 10 Dec. 2014. Web. 07 June 2016.
4 Blood, Steve, and Sorell Playmaker. Critical Capabilities for Corporate Telephony, 4Q15. Tech. Gartner. N.p.: Gartner Research, 2015. 1-2. Print.

Internet telephony, or Voice over IP (VoIP) is the core feature of any UC system. VoIP uses the Internet to transmit conventional telephone conversations or dedicated voice chat sessions. By using a PBX (Private Branch Exchange) gateway from an existing office telephone system to digitize and compress voice data into IP packets, VoIP can take place seamlessly without major equipment upgrades. Dedicated VoIP systems using conventional handsets are also available. Most UC systems also provide software-based VoIP that allows users to make and receive calls directly from computers.

UC systems frequently integrate various instant messaging (IM) systems. This can range from SMS (text) gateways, to proprietary chat applications, to integrations with popular IM platforms like Jabber. Speech recognition is increasingly incorporated into UC interfaces to allow users to type by talking for hands-free messaging or composition.

Video conferencing and screen sharing are major features of unified communications. Using mobile apps or cameras on desktop or laptop computers, users can instantly initiate a video conferencing session with multiple other users. Participants in the conference can share their screens for viewing, allowing them to demonstrate or display visual data. Interactive document editing shows real-time changes, and the author of those changes, allowing collaborative writing, editing, and brainstorming.



Conventional email is included into UC systems to take advantage of feature integration. For example, a UC system might be configured to record voicemails as digital audio files, then email the audio file to the recipient. They can listen to it offline or away from their phone. Voicemail and call control features are built into UC VoIP with all the typical functions like customized messages, in-call transfers, forwarding, and distribution lists.

The real magic of UC comes from the integration of all these features, however. Users can switch and add participants in mid-call, or can interrupt voicemail recording to take the call immediately. A user might jump in on a call that has already been sent to voicemail when they see that it is from a particularly important customer, for example. A small team might start a phone conversation about a product feature, then jump over to a shared-screen teleconference to check out and critique a new idea from one of their number. UC makes it easy to collaborate efficiently, without losing time to coordinating meetings.

Find me/follow me is another popular use for unified communications. Using tools built into the UC system, users can set incoming calls to be routed intelligently to various end-points depending on their location and activities. For instance, a user might configure calls to be sent to his or her desk phone first thing in the morning when they are at their desk, but then to switch instead to their mobile number in the afternoon when they are out in the field. Or, during a meeting, calls might be sent automatically to voicemail without ringing anywhere--except for important numbers, which might be set to still ring through. Or the user could cause an IM to be generated, so their phone wouldn't ring aloud, but they would still have the option of taking the call discretely.

## Our Solution

The power and flexibility of these features make it easy to justify a unified communication system for most businesses. Putting the right information in the right hands at the right times enables better business decisions. And the cost of implementing UC is often mitigated by the savings of VoIP telephony versus POTS (Plain Old Telephone System) lines.[5]

For additional cost savings, cloud-based UC solutions are worth looking at closely. In particular, **Communify**, from CRA, offers all the important features of a unified communication system while delivering all the advantages of cloud-based services. Increased financial control without any sacrifices in quality of service or flexibility make **Communify** a solid option for companies exploring Internet VoIP providers.

5 Gareiss, Robin. “VoIP by the Numbers.” Network World. N.p., 03 Nov. 2003. Web. 07 June 2016.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