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***Small Business
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FOR
DUMMIES®
AVAYA 2ND CUSTOM EDITION

**by Joseph Kelly and
Lawrence C. Miller, CISSP**



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Introduction



All successful small businesses have one thing in common: They know how to make the most of the resources available to them.

Whatever sets you apart — whether it's your products and services, your customer support, your employees, or your superb financial management — you need to be constantly on the lookout for the smartest ways of taking advantage of it.

But what if there was a solution specifically designed to help you do that? Imagine, a single solution that, when used effectively, offers a great way to help attract new customers, increase revenues, develop more repeat business, or keep overhead in check.

Impossible? Not at all. In fact, that very solution may be sitting on your desk right now: it's your small business communications system. If you are like most business owners or managers, you don't think of your office communications system as something that can help your business grow. But that may be because you're not aware of how much communications systems have changed in recent years.

Today's communications systems are more like computers than traditional phone systems. These new communications systems run over the same wiring as computers, accept applications, and connect directly to business processes. And perhaps best of all, they unify your communications, bringing together your phone, e-mail, instant messaging, video, and more. That's why investing in a new communications system is one of the smartest decisions any small business can make. Interested? Read on. This book will help you think differently about your communications system, and how it can help your business grow and prosper.

About This Book

Small Business Unified Communications For Dummies, Avaya 2nd Custom Edition, provides an in-depth overview of how you can use today's small business communications systems to unify communications to help your business grow. The book is written for nontechnical readers such as small business owners and key managers in small and medium-size companies (defined here as a business or organization with 250 or fewer employees).

How This Book Is Organized

We've organized this book into five chapters, each written to stand on its own, so that you don't necessarily have to read it from start to finish. Feel free to jump in wherever it makes the most sense for you.

Chapter 1: What Is Unified Communications?

In Chapter 1, we explain Unified Communications — what it is and what it can do for you. Here you get introduced to some of the core capabilities of Unified Communications.

Chapter 2: How Will Unified Communications Help My Small Business?

In Chapter 2, we take a more in-depth look at the challenges you're facing as a small business — how to increase sales, improve productivity, lower costs — and how a Unified Communications solution can make an impact in those areas for both your business and your employees.

Chapter 3: Choosing the Right Unified Communications Capabilities

Chapter 3 helps you create a Unified Communications strategy for your business. Here you get a step-by-step and employee-by-employee approach to understanding how to get the Unified Communications capabilities that will fit your needs.

Chapter 4: Do I Really, Really Need Unified Communications?

In Chapter 4, we explain why you might be skeptical about the value of Unified Communications in your business — and if you are, why that could be a big mistake.

Chapter 5: Ten Reasons to Implement Unified Communications

The final chapter, in that famed *For Dummies* style, presents ten very good reasons you should incorporate Unified Communications into your small business — all in an easy-to-follow format.

Icons Used in This Book

You'll occasionally see special icons that call attention to important information. Don't bother double-clicking the page — just perk up and take note! Here's what you can expect.



This icon points out information or a concept that may well be worth committing to your nonvolatile memory, your gray matter, or your noggin' — along with anniversaries and birthdays!



If you're an insufferable insomniac or vying to be the life of the party, pay attention. This icon explains the jargon beneath the jargon and is the stuff legends — well, at least nerds — are made of!



Thank you for reading, hope you enjoy the book, please take care of your writers! Seriously, this icon points out helpful suggestions and useful nuggets of information that may just save you some time and headaches.

Where to Go from Here

Well, if you had pointy ears instead of a pointy chin (like the Dummies Man logo), you might say “logic clearly dictates that you turn the page and start at the beginning.” Instead, we suggest the needs of you outweigh the needs of the many, and this book has been written to meet your needs!

Although you don't have to, we recommend starting with Chapter 1 to gain an understanding of the basics of Unified Communications (UC). We explain some key concepts and define some common terms that will make it easier to follow no matter where you go in the rest of the book. From there, we help you build the business case for UC, choose the right UC capabilities, and prepare your organization for the UC revolution!

Chapter 1

What Is Unified Communications?

.....

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the demand for Unified Communications (UC)
 - ▶ Seeing how UC helps you stay connected
 - ▶ Exploring the heart of UC
 - ▶ Talking about how UC really works
 - ▶ Looking at the benefits of UC in the real world
-

It's hard to believe how much communications has changed in recent years. Before cell phones, people rushed from payphone to payphone to stay in touch. Before e-mail, you depended on fax machines and overnight delivery services if you needed to send a document quickly. Want to send a quick text message to someone? In the old days you trundled down to the local telegraph office. Now, you can just use instant messaging.

Getting all these new forms of communications working together is what Unified Communications (UC) is all about. In this chapter, we present a broad overview of UC: what it is and what it can do for you and your small business.

Understanding Why You Need Unified Communications

Communication has become faster, easier, and more convenient. But, paradoxically, it has also become more complex. Hmm, simpler *and* more complex. How can that be?

To begin with, you have all of these great ways to communicate — desk phones, cell phones, smartphones, your home phone, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), and so on — but they don't necessarily work together. Instead, they operate largely independently and unaware of each other, with little or no integration between systems, devices, and applications.

Not only do these devices not work together, but more and more often, people don't work together either. The world has become such a mobile workforce that today people work from just about anywhere — an office cubicle, a home office or coffee shop, a hotel room, or even an airport terminal. The fact is, work isn't where you are, it's what you do!

As a result of these two momentous developments — more communications options and more mobility — knowing how to simply “reach out and touch someone” has become a lot more difficult. A customer or colleague urgently trying to contact you may leave a voicemail on your office phone, send an e-mail to your personal mailbox, and send a text or IM, before finally reaching you on your cell phone — assuming, of course, that this person had your office phone number, your various e-mail addresses, your IM handle, and your cell phone number all readily available — and the time and patience to try them all!

There is, of course, a solution: You can use your small business communications systems to unify your communications, and you can make it simple for your employees to choose the right device, at the right time and in the right place. Now, you can get everything working together to make reaching your customers, partners, and suppliers — and letting them know how to reach you — as simple as entering a single phone number or address, and letting the *technology* rather than your fingers do the “walking.”

Understanding UC and How It Helps You Stay Connected

UC allows you to easily stay in touch with the people who are most important to your business: your customers, your colleagues, and your suppliers . . . anytime, anywhere, using just

about any device that's appropriate at the time. It simplifies communications so that your customers find it easier to get in touch with you.

UC frees you up to do business where and when you need to, under just about any circumstances. With just your laptop and an Internet connection, UC lets you receive calls that come in to your office right on your laptop, and to make calls that look like they're coming from your office phone. No one will ever know that you're working while curled up next to your fireplace!

UC breaks through the technical barriers of modern communications to help increase the productivity of your employees, lower your business costs, and delight your customers. Can one technology really do all that? The answer is *yesss!*

Exploring the Basics of UC

In the old days, communications systems were designed to efficiently and reliably deliver voice signals. Today, those voice signals are converted into the 1s and 0s of digital communications. Your voice conversation is digitized and transmitted in roughly the same way as any other data file, such as a document, an e-mail, an IM, and so on.

