This is Part 1 of a four-part series on the varying levels with which businesses leverage unified communications and collaboration. This first part provides a glimpse into the organizations that display the lowest level of communications technology, the struggles they face, and how they can climb their way to higher levels.

You may not realize it, but businesses that communicate and collaborate at a high level didn't get there by accident. Think back to when you were a baby. Sure, your memory might be a bit foggy, but it wasn't dumb luck you slowly learned to talk. It's the same way with effective business communication.

It takes a focused strategy, a culture shift, and a healthy dose of modern infrastructure to create an environment of high-level communication and collaboration.

What's the Problem?
Why on earth should you care about the four levels of communications maturity? Well, if your organization finds itself in the first level, you should care quite a bit. According to Pingboard, those with the most basic level of communication and collaboration abilities (level one) risk the following:

- Decreased employee loyalty
- Lower employee morale
- Up to 20 percent loss in productivity
- Stifled innovation
- Increased turnover

That's not a pretty sight, is it? When companies struggle to provide their employees with an efficient means to collaborate and communicate, everyone's job gets a little more difficult. The reason is pretty simple: Communication is the basis of just about everything workers do, while collaboration is the fuel for innovation.

So, what does an environment at this level look like? If your organization's main strategy for communications technology centers around pen and paper or a telephone, it's likely in this group. If effective communication is your goal, traditional telephones — the ones with cords that connect to office desks — shouldn't be the backbone of your communication technology.

In an age when mobile technology has provided an entirely new perspective on productivity, being confined to desktop phones (or even voice communication, for that matter) is an unnecessary limitation.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle isn't so much how bad level-one organizations have it, but rather, how much better life could be with unified communications and collaboration.

Getting Over the Hump

The real question is, why are these level-one organizations so hesitant to take the plunge into digital transformation? Communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) can clearly solve level-one communication headaches, yet so many workers still rely on the same technology their parents worked with. Making changes to communication infrastructure is never easy, and yet the pervasiveness of communication should compel these companies to do everything they can to make it seamless and efficient.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle isn't so much how bad level-one organizations have it, but rather, how much better life could be with unified communications and collaboration. Thanks to a distinct lack of communications maturity, these organizations simply don't realize what they're missing.

Dialing customers from a desk phone or collaborating face-to-face are wonderful ways to communicate — in certain situations. Level-one organizations seem to think this approach adequately covers any and all communication needs, which might explain their hesitance to transition to a CPaaS or other unified communications environment.
Taking the Next Step

If these organizations are so set in their archaic ways, what hope do they have? Okay, that might be a bleak way of putting it, but they're certainly missing out on some pretty fruitful collaboration and innovation. So, how can they snap themselves out of this funk?

The first step is to make a case for unified communications and collaboration. Take the time to thoughtfully consider the role of a technology such as CPaaS in your environment, and you'll be better prepared to make the case for buy-in from the decision-makers in your organization. How often do you collaborate? Where do you collaborate? Could you benefit from the ability to share documents, attend meetings, and hold video conferences at any time or place?

Questions such as these will give you some useful insight into how much of an impact unified communications could have in your organization. There's also the challenge of confronting a communication culture that likely got its start around the same time as Thomas Edison.

The best way to make a difference here is to present a solution that's actually easier to use than the phone on your desk. Cloud-based communications platforms are a safe bet here. With click-to-dial, CRM integration, and unified apps that operate seamlessly in a browser or on a smartphone, you might be surprised how eager people are to try something new.

In the end, expecting effective communication and collaboration with a traditional phone system reveals an organization that's simply out of touch with modern business technology. When increased productivity and employee loyalty are on the line, the decision to take the plunge on unified communications should be an easy one for level-one organizations.

*Stay tuned for Part 2 of this series, and connect with a Vonage Business consultant to learn more about boosting company-wide collaboration.*