



SIX WAYS TO MAKE UC INTEGRATION PAY OFF IN PRODUCTIVITY



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White Paper

COMMUNICATIONS IS EVERYTHING

As enterprises make increasingly data-driven decisions, the ability to connect and communicate between business and productivity applications becomes ever-more important. Business depends on human interaction, and that interaction in turn depends on communications. Thus, in today's hybrid IT environment, where applications reside everywhere from on premises to public and private clouds, unified communications as a service (UCaaS) is playing an increasingly important role, with the market projected to reach more than \$60 billion in 2018.¹

Although UC simplifies communications, it does not guarantee integration between applications. As a result, some UC solutions can have a negative impact on productivity, becoming just one more disconnected tool with its own set of



disconnected data. This white paper looks at how UCaaS is evolving and provides guidance on what buyers should look for while evaluating modern UCaaS solutions.

THE PRODUCTIVITY GAP

Time is money—and agent productivity is a critical factor, according to contact center expert ICMI.² Increasing business efficiency, especially employee productivity, can be a difficult challenge for many reasons. In some cases, technology advances can become hidden productivity gains, as employees struggle to make software conform to their roles and responsibilities. One of the biggest challenges is inefficiencies that evolve from dealing with multiple communications solutions, including productivity tools, customer relationship management (CRM) software, business applications and communications tools. Organizations can experience significant workforce productivity losses stemming from inefficient communication solutions, the absence of integrated collaboration tools and the inability to share communication data effectively across all customer and employee touchpoints.

¹ "Increased Enterprise Mobility Will Boost Deployment of Unified Communication as a Service (UCaaS) Solutions, reports TMR," Transparency Market Research, August 2016

² "Three Multichannel Contact Center Metrics that Matter," ICMI, Aug. 16, 2016

Having so many touchpoints makes it more difficult to pinpoint where to plug the gaps to improve performance, since applications and collaboration tools are disconnected. For many sales, customer service and IT professionals, the questions are where to start, how to improve productivity to gain more efficiency, and what happens if the problem can't be fixed?



WHY IT MATTERS

Productivity shortcomings due to disconnected applications can have a major negative impact on a company's bottom line. At the most basic level, there is the loss of efficiency from going from application to application to collect all the information needed to get the full picture about a customer's relationship with the business. Then, there are the redundancies that are created by the need to capture the same information multiple times for each application—or at best devise a way to remember newly captured information across client-facing applications. This process of manually logging data into the CRM after each customer contact wastes agent time and costs the business in productivity.

The underlying problem is often the lack of simple communications protocols between applications—they just do not really talk to each other well. As a result, communication between team members, especially in different departments, is also limited. And when teams cannot collaborate well, the bottom line impacts can pile up quickly. Here are a few areas particularly sensitive to the productivity gap:

- **Customer satisfaction:** When teams are disconnected, customers often must share the same information several times with multiple team members to achieve a desired outcome. This loss of context between employees within the organization often leads to frustration on both sides and can drive customers to take their business to a competitor that is perceived as more responsive.
- **Sales team performance:** The need for sales and customer support teams to manually log calls and caller information into the CRM application is a major productivity thief. This need to waste time entering and collecting information from multiple applications can also add to employee frustration with doing the same thing multiple times—without understanding why.

- **Increased time to complete tasks:** Wasted time translates to lower efficiency and performance, making it difficult for management to understand the true nature of employee performance across the organization.

In all, productivity losses due to communication disconnects lead to a worse engagement experience for both employees and customers. What should be a win-win can quickly become a lose-lose situation.

COMMUNICATIONS IN CONTEXT

Fortunately, modern communications tools have evolved to help address the productivity challenges that multiple applications can spawn. New UCaaS offerings can provide integrations that empower a new kind of contextual productivity, without the need to modify business or productivity applications to achieve higher levels of connectivity. UCaaS offerings from companies like Vonage offer new levels of integrations that eliminate the need to move previously siloed data between business applications, productivity apps and the UC platform itself.

This can unlock productivity in applications like Salesforce.com, Zoho and many others in several ways. For example, contacts and communications can begin in the UC console itself, and that interaction can *automatically* create or update data in CRM or line-of-business applications. No more cut-and-paste or doing the same data entry multiple times.

New UCaaS solutions offer powerful application programming interfaces (APIs) that go even further by allowing a business to integrate business-specific homegrown applications with the UCaaS platform, existing CRMs and other applications—quickly and simply.