UC is the convergence of all these digital forms of communications — voice, video, Web, desktop, and mobile communications — through a communications system that's based on IP (Internet Protocol), which is the same protocol that helps power the Internet.

When people refer to UC, they generally expect it to include the following:

- ✔ **Telephony/voice communications:** The basic phone call might still be the most powerful form of communications — efficient, easy-to-do, inexpensive. It's the foundation of any UC strategy.
- ✔ **Unified messaging:** Voicemail and e-mail are the ways you communicate when you can't reach someone in real time (that is, instantly.) The convergence of voicemail and e-mail, with access to both messaging functions on

many devices and through a single mailbox, is called *unified messaging* and is a critical part of UC.

- ✔ **Chat/IM:** Instant messaging (IM) started in the consumer world, but it has rapidly evolved into a business tool and plays a big role in UC.
- ✔ **Conferencing/multimedia conferencing:** The ability to quickly bring large groups of people together on a conference call, as well as video and Web conferencing, are key ways UC can increase efficiency and productivity in any organization.
- ✔ **Fixed-mobile convergence (FMC):** If UC is nothing else, it's the ability to seamlessly move calls back and forth between your business phone system and your mobile communications system. That's what FMC, or fixed mobile convergence, is all about.
- ✔ **Mobile client:** A "softphone" application, which allows you to manage calls on your PC, is another key way UC facilitates anytime, anywhere communication.
- ✔ **Presence:** With so many people working in so many different locations, you need "presence," which is the ability to see someone's availability (that is, to know that they are present, not absent) and their communications preference.
- ✔ **Contact centers:** A contact center lets you set up special call routing and handling for sales, service, or some other functions. It used to be that only big companies could afford contact centers, but today's small business communications systems do it, too, providing *screen pops* (which allow you to view customer information on your PC screen right as the customer is calling in) and other enhanced features that enable customer service agents to streamline and improve service.

Seeing Unified Communications in Action

Now that you have a pretty good idea of what UC is, what it does, and what you can probably expect to find included in a UC solution, here's a look at a few examples of UC in action.

Using one phone number for everything

Knowing how to reach someone used to be pretty easy. You simply called the number listed on the person's business card. Now it's more likely that you have to choose from a list of numbers: office, mobile, virtual office (home), fax, and so on. It's more than an inconvenience and in situations where it's important to reach someone in a hurry, this can be a real problem.

Older communications systems were not much help because they were designed for one-to-one communication: dial one number, have a conversation, end the call. But today's IP-based communications systems have the ability to create a connection to more than one device at a time. Now you can give out just one number — your main office number — and your communications system knows to simultaneously route an incoming call to your mobile, home, or other phone.

This single number access is known as *one number reachability*, and it's a real advantage. Callers need to remember only one number and still know that they'll be able to reach you (provided you want to be reached, that is). Also, because all phone contact goes through your main office number, and not your personal numbers, the process is more professional. Your employees don't need to give out their home or cell phone numbers, and yet they're still easily reached. Plus, this feature allows you to easily screen out unimportant calls and have voice messages and/or faxes automatically routed appropriately.

Simplifying call handling

How you handle incoming calls, or your *call coverage*, is one of the most important challenges for any business. Should calls be handled first by a receptionist or an automated attendant? Should a call be routed to an assistant, voicemail, mobile phone, home phone, or some other destination? Does it depend on who is calling or the time of day?

Older phone systems provided reliable call coverage, but they were limited in their flexibility. Say that your business used more than one incoming number (for two different sales

operations, for example). Older phone systems were not good at allowing you to easily move calls around so if you had two different numbers, it was almost like having two different phone systems. Or, say you wanted to be able to take calls at home. With an older phone system, you could set up call forwarding, but it wasn't seamless and you wouldn't have access to all of the features available with your office phone.

Because today's IP-based small business communications systems are more like computers, it is easier to program them with a range of call coverage options. You can set up simple rules to route calls directly to voicemail, to an assistant or receptionist, to a call center, or to almost anyplace else. You can define rules that handle calls differently based on who is calling, what number they are calling, the time of day, whether the call is internal or external, or whether your phone is busy. You can easily set up the system to ring your phone at home or any other location and have instant access to all your speed dials and other tools.

In effect, today's small business communications let you adapt call coverage to the needs of your business, rather than to the limitations of the phone system's capabilities.



You can have an incoming call routed to an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system that can ask the caller questions and, based on the caller's response, make decisions about how to handle the call. This can be an ideal way to increase the productivity and efficiency of your staff, especially if you have a high volume of calls with more, shall we say "mundane" inquiries, such as for office or store hours, directions to your office, and the like.

Managing your messages

Voicemail is critical in any business because voicemail makes it easy for people to "talk" to you at any time. But voicemail is also an example of how communications has become both more convenient and more complicated.

How many voicemail boxes are "managed" every day in your business? Each mailbox has to be set up and each greeting needs to be regularly updated. They all have to be frequently checked for new messages, and each one is probably accessed differently. And, forget transferring, forwarding, or replying to a voicemail between systems — just try to

remember that delete is “6” on your cellular voicemail system and “7” on your office voicemail system . . . or is that the other way around? Oops!

Today, messaging is often a hodgepodge of independent systems and service providers, largely lacking interoperability. UC on your office phone system can essentially eliminate these “islands” of messaging communications. Here’s how:

- ✔ Instead of having to maintain numerous voicemail systems, you have a single voicemail system that you can access from anywhere.
- ✔ A voicemail left on your office phone system can be digitized and e-mailed to your smartphone, where you can click and listen to it.
- ✔ With *text-to-speech* capabilities, you can have your e-mail messages read to you at the same time you’re accessing your voice messages.
- ✔ Increasingly, today’s small business communications systems are capable of visual voicemail. You can sort, scan, and review your messages, skipping to the ones that are most important, rather than having to listen to them in the order in which they were received.

Getting all your messaging working together is a major advantage of UC. It saves you the time of checking and managing multiple in-boxes, and it keeps you instantly in the loop for important messages.

Letting others know if you’re available

With today’s small business phone systems, you can specify your communications preferences and availability, letting customers and coworkers know when you’re present (that is, available) before they even try calling you.

This feature — known as *presence and availability* (or simply *presence*) — makes it easier for a caller to reach someone who’s available and willing to be called. Presence enables people to inform others of their status (letting them know, for example, that they are “on the phone,” “busy,” “out of the office” or not to disturb them). It lets potential callers know

if you are reachable or not before a communication session even begins. Callers can decide to call back later, leave a message, or reach you through another method, such as e-mail. It works to increase productivity by making it easier to reach people more efficiently.



Presence is not limited to a single person; it can also apply to a group of people (for example, Finance) or a device (for example, Phone Status = On the Phone or Off the Phone).

Conferencing: It's more than just three-way calling

The use of conference calling has grown tremendously, particularly as more people are mobile and working remotely. When something needs to be decided and time is at a premium, there is nothing like a conference call to get all the right people together and talking. Some small business communications systems (such as Avaya's IP Office) have their own built-in conference bridges. You can use this capability to instantly set up a conference call anytime, anywhere, using any phone. Not only is such a system convenient, but it's also a money-saver because it eliminates the fees you pay to outside conferencing services. A company that holds just a couple of conference calls a day will see a rapid return on its investment in this solution.

