



Creating the modern workplace.

Your guide to how Unified Comms can deliver a more productive, profitable and customer centric environment for your organisation.

Introduction

Driven mainly by advances in capability, consumer behaviour and demands have changed significantly in recent years. They expect choice, consistency and a seamless service from every business they deal with.

Technology has been instrumental in helping businesses respond, allowing new disruptors to challenge established vendors. Challengers are forcing businesses to present their customer service abilities upfront, allowing customers to assess potential suppliers before they commit.

This guide highlights:

- | The challenges being faced by your industry in more detail
- | Advice on equipping your organisation to resolve them

Productivity

As your customers become more mobile, so too does your workforce. Indeed, travel is a key requirement for your industry. In some cases your most knowledgeable, proficient employees are almost entirely field-based, rarely at a desk with a fixed phone.

Time-poor customers don't care about these logistical issues. When they call, it's because they want to speak to someone – and 61% of consumers still prefer to use the phone⁵.

More importantly, they expect to be connected to someone who can answer their questions quickly and effectively, preferably at the point of asking.

The background of the slide features two hands, one at the top left and one at the bottom right, reaching towards each other. The hands are rendered in a soft, glowing blue and purple color against a light orange background. The hands are positioned as if they are about to meet or are in the process of shaking hands.

56%

of customers
expect their queries
to be dealt with in a
single interaction.

80%
of business buyers and

64% of
consumers
said they expect
companies to respond
to and interact with
them in real time.

As the Millennial generation becomes more powerful in the marketplace, the issue will only become more pressing — 66% of Millennial consumers expect real-time responses and interactions.

More than half of your potential new opportunities will go elsewhere if you can't deliver first time.

The people fielding customer queries need to be properly empowered to assist. You must provide access to key documents and data, allowing them to be fully productive in the field and at their desks. You can further increase productivity by allowing your team to knowledge share on expert matters through real time collaboration.

You should not underestimate the importance of these tools. Take sales reps for instance – according to Pace -

- Productivity, just 22% of their working week is spent on actual sales activities⁸. Other tasks like administration and customer support eat into their schedule, reducing the time available to generate sales. With more efficient communication and collaboration tools they could achieve a better balance.

There are similar productivity problems across all roles, not just those in the field. According to SIS Research, the average employee in a 100-person SMB spends 3.7 hours per week attempting to coordinate communications between team members. They then spend another 3.5 hours waiting to receive information from their colleagues⁹.

3.7
hours

spent attempting to coordinate communications between team members.

3.5
hours

spent waiting to receive requested information from colleagues.

7.2
hours

is almost one working day being wasted every week by every employee.

Consider asking your teams for their experiences... you may be shocked.

At a time when economic growth remains sluggish, reducing inefficiency remains one of the best ways to maintain – or grow – profit margins.



Growth opportunities

In recent years, mobile working has moved from being a niche requirement for a small subset of employees to a mainstream operational necessity. Changes to legislation, such as the legal right to request flexible working provisions, mean that every business has (or should have been) investigating potential for remote access and connectivity¹.

However, the challenge here - and indeed the opportunity - isn't to do with meeting regulations. Technology that supports mobile working effectively will allow you to attract the right employees from a wider candidate pool, retain them, onboard them quickly and keep them connected in ways that make it easier to deliver revenue. Connected with who? Their wider team, important business assets and (most importantly) your customers.

As alluded to already, candidates themselves now consider remote working provisions as one of their criteria when job hunting. According to a prediction from software giant Citrix, 70% of people will work away from the office as often as they work at a desk. For any business concerned about retention, it makes good sense to invest in remote working tools. Employees have notably higher job satisfaction than those who aren't allowed the same work-from-anywhere perk—they're 48% more likely to rate their job a "10/10" on the happiness scale².

When it comes to delivering revenue, it's the ability to deal with customer queries any place, any time that will attract more leads and close new deals. 50% of consumers would use a company more frequently after a positive customer experience³, so improving the quality and responsiveness of your service will also allow you to maximise revenue from your existing client base. With the right collaboration tools in place, you can grow your business even before you find new customers - and, when you do, it's easier to build relationships thanks to personalised remote communication methods e.g. chat or video.