CRM CASE STUDY

A major auto-body parts manufacturer has an inside sales team that must manage a nationwide dealer network. Reaching out to dealers at the point of sale was a very time-consuming task, and sales management couldn't track the effectiveness or productivity of employees, who relied on both CRM and a line-of-business application. By upgrading to Vonage UCaaS, not only was the sales team able to speed customer interactions, but management used the Vonage reports and analysis to determine which customer segments were most profitable and shift focus to those clients. ■

As a result, employees can access at their fingertips and at all times all the pertinent information about a customer, whether that information came from CRM, accounting or line-of-business applications. Content in context translates to more efficient transactions. Even better, it no longer matters where application workloads reside. UCaaS is a truly hybrid platform that integrates with on-premises, SaaS and cloud-based applications and data. For example, business application objects like Salesforce campaigns or cases can now be accessed within the UCaaS application without the need for additional customization. No more toggling between screens, applications or application interfaces.

Modern UCaaS can also offer deeper, unexpected benefits. By collecting, analyzing and delivering reports on data that spans applications and data silos, UCaaS provides insights that deliver new business benefits, by spotting trends, uncovering customer service or sales engagement hot spots, and ultimately providing management with new tools for improving productivity and efficiency. This bonus value often ends up as a bottom-line increase in profitability—to management's delight.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

What should businesses look for when choosing or upgrading unified communications—especially when moving to UCaaS? Here are six key factors to consider:

1. **A single interface for all business applications:**
Once a business adds an application integration, it should immediately become available in the user interface to every user. Users or IT should not have to individually install each integration on their systems or user account.



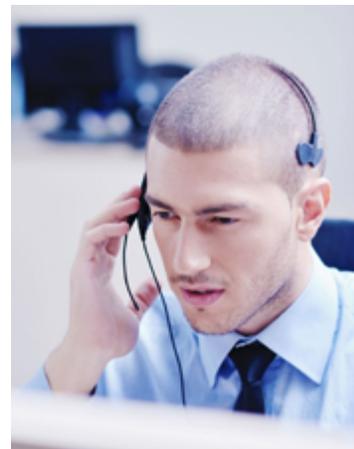
2. **Richer data interactions across all business applications:** Access to business application objects such as Salesforce cases or campaigns should be accessible within the UCaaS application without the need for additional customization. Additionally, enhanced workflow management features should include at least the ability to pull data from all customizable data points in any business or productivity application.
3. **Extended call handling, control and logging:** The UCaaS platform should allow calls to be initiated from either the integration interface or the business application itself, so users don't have to continually switch apps, screens or context. Additionally, all the UCaaS advanced call control capabilities should extend to calls related to business applications. And for continuity's sake, calls should be automatically logged in real time in the corresponding business application to save time and effort.
4. **Seamless contact management and follow-up scheduling:** Look for a solution that offers the ability to manage multiple business application contacts from within a single interface. The platform should easily answer calls and simultaneously pull up contact records in the corresponding business application to speed service. Finally, the ability to quickly schedule the next tasks, follow-ups and appointments while still on a call will provide a huge productivity boost.
5. **Integrated reporting capabilities:** For maximum efficiency and silo-busting, call data should be automatically synchronized into a business application's native reporting dashboards and features, allowing management to select their reporting tool of choice to keep updated.

6. **Mobile device compatibility:** Because employees are increasingly using multiple devices during any given day, the ability for calls to be made and handled across devices without losing context or data integration with business applications is critical to adoption, especially among millennials and younger team members.

ABOUT VONAGE

Vonage is one of the leaders of UCaaS worldwide. By leveraging its consumer roots, Vonage has been able to crack the code on the future of business communication. Vonage offers highly personalized solutions for UCaaS and understands that even small to midsize legal, retail, finance and healthcare organizations have the need for a UC solution that breaks down application silos and integrates seamlessly with both productivity and business applications, wherever they may reside.

The Vonage Integration Suite offers advanced contact management, enhanced call control and note-taking features, and robust in-application help and support, all designed to create a better overall integration experience for business professionals and IT alike. With Vonage, businesses can quickly view and analyze customer interactions as well as team and individual performance, and managers can use *automatically* logged call data to see real-time inbound or outbound call performance and metrics.



Furthermore, call notifications through richly designed screen pop-ups means sales and support teams know exactly *who* is calling and potentially know *why* they are calling, based on previous call history and context.

NEXT STEPS

The Vonage Integration Suite can provide employees with better context, simplify their communications and logging for every interaction, and drive productivity up while delivering management real-time data on top performers and reliable business intelligence at every level—representative, customer or segment. To learn about how a Vonage integration can help your business achieve higher levels of productivity—and profitability—visit vonage.com/business.