Built-in conferencing capabilities can provide

- ✔ **Multimedia capabilities:** In addition to the audio call, you can broadcast documents (for example, Web pages, PowerPoint slides, Word docs, and so on).
- ✔ **Conference call-out:** The conferencing system calls out to the meeting host and participants instead of having everyone dial in. No more searching for dial-in numbers and access codes — just answer the phone when it rings.
- ✔ **Integrated scheduling:** When someone organizes a conference call, the conference information can be included in an e-mail invitation, and the participants' calendars are automatically updated.
- ✔ **Click-to-call, click-to-conference:** You can dial a number or join a conference directly from your Web browser or e-mail application.

✔ **Connecting your desk with your device:** Conference organizers can — in real time — control video and audio aspects of the conference. Participants with rich media capabilities can see the video, hear the audio, view the application sharing, and so on, while participants on less capable devices, such as a cell phone, will receive only the capabilities that are enabled on their device.

Mobilizing your desk phone

Everyone today wants the flexibility of easily working anywhere. That's why today's small business communications systems allow you to turn any home or mobile phone into an actual office extension. The features that make communications so easy back at the office now "follow" you anywhere. It's like taking your office phone with you, wherever you are — without the office commute.

Calls to your office desk phone can ring simultaneously on your mobile phone (or any other phone for that matter). Calls can be managed on your cell phone, just as though you were in the office: you can forward calls, put them on hold, toggle between two calls, conference in other people, transfer the call to another phone, and more. It's just like you're in the office.

And if you're using a smart mobile device, your cell phone can function even more like your desk phone by routing calls through your office phone system, thereby saving on toll charges (especially for international calling). Because all calls go through the office phone system, there's no issue with allocating expenses. Such call routing also means you can maintain better customer records, such as who called, when, and for how long.

Reaping the Benefits from UC

Do these capabilities sound great, kind of nice, or *fugetaboutit*, you're not interested? Your answer probably depends on whether you can see the value UC can provide to your business. In the next chapter, we take a brief look at some of the challenges you are likely facing as a small business and how these and other UC features just described can help you solve them.

Case study: Leftfield Pictures

Leftfield Pictures, a producer of television shows based in New York City, is credited with a list of top-rated shows. But when it came to operating efficiently, Leftfield realized it was coming up short and quickly focused on its communications system.

- ✔ There was no Caller ID or easy way for callers to get connected directly to a Leftfield staff person.
 - ✔ Leftfield producers on location who wanted to collaborate effectively with their colleagues back in the edit room were constantly juggling their mobiles, the office communications system, e-mail, and IM.
 - ✔ There was no way to tell who was calling or who was available to talk, so that information had to be relayed and referenced manually.
 - ✔ To keep in touch with productions in progress throughout the country — the company lives on conference calls — they had to pay an outside company to host them. This use of an outside company resulted in high costs.
 - ✔ Simply answering and transferring calls kept one Leftfield staff person busy all day.
- ✔ All Leftfield staff members now have their own extension and can be easily reached through the company directory.
 - ✔ Staff can see at a glance who is available and how best to reach them, via e-mail, mobile, chat, and so on. This has improved efficiency in the business and its customer service.
 - ✔ When a call comes in, staff can have their office and mobile communications ring simultaneously, so that they don't miss a call simply by being away from their desk. If the call isn't picked up, the voicemail gets digitized and sent as an attachment to an e-mail to be picked up anywhere.
 - ✔ Conference calls are now hosted on the IP Office system, eliminating the need for outside conferencing services.
 - ✔ Enabling calls to go directly to the right person has freed up staff to handle higher priority tasks.

Even though its old communications system was still in fine working order, Leftfield decided to make the move to IP-based communications, using an Avaya IP Office solution.

Leftfield Pictures estimates that the Avaya IP Office solution has cut communications management time in half and made the company “easier to do business with” while saving \$50,000 a year.

Want to learn more? See the video about Leftfield Pictures at www.avaya.com/usa/resource/assets/casestudies/Avaya_071710_DM.wmv

Chapter 2

How Will Unified Communications Help My Small Business?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Realizing how UC affects your business
 - ▶ Looking at the real-world benefits of UC
-

Unifying your communications is unquestionably convenient. Getting your mobile phone working with your office phone and e-mail, simplifying and lowering the cost of conference calls, being able to be reached anytime, anywhere you happen to be, adding video communications — it's all great.

But if this was just about communications, you might decide that it was an interesting new technological development, but one that you will look into further when you have more time. Instead, Unified Communications (UC) is not just about communications. It's not just a new twist on the old phone system. In fact, if you simply look at UC as a faster, simpler way to stay in touch, you'll be missing the boat.

In this chapter, we show you how far-reaching a Unified Communications solution can be and how it can help your business succeed.

Understanding How UC Changes the Game

UC is a game changer when it comes to running a small business. UC affects everything: the products and services you offer, the support you provide to customers, the productivity of your employees, your hiring strategies, decisions about real estate, and more. To understand how UC affects everything, ask yourself:

- ✔ Do you have a well-run business with efficient processes? UC can make you more efficient.
- ✔ Do you take customer service seriously and allocate time and resources to it? UC will enhance your customer service.
- ✔ Do you hire great people who are ready to respond to any challenge? UC will give them the tools they need to be even more responsive.

UC takes your existing strengths and transforms how you deliver them — by helping make your business operate more efficiently, by reducing expenses, by enabling your people to be more responsive to customers and each other, and by giving you an added measure of flexibility in managing the peaks and valleys of business expansion and contraction.

Intrigued? Read on and discover a whole new way to think about your business communications system.

Increasing sales

Increasing sales is always a priority in a small business. *Scaling your business* — getting more sales without a commensurate increase in overhead — is the holy grail of business success. UC can help by reducing or eliminating missed sales opportunities. Here are three key ways UC can make this happen.

No more missed sales calls

Say that your top sales person steps out for lunch and misses a call from a new sales prospect. If you're lucky, the prospect will leave a message. But today, it is just as likely that the prospect will move on to one of your competitors, leaving you with a missed potential sale. Plus, it may be more than that.

Think of the money and effort you invested to get that prospect to call, possibly thousands or tens of thousands of dollars on a Web site, banner ads, pay-per-click advertising, and direct mail, just to name a few. Now it's all down the drain simply because your sales rep happened to step away for a few moments.

But what if incoming calls rang simultaneously on an office extension and on a mobile or home phone, or any other number you designate. Then the sales rep would have no reason to miss a call simply because she's away from her desk. Even if the sales rep can't engage with the prospect at that moment, that personal connection is made.

The best strategy for increasing sales is to get your sales representatives connected to an incoming caller as quickly as possible. UC can help you do just that.

Make it easy to do business with your company

Imagine that a major customer regularly deals with one specific sales rep, but becomes frustrated because there is no direct way of reaching that sales person. Instead, the customer has to call the main office number and be routed. It's annoying, especially when the call ends up in the wrong department. But what if your communications system provided direct dial to specific employees and also made it easy to find an employee with a simple directory. By increasing the chance of a smooth, efficient, responsive customer interaction, you enhance the image of your company in ways that can lead to measureable business improvement. Best of all, it doesn't cost you anything to do this: It's part of the built-in intelligence of today's small business communications systems.

Improve quality

There is no simple formula for sales success, but training and practice are proven ways of increasing win rates. Analyzing the performance of your sales reps to find out what's working and what's not is a great way of getting the material you need to help raise the overall level of sales.

Today's UC solutions make improving quality much easier in at least two ways:

- ✓ **Simplifying call recording:** With today's UC systems, you can set up the system to record calls randomly or in a set sequence and have the recordings instantly

available to managers, right in an e-mail inbox. You can analyze the recordings, searching for key words to find out quickly what's working and what's not. You can also make it easy for managers to monitor calls and jump in to help close a sale when the need arises.

- ✓ **Detailed call reporting:** Today's small business communications systems can also provide detailed reports on the number of incoming and outgoing calls, average wait times, time spent on calls, dropped calls, where calls are originating from, and more. All of this is vital for evaluating your sales efforts. Remember, "to manage it, you need to measure it" and today's communications systems will help you do that.

Supporting productive mobility

Many of your employees probably spend a lot of their time away from their desks. They might be at a client's office, at an airport en route to close a deal, or negotiating a buying agreement with a supplier. Or, they could be stuck at home in severe weather or sitting in their cars in traffic. Basically, they could be anywhere! The question is what happens to their productivity when they aren't in the office in front of their computer, next to their phone?

There are also times when it's actually better for employees to stay home. Who hasn't had a dedicated employee come into the office sneezing, wheezing, and coughing, potentially infecting others (or at least creating some paranoia) and who then still ends up out sick for a couple of days? This scenario is known as *presenteeism*, which is when employees feel compelled to be in the office, even when they're sick or stressed, but would be better off not coming in at all.



According to an Avaya study, 72 percent of small business owners say employee sick days and stress are the top two contributors to lost productivity, more than 20 percent are severely impacted by inclement weather and power outages (six or more days per year), and 13 percent agree that unscheduled absences cost their businesses as much as \$20,000 annually in lost productivity.

The good news is that UC can help you recover some of that lost productivity by enabling your people to be accessible, responsive, and productive in just about any circumstance.

And, UC can deliver benefits to your employees that can be the equivalent of a substantial raise.

UC enables employees to work from home and to have complete access to the communications tools they have in the office. They can make and receive calls using just their laptops and their home phones — through an application on their laptops that interfaces with their home phones. They have access to their speed-dial numbers, can conference in colleagues or customers, and can transfer calls as though in the office.

Such a benefit not only positively impacts their work-life balance, but it also saves them commuting costs, dry cleaning bills, and restaurant meals. That's a nice perk to offer your employees; one that puts money right back into their pockets — and gives them more time to enjoy it!

It's also a proven way of supporting a more energy-efficient workplace. Enabling employees to work from home even just one day a week can deliver tremendous benefits to the environment. A typical yearly commute contributes about 5,000 pounds of harmful carbon emissions and about 400 gallons of fuel. Taking advantage of UC to offer your employees the opportunity to occasionally work from home can provide real savings and benefits to your business and the environment.

Reducing expenses

It goes without saying that in a challenging global economy, businesses of all types and sizes are taking a close look at costs. But did you know that UC can play an active, ongoing role in helping you manage and reduce expenses?

For example, real estate costs for a business can really add up: your lease, utilities, furniture and office equipment, to name a few. The industry average for facilities costs for a small business is about \$5,000 per employee, per year. Using UC to enable your employees to work from home can generate real bottom line benefits:

- ✔ When it comes time to renew your lease, you might be able to take less space (by allowing some or even all of your employees to work from home).
- ✔ If you were thinking of expanding, you could decide to stay in that same space rather than moving to larger offices.

You might end up saving thousands of dollars a month in rental costs alone, not to mention furniture, equipment, and utilities.

Lowering real estate costs is just one way that UC can generate savings that can actually pay the expense of moving to a new communications system. Here are some other examples:

- ✔ **Lower mobile phone/long-distance bills:** Today's small business communications systems open the door to a wide range of options for better managing your company's mobile phone and long-distance charges by routing calls through the system and over broadband (Internet) links.
- ✔ **Handle more calls with fewer people:** Instead of using staff time to answer incoming calls, rely on the built-in intelligence of your communications system to route calls quickly and accurately. Make more productive and effective use of your most important resource.
- ✔ **Eliminate conference calling fees:** Some of today's small business communications systems make every day conferencing affordable and practical by providing a built-in conferencing bridge. You can eliminate fees to third-party conferencing providers.
- ✔ **Simplify administration tools:** Being able to easily perform moves, adds, or changes to your communications system will help you cut back on any existing expense you are currently incurring for this kind of administration.
- ✔ **Centralize administration:** For businesses with more than one location, you can administer the communications system at each site from a central location. No need to have an administrator at every site, which is typically a major cost savings.

Understanding How UC Provides Real-World Benefits

How exactly will your business benefit from UC? How will it drive more sales, raise productivity, and cut costs for you?

Some benefits are easy to quantify in advance. For example, if you are paying for outside conferencing services or you regularly have technical support coming in to re-administer

the phone system, you'll see savings in those areas right away. If you are devoting significant staff time to handling calls or are actually missing sales calls because of inadequate call coverage, you will see benefits right away in those areas as well.

But often the most dramatic benefits are the ones that weren't anticipated. That's because UC is not so much a technology as a way of adapting technology to the needs of your specific business. UC lets you take the many communications options that are available to you and gets them all working together.

When you begin to imagine and then implement new business plans and ideas because of UC, then you know it's really working.

Case study: Pet WOW Veterinary Clinic

Pet WOW is a nearly 40-year-old family business and currently the largest animal hospital serving Northern Kentucky and the Cincinnati, Ohio, area. Since 1998, it's been on a rapid growth curve with the addition of a pet grooming business and also a mobile veterinary practice — a fully-equipped van that brings the vet to the patients for examinations, vaccinations, follow-up care, and more.

As Pet WOW expanded, so did its communications and before long it had three different phone systems (one for the hospital/clinic, one for grooming, and one for the mobile practice). The situation was increasingly unworkable because each system had different functionality. In times of high volume, it was easy to forget which phone was for what business. There was no way to page people when calls came in

and no way to transfer calls from one system to another.

That has all changed now by replacing the three systems with a new IP-based, small business communications solution — the Avaya IP Office system.

With Avaya IP Office, Pet WOW routes all calls through one contact center. The operators know immediately what the person is calling about based on the number dialed. The contact center consists of two full-time operators onsite and two people working in home offices.

"The capability to extend full functionality to receptionists working at home has solved a big problem of covering the phones during peak hours," said Shandon Stamper, a co-owner of the practice. "Whether they are in the office or working from home, the operators are equipped with software

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that enables them to answer, route, and manage calls with point-and-click controls on their PCs.”

The phone system also streamlines the connection between pet owners and the physicians treating the animals. When pet owners call and ask to speak to a vet, the call is typically handled by a designated “call handler,” who listens, responds (if possible), and relays the message to the doctor. If a call is urgent, it is also immediately forwarded to the doctor and displayed on a large screen in the clinic’s operating area. This method of call handling results in satisfying and productive communications that make the best use of everyone’s time.

The ability to extend IP Office communications capabilities to Pet WOW’s mobile vans was one of the major innovations of the new phone system. Originally the vans used cell phones and broadband cards for the computers. Now each van is equipped with an IP phone that is just another extension on the office phone system.

Administrators at the practice also use the “one number reachability”

capability of Avaya IP Office: Incoming calls are directed to the administrator’s mobile (or home or other phone). Administrators appreciate not having to give out their personal mobile numbers for business use. Voice messages taken by the office phone are transmitted to the administrator’s e-mail and are available right away on their smartphone.

The Avaya IP Office solution has streamlined operations and delivered real bottom line benefits. According to Shandon Stamper: “We could not be doing the revenue we do right now with the staff that we have without the capabilities that Avaya IP Office provides for us. The way that translates into hard dollars is in the amount we save on the staff that would be required to do all the processing that the system does. We believe that it would take anywhere from five to eight additional people, so our savings translate into well over \$200,000 a year.”

Want to learn more? See the video about Pet WOW at www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhTlwUscnZ4.

Chapter 3

Choosing the Right Unified Communications Capabilities

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing communications that meet your business' needs
 - ▶ Selecting the right communications for your employees
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In Chapters 1 and 2, we discuss the ways in which your business can benefit from Unified Communications (UC). If you've read those chapters, you know that UC is big — and the impact can be far reaching. But, what is the best way to choose the right UC solution for your business, particularly when there are people in your business who have very different needs and requirements? In this chapter, we give you an easy, two-step approach that's sure to put you well on your way to finding a solution that meets your needs.

Evaluating Your Business' Needs

While choosing the right small business communications system may seem like a daunting task, it doesn't have to be. Although everyone in your business takes communications seriously and they all have very specific requirements, if you approach this process in an organized way, it can be quite simple.

Follow this two-step approach for doing so:

1. Start by understanding which of three categories your business falls into:

- Just getting started
- Seeking a competitive edge
- Focused on customers

Once you identify your category, you'll have an idea of the key capabilities you need to look for.

2. Now, consider the different types of employees in your business.

Are they executives (or what you might call “power users”; people with extensive communications needs), mobile sales people, receptionists, customer service agents and their supervisors, and so on.

Each type has slightly different requirements so understanding what each one needs will help you cover all the bases when choosing a solution.

Now that you know what steps to follow, you're seconds away from getting started.



Typically, small business communications systems have specific capacities: they handle a certain number of incoming lines, connect a certain number of phone sets, support a certain number of voice mailboxes, and so on. Although it's critical to get the right capacity, this needn't be a big issue; it's likely that a system has been engineered to meet your capacity needs. It's more important to focus on the features and capabilities that are right for your business, all of which depend on what kind of business you are.

The following sections cover three typical scenarios. Decide which one applies to you and use that as your starting point.

Just getting started

You're a start-up business that's just getting off the ground, and you have a lot of things on your mind. You want to keep your costs down while still getting the essential call-handling capabilities your growing business will need. Simplicity and convenience are critical, but so is the ability to handle incoming calls 24/7/365. You know that your business will grow, but worrying about how big you might become in five or ten years

is too much to think about. Right now, you just want a solution that won't lock you in to some arbitrary limit.

When it comes to communications, your must-haves probably include

- ✔ Basic call handling, such as hold and transfer
- ✔ Voicemail
- ✔ Caller ID
- ✔ The ability for callers to dial by name or extension
- ✔ An automated attendant to answer and route calls automatically
- ✔ Conference calls (a few parties, possibly five)

Seeking a competitive edge

If you're in this category, you've moved beyond the start-up phase and are looking at how you can use your phone system to enable your staff to work more effectively, collaborate easily, and respond quickly to customers and colleagues — in short, all of the things that go into developing a competitive edge. You're very forward-thinking, you know that your business is growing, and you want a solution that keeps expanding as your needs change and evolve. And even though you need more than just the basics, you still want a communications solution that's easy and cost effective to manage.

Your must-haves include all the basics, plus things like:

- ✔ **More sophisticated voicemail:** The ability to handle a dozen or more simultaneous calls, broadcast a single voicemail to all the mailboxes across your business, and have voicemail messages “find” you.
- ✔ **“Meet Me” conferencing:** Built-in conference calling capability that goes beyond a handful of callers, allowing you to have dozens of people on the line if need be.
- ✔ **Robust, automated call routing:** A robust set of call-handling capabilities for routing incoming calls automatically; able to be customized by time of day, day of week, or specific callers — recognizing callers and delivering personalized messages to them.

- ✔ **Call recording:** Built-in recording of incoming or outgoing calls for quality control, training, compliance issues, and more.

Focused on customers

Winning new customers makes your company grow. Keeping customers loyal and satisfied makes your company profitable. If your business is in this category, you want a communications system with advanced customer service features. The right communications solution will enable you to improve your service and satisfaction levels, identify more sales opportunities, and control how much you spend.

When you boil it all down, what you need is a communications solution that takes the features that have always been available to big companies on very expensive communications systems and repackages them for a small business. In effect, you want everything any small business needs, plus reporting and call-handling capabilities that allow you to:

- ✔ **View agent status and productivity:** Get real-time and historical information on call queues, hold times, dropped calls, agent status, performance, and more.
- ✔ **Manage marketing performance:** Get real-time insights into how marketing campaigns are performing so that resources can be adjusted (if necessary) to maximize on the investment — for example, capture information such as the customer's telephone number and location.
- ✔ **Selectively retrieve recorded calls:** If you are serious about customer service, you'll want call recording *and* the ability to easily and securely manage those recordings — for example, retrieving them from any PC by searching by date, time, extension number, and more.
- ✔ **Automate popular inquiries:** Free up valuable time for customer service reps by providing customers with easy-to-use caller menus for fast and efficient responses to commonly-asked questions such as office or store hours, directions to your office, and so on.
- ✔ **Create self service menus:** Improve responsiveness to customers and continue generating revenue even outside of normal business hours by allowing customers to place or change orders, check status of shipments, and more.

Empowering Your Employees

Once you have self-identified your type of business, it's time to turn your attention to the needs of your specific employees. Just about everyone in your business can benefit from UC. But why not get a little more specific? While UC enables everyone to reach out — and be reached — under just about any circumstances, different kinds of workers will find themselves working in different situations.

See if you can recognize employees in your business that fit one or more of the employee profiles that follow. If you're like many small businesses, you probably have at least one of these employee types in your business, and in many cases all of them. Each group has its own unique needs, but they can all benefit from the improvements delivered by UC.

Power users

Power users typically have a laptop computer and are as comfortable working in the office as they are out of it — from their home or car, at the airport, or in a coffee shop — just about anywhere. And they need to be accessible no matter where they are. Think of yourself, your executives, and your key managers.

Some of the key features a power user might be looking for include

- ✔ **One number access:** The ability to give customers and others just one phone number (the office number) and have all calls ring simultaneously on any other phone (mobile, remote office, home), eliminating missed calls.
- ✔ **Control calls from any phone:** The ability to turn any phone into an office phone, with the full complement of features and capabilities available on their office phone.
- ✔ **Turn a laptop into a phone:** With a headset and Internet connection, use point-and-click call control software on a laptop (also known as a “softphone”).
- ✔ **E-mail text-to-speech:** Receive important e-mail messages by having them read over the phone. This is perfect for staying in touch with important e-mails during times when it's inconvenient or even impossible to get e-mail — for example, when driving in the car.

- ✔ **Unified messaging:** Get all messages (voicemail, e-mail, faxes) in a single inbox, speeding up productivity and responsiveness.
- ✔ **Message notification:** Automatically receive notification of new messages and access them via any phone.

Highly mobile sales people

Highly mobile sales people may not have a laptop, but they are frequently out of the office — either meeting with clients or roaming around your facility. You often see these kinds of workers in a real estate office, a manufacturing plant, or an auto dealership, to name a few.

Some of the key features a mobile worker might be looking for include

- ✔ **One number access:** Provide customers and others with just your office phone number and have all calls ring simultaneously on any other phone (mobile, remote office, home), eliminating missed calls and making it unnecessary to give out personal numbers.
- ✔ **Mobility:** A wireless phone that lets them roam throughout the building or campus and still be easily reached as though they're sitting right at their desk.

Full time teleworkers

Full time teleworkers don't have an office in the traditional sense; they work from home exclusively. That doesn't mean they don't need to work as though they are in the office. They need communications tools that make them just as accessible and responsive as employees who work in the office.

With just an Internet connection, your home and remote workers can be a seamless extension of the main office, making it easy for customers and colleagues to reach them. Calls flow through the network to reduce costs (and eliminate variable phone expenses), and real estate requirements can be substantially reduced. Instead of leasing larger office space as your business grows, you can have newly hired employees work from home and keep your rental costs the same. Think about it, your revenues increase, but your costs don't.

Some of the key capabilities teleworkers might be interested in include

- ✔ **Point-and-click call handling:** Intuitive and easy-to-use software to make call handling a snap.
- ✔ **Presence:** These features allow remote workers and their office counterparts to “see” each other’s status: who’s on the phone, away from their desk, busy, and so on.
- ✔ **Recording calls:** Record, archive, and replay calls for monitoring and training purposes and maintain a level of control and connection with your remote workers to ensure productivity remains high.

Office workers

People who primarily work in the office are the prototypical phone user. In today’s high energy work environments, they can benefit from a unique set of communications tools to ensure they work faster and smarter and are as productive as possible at all times.

Here are some of the tools that can benefit an office worker:

- ✔ **Sophisticated call-handling interface:** A PC software program that lets them control calls, access speed dial entries, transfer calls, and conference-in colleagues. Office workers can stay focused on their PC desktop and never miss a beat.
- ✔ **Unified messaging:** The ability to handle all messages from one interface on a PC. See voicemail messages alongside e-mails and faxes and respond to highest priority ones first.
- ✔ **Conferencing:** The ability to create, access, and manage audio conferences with point-and-click simplicity and speed.

Receptionists

These days, many companies have done away with the traditional “receptionist.” Other companies wouldn’t think of doing without one. If you have a dedicated receptionist, this person is often the first point of contact for your customers, and

needs to be able to route calls with great efficiency — even when people are out of the office meeting with clients, working from home, or busy at their desks.

The following features are helpful to a receptionist:

- ✔ **Click-and-drag call handling:** An easy-to-use PC interface helps improve a receptionist's efficiency and effectiveness. Even with large call volumes, a PC interface helps ensure that calls get to the right person quickly.
- ✔ **Visual call status:** The ability to instantly see the status and availability of all associates on the network (who's on the phone, away from their desk, not to be disturbed, and so on) enables receptionists to route calls more efficiently.
- ✔ **Centralized call management:** The ability to handle calls for multiple offices such as transferring calls between locations, adding people to conferences, and managing voicemail messages for associates is appreciated by all.
- ✔ **Call handling for multiple businesses:** When a receptionist manages calls for multiple businesses (for example, in a shared office environment), it is important to be able to quickly and accurately identify callers, greet them appropriately, and route calls to the right business.

Customer service agents

Customer service agents spend their days talking on the phone to customers — selling or helping them resolve issues. Your business may not have a traditional call center, but if you have employees who talk with customers on a daily basis, you've got customer service agents and they need effective communications tools that enable them to:

- ✔ Instantly see information about a caller: name, company, recent sales or customer service issues, and more
- ✔ Monitor the status of time spent on calls, calls in queue, calls on hold, and so on
- ✔ Easily record calls for compliance purposes
- ✔ See the presence status of other call center agents, supervisors, and experts

Customer service supervisors

Customer service supervisors manage your customer service agents, ensuring that customer interactions are as effective as possible, monitoring call volumes, identifying and resolving gaps, and helping representatives to maximize opportunities to sell to or assist your customers.

Some of the key features that help drive better customer service include

- ✔ **Real-time access to information:** Supervisors will benefit from point-and-click, drag-and-drop convenience for obtaining real-time reports on the performance of individual agents or groups of agents (number of calls, time on calls, wait times) or to set alarm notifications and automatically deliver customized reports. They may also benefit from customized reports specific to the business; for example, reports that identify where calls originated, the length of calls, missed or dropped calls, and more.
- ✔ **Recording calls:** Reviewing recorded calls with agents helps supervisors improve agent performance, maintain compliance records, train new employees, and so on. Agents, too, will welcome the opportunity to get information to help them budget their time better based on workload, call queues, and availability of other agents.

Case Study: AmeriMerchant

AmeriMerchant, a fast growing financial services company, knows the importance of customer service first hand. AmeriMerchant provides merchant account funding, enabling small businesses to borrow against future credit card receipts. The company knows that keeping customers on hold for just a few extra seconds can lead them to give up and move on to a competitor. The best growth strategy for AmeriMerchant is to get one of its

sales representatives connected to an incoming caller as quickly as possible.

Taking advantage of one of the most powerful capabilities in the Avaya IP Office solution, AmeriMerchant organized its sales team into a formal contact center.

When a call comes in, AmeriMerchant is committed to engaging a customer within seven seconds. The company offers a range of financial services and uses different 800 numbers. With

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the Avaya IP Office solution, the sales representative instantly knows what the caller is interested in. If it's an existing customer, the Avaya solution automatically triggers the retrieval of the customer's record from the company's CRM solution (salesforce.com.) The days of having callers repeat basic identifying information are over at AmeriMerchant.

Calls to specific sales reps can always get through. If the sales rep has stepped away, the call can automatically ring on a mobile. The system is also set up so that voice mails are automatically forwarded as an attachment to the sales rep's smartphone. If the call center in New York is at capacity, calls are automatically forwarded to AmeriMerchant's San Francisco office.

Because AmeriMerchant is very fax oriented, new agreements have to be faxed and approved before financing can take place. The ability of the Avaya IP solution to handle voice, fax, e-mail, IM and more makes it easy for new financing agreements to be approved quickly.

The power of AmeriMerchant's contact center capabilities goes beyond call routing. At AmeriMerchant, it's a well-defined business unit with specialized software and reporting capabilities to fine-tune performance. AmeriMerchant is able to

carefully evaluate agent workloads and consequently put more focus into outbound calling efforts.

The company also takes advantage of another key capability of Avaya IP Office: call recording. This is a critical way that customer-focused organizations can use their communications system to keep tabs on quality, identifying instances of inaccurate or poorly conveyed information that can negatively impact customer experience. Gaining knowledge through call recording is vital for training purposes.

The functional payback of the Avaya IP Office solution is very tangible on a day-to-day basis at AmeriMerchant:

Sales have gone up since they started using Avaya IP Office. There are one or two deals a month where sales managers hop in on a call that might otherwise be lost.

From a financial point of view, IP Office paid for itself within a year by eliminating additional charges for fax lines and call recording software.

Overall, Avaya's small business communication system gives AmeriMerchant the flexibility to measure its success and map out how it wants to be in the marketplace. To learn more, see the video about AmeriMerchant at www.avaya.com.

Chapter 4

Do I Really, Really Need Unified Communications?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Making the case for unified communications
 - ▶ Realizing that you need a new communications system
-

Unified Communications (UC) is a major advancement in small business communications. As most small business owners know, however, making a change of any type can be difficult. It's easy to come up with a lot of different reasons why you shouldn't make any changes.

In this chapter, you see why many of the arguments *against* implementing UC simply don't hold up.

Examining the Arguments against Change

UC makes it possible for a communications solution to adapt to the specific needs of your business: how you work; where you work; how you want to handle calls, e-mail, and IM; how you want to serve your customers, support teamwork, support collaboration . . . the list is virtually endless.

“Okay,” you might be saying. “I get it. I'm not a Neanderthal. I know communications have changed, but I have other practical reasons for not investing in a new communications system right now.”

Here's a look at some of those very practical, sensible objections that shows you why they might not be so practical and sensible after all.

It's too new

In the 100-plus-year history of telecommunications, the IP-based communications systems that support UC are clearly the new kids on the block. And they will be the newcomers for quite some time. But at this point, the new IP-based communications systems no longer qualify as “new technology” as in the “I’m an early adopter with arrows in my back.”

These systems were first introduced in the 1990s. Since then, they have gotten better and better in terms of performance, flexibility, modularity, feature-functionality, you name it. And they will keep getting better, as all technology does, becoming even faster, smaller, and more robust. Count on it.

Small business owners rightly worry that new technology isn't as reliable as the old stand-bys. But, in the case of communications, this fear is misplaced. In fact, the new IP-based communications systems are at least as reliable, if not *more* so, than their predecessors. The new IP-based communications systems give you more options and flexibility to keep your communications up and running in the event of a power outage or disaster. And they are far easier to adapt and modify as your business evolves, which is one of their major selling points.



If there was one issue or problem that hampered the new communications systems when they were first being rolled out, it was lack of *bandwidth* (that is, the size of the communications network coming into your business). When you're acquiring a new system, carefully evaluate the amount of bandwidth available to your business. Make sure it is appropriately sized to your volume of calls. When properly implemented, today's new communications systems work great.



You can keep waiting while today's new small business communications systems continue to evolve, but from a quality, reliability, and performance standpoint, they've already arrived.

What I have still works

Phone systems tend to keep on going. It's not unusual to find a successful small business that's been using the same phone system for the last 10 or 15 years.

The reliability of the typical phone system lulls a lot of companies into a false sense of security about their communications — the “If it ain't broke, don't fix it” sensibility. This false sense of security feeds into their skepticism about the value of today's new communications systems. But be wary. Following that same logic, you could simply say

- ✔ **Forget about PCs and laptops.** That old 1970s minicomputer in the back office is still chugging along.
- ✔ **Who needs broadband?** We can wait just a little longer for downloads on dial-up.
- ✔ **Digital photography?** For an instant photo, I still have my old Polaroid.

This isn't to say that older solutions don't have their virtues, but in today's world, technology has a lifespan. You can keep using what you've been using, but at a certain point the value a new system can deliver to your business — lower costs, greater employee productivity, more market growth, and better customer service and retention — will outweigh the money you may be saving by sticking with what you have now.



Today's small business communications systems provide you with more than just new ways to handle communications; they provide whole new ways to manage and operate your business.

It's a big investment

No one should invest in a new communications system simply for the sake of having the latest technology. But what if it can be demonstrated that making an investment today in both time and money — and it may very well be a smaller investment than you think — will end up saving you both time and money?

Ask yourself. What value do the factors in this list have to your company?

- ✓ Saving a few sales opportunities every week that might have otherwise slipped through the cracks because the call wasn't handled properly
- ✓ Eliminating or dramatically reducing the staff time needed to manage incoming calls, transfer calls, check to see who is available, e-mail someone to let the person know that there's a voicemail waiting
- ✓ Eliminating fees for outside services such as conference calling, faxing, call recording
- ✓ Sharing a receptionist, messaging capabilities, and system administration between offices



Getting the latest communications capabilities may be far less expensive than you think. The phones themselves are among the most costly aspects of any communications system. But you don't necessarily have to replace all or any phones, or you may be able to do so over time, thereby phasing in the cost.



Avaya makes it easy to actually calculate what you can save by investing in a new communications system. The Avaya online Return On Investment, or ROI, calculator takes just a few minutes to do and gives you a clear picture of what you can save and how quickly a new communications system can pay for itself. Go to www.avaya.com/usa/campaign/ip-office-roi-calculator/.

I just need the basics

The idea that your business just needs a basic communications system for making calls — *we just need to make phone calls, we don't need any of that other fancy stuff* — is one of the most common reactions that small business owners have when they begin to look at their communications options.

Although a little skepticism is always welcome, at a certain point the desire to “keep it simple” begins to lose its effectiveness. What's more, when you really begin to scratch the surface of what you need in a business communications system, you're probably not going to be happy with just “basic communications.”

Consider the following reasons for becoming just a bit more sophisticated in your communications and improving your business in the process:

- ✔ You want a slight change in the way you handle calls on weekends versus at night.
- ✔ You realize it's becoming difficult and time-consuming to separately manage mobile phones and office phones.
- ✔ The idea of a built-in conference bridge begins to look quite attractive (based on the fees you're paying to an outside service).

It won't be long before you begin to look over the various marketing brochures for new communications systems you've been collecting and start to get excited about the possibilities. Congratulations, you're ready to step up to the new world of Unified Communications.

Knowing That You Need UC

What are some telltale signs that you need a communications system that supports Unified Communications?

Here are several examples:

- ✔ **People want to work from home:** You realize how much your business and your employees might benefit from making it easy for people to work from home if they aren't feeling well or have a personal issue they need to attend to.
- ✔ **Customers complain:** Your customers tell you things like: *It's hard to get through and I'm one of your best customers, but when I call no one knows who I am.*
- ✔ **Employees complain:** Your employees say things like:
 - *The voicemail on this system is a pain. You can't skip over messages.*
 - *I have no idea how to do a conference call on this system.*
 - *I've got the office phone and my mobile, and I sometimes work at home. Handling all of these phones is a hassle.*

- ✔ **What you have is complicated and expensive:** Making almost any adjustment, such as adding a new extension, requires a visit from a technician.
- ✔ **Your current system offers little or no help outside of business hours:** You can't easily change the outgoing message or allow callers to get to the extension of someone who may be working after hours or on a weekend.
- ✔ **Your calling costs are high:** You can't route calls easily over the least expensive connections. You're stuck paying conference calling fees.
- ✔ **Your system isn't a good use of employee time:** You notice that your employees spend a lot of time just answering the phone for simple, repetitive questions, which interrupts them and their work.



If any of these apply to you, you're ready to move into the market for a new communications system — *now*. Your customers, your employees, and your business itself are all giving you the signs.

Chapter 5

Ten Reasons to Implement Unified Communications

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Increasing productivity, gaining competitive advantage, and accommodating growth
 - ▶ Reducing facilities, energy, and telecommunications costs
 - ▶ Mitigating risks, putting a smile on people's faces, and making the world a little greener
-

You already know the benefits that Unified Communications (UC) delivered by today's new phone system can bring to your business, and you're likely ready to move forward. But, just in case you'd like to put it all in a nutshell, here are ten great reasons to incorporate UC for your small business.

Increased Efficiency

Communications plays a major part in the everyday operations of any company. But when communications isn't working together — when you need to send an e-mail, place several phone calls, leave a voicemail, *and* send an instant message just to reach someone — you're losing efficiency. UC improves efficiency by getting all the important communications tools in your business working together, making it easy to choose the right tool at the right moment and simplifying

access to communications on your office phone system, your PC, and your smartphone.

Increased Productivity

Small businesses usually have to do more with fewer resources — fewer people, smaller budgets — compared with their larger counterparts. UC provides the tools to empower your employees to work from just about anywhere and under any circumstances, allowing them to be more productive.

When your employees can communicate at any time with each other, with your customers, and with your vendors, their productivity can rise. Relying on your communications system to manage how incoming calls are routed throughout your business frees up time for your support staff. Enabling your customer service reps to instantly get a “screen pop” of information about a caller gets the sales conversations started faster and on better footing. Getting voicemails automatically forwarded to your smartphone is a faster, simpler way to stay in touch. And productivity enables other benefits for your business — more revenue, happier customers, more loyal employees, and lower costs.

Competitive Advantage

Quick response and efficient execution are the bread and butter of small businesses. If you are seeking a greater advantage over your larger competitors or are trying to retain established accounts in an increasingly competitive environment, being able to effectively communicate is critical. UC can help you gain this advantage by enabling your employees to communicate more efficiently from virtually anywhere.

When customers can quickly and easily reach their sales or service reps, they’re happier and more likely to stay with you (or switch to you). When your employees can talk with each other at a moment’s notice, they (and you) can make better and faster decisions, which can help you win new business.

Being nimble is a key advantage for small businesses, and with UC you can build on that advantage even more.

Accommodated Growth

Most small businesses envision themselves growing larger, serving more customers, and expanding their market share. UC offers capabilities that can make business growth — and the associated growing pains — less painful.

The IP-based communications systems that support UC have scalability. A solution such as Avaya IP Office can support a company with just a dozen employees or one with multiple offices and up to 1,000 employees, without requiring a major system change. You also don't need technical support to add another extension or re-administer the dial plan.

Today's IP-based communications solutions also simplify the opening of additional offices. With a solution such as Avaya IP Office, you can network offices together so that everyone is on one dial plan — connect with a colleague across the country by dialing just 3 or 4 digits. An office on the West Coast of the U.S. can handle calls for an East Coast office, and callers won't know the difference.



With the productivity tools discussed in the earlier chapters, Avaya's IP Office can help you grow your business by making your employees more efficient while minimizing costs.

Reduced Operating Expenses

Businesses are under pressure to reduce costs; facility and overhead (energy and telecommunications) expenses are chief among these expenses. For a small business, these relative costs are greatly magnified.

UC can significantly reduce electricity and travel costs for your business. If business can be conducted just as effectively (or even more effectively) remotely, you can reduce energy consumption in the office and travel time and expenses with

teleconferencing. The Avaya IP Office solution, for example, includes a 128-party conference calling bridge that can add up to significant monthly savings in travel and conference call fees.

If a significant number of your employees are working from home with a UC solution, you may be able to delay or defer the costs of additional real estate. During challenging economic times, do you really want to sign a lease for larger facilities if you have any concerns about whether your business is going to grow as planned?

If your real estate lease(s) are up for renewal within the next nine to eighteen months and you're looking at options, you should seriously consider UC and teleworking.

Reduced Risk

Providing the ability for employees to work from virtually any location (including their home, for example) can help reduce the risks associated with emergencies, natural disasters, or other events (such as severe weather, health-related issues, and other adverse occurrences).

When such events occur, employees who are already accustomed to UC can continue working without missing a beat. Not being able to get into the office — due to severe weather or other emergencies — can quickly take a toll on a small business. There's something to be said for not putting all of your eggs in one basket.

Environmental Protection

Customers want to do business with “green” companies. Regardless of your beliefs about climate change or your politics, businesses cannot afford to be perceived as insensitive to environmental concerns. Implementing UC and teleworking can help reduce your business's energy consumption costs and your employees' commuting costs, both of which can significantly reduce carbon emissions in the environment.

Diversified Workforce

There are times when it becomes difficult to find qualified people to hire in the local area, or it simply makes more sense to hire someone who lives in a different area (and time zone). With UC, you can expand the talent pool to help ensure you hire the right people for the job (no matter where they live) and give them the same communications capabilities your office employees enjoy. Your customers won't know the difference and will likely enjoy the service benefits this kind of flexibility provides to your business.

Boosted Employee Morale

A flexible working arrangement can be a key factor in employee morale. Enabling people to work from home on occasion or even full-time, can enhance their quality of life in a number of ways. Some studies show that a flexible work schedule is more important to employees than higher salaries.

Helping employees balance their work and life commitments should be a concern for any business. Workplace stress and illness, coupled with the growing problem of “presenteeism” (being in the office when they shouldn't be because they're sick or stressed), reduces employee effectiveness and overall productivity.

Increased Profitability by Bringing It All Together

All of the preceding points are great reasons to implement UC in your small business. But the bottom line is that you want to improve your bottom line! Taken as a whole, the advantages of UC described here can help you dramatically improve your top line (increasing revenues by attracting new business and retaining your existing customers through greater customer responsiveness and service) and your bottom line (reducing costs and improving productivity to increase profitability).



Use UC to stay
connected with your
customers and employees

Control how and when others can reach you!

The ability to stay connected to your customers and colleagues is critical to the success and survival of your small business. But, in order for you to respond at all, they need to be able to contact you — whether you're in the office or on the road. With voicemail, e-mail, and mobile devices, you'd think it would be easier to contact someone — but with so many options, it can actually be harder to do. Unified Communications (UC) gives you the ability to ensure that everyone — your customers and employees — always knows when, where, and how to contact the right person at the right time. This book explains the benefits of UC and how you can implement UC in your small or medium business.

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Discover how to:

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productivity and
enhance customer
satisfaction*

*Get the competitive
edge you need to keep
your business growing*

*Keep your employees
productive in the office,
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*Implement a
UC solution and
teleworking program*

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