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Remote working is also a powerful tool for growing the geographical reach of your business, or developing new ways of working, such as the use of short-term contractors (“gig workers”). A centralised comms platform allows you to expand into new regions and territories quickly. Whether you plan to open a branch office, or to create international franchising options, connecting those new corporate outposts to internal systems can be simple with the right choice of platform.



Overhead efficiencies

There are hundreds of tools available, designed to help your business better communicate and collaborate. But that's a problem. The more systems you use, the more complicated and costly it becomes to manage your IT and comms estate.

Most organisations more than a few years old have already acquired several isolated technology solutions – CRM, PBX, finance, helpdesk etc – to deliver against the changing demands of customers and business processes.

The situation is so severe that most companies have just 20% of their IT budget to invest in new solutions to drive their business forward – the other 80% is spent maintaining existing legacy platforms¹⁰.

This problem is not restricted to mature businesses either. Agile start-ups that rely on Software as a Service subscriptions, cloud platforms and mobile apps can fall into the same trap very quickly.

Yes, they may have an application for most eventualities, but the cost of operating them all can quickly spiral.

Consolidating and reducing the application estate will help to bring these costs back under control. You will also benefit from centralised data, making it easier and quicker to retrieve the right information when you need it.

Research studies repeatedly find that workers waste 10%-25% of their time searching for data that should be readily available in their company systems.

The average employee spends up to 11% of their time navigating different applications in search of information needed to do their job.

Collaborating within teams is already a challenge, but the complexity of a multi-system set-up increases exponentially for businesses that operate across multiple sites. Traditional on-premise applications create an additional barrier to company-wide collaboration – information is simply too hard to share and work on effectively.

Without full access to data, your team will struggle to deliver an efficient, timely service to demanding customers. Finding a solution that brings disparate channels together allows you to consolidate and connect data to improve personalisation and overall quality of service, which means you're better placed to improve productivity and profitability.

Increasing competition

Mature ecommerce technologies have dramatically simplified the buying process for consumers making it incredibly easy to buy from sellers based anywhere in the world. This increase in choice is great for consumers, but ultimately causes more vendors to now compete for each sale.

Increased choice also exposes commonalities between products and services, making it even harder for businesses to differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace – depressing sales and profits in the process. Worse still, increased access to similar offerings is helping to drive down customer loyalty.

People wouldn't care if 77% of brands disappeared.

The only way to effectively differentiate is through value-adds, particularly the quality of service you offer. In fact, 64% of people find customer experience more important than price¹³. Investment in technologies that improve communications and collaboration will pay off though – customers typically spend much more with companies that deliver a consistent, always-on, efficient service.

UK consumers are willing to spend, on average, 15% more with companies that have a history of positive customer service experience.

Actions

There are several practical steps your business needs to take to remain competitive during 2020 and beyond.

1. Consolidate communications

Landlines, mobile, voice, video, text... there's a thousand apps and technologies to connect you to your clients. This year, look at consolidating and streamlining them all using omnichannel Unified Communications to deliver a consistent service to customers no matter how they make contact.

2. Simplify collaboration

Empower your employees anywhere and everywhere by giving them tools that support collaborative working. The ability to share information and work on data together allows them to be more productive – and helpful to your clients.

3. Think outside the office

The modern workforce is increasingly mobile and you need reliable ways to stay connected with your team. Unified Communications allows you to seamlessly communicate using the most appropriate channel at any given moment, no matter where you are in the world. It will also help you to meet employee demands for increased flexible working.

4. Break down silos

Finding ways to share data around the business will unlock new opportunities and help your employees to increase productivity. You should also be wary of adopting single-function applications that introduce new barriers to data sharing.

5. Free up IT budget for strategic projects

Take the opportunity to consider how much of your current IT spend is “dead money”, propping up systems that frustrate your employees and limit productivity. What is the cumulative cost of IT spend and lost productivity? This will help you properly quantify the benefits of future investment in comms and collaboration tools.

Conclusion

Your business is facing fundamental challenges from both inside and outside the organisation. Increasingly disloyal customers who have the entire world at their fingertips are looking for a better quality of service in return for their cash. At the same time, employees are demanding flexible working provisions that allow them to better manage their work-life balance.

To stay competitive in this constantly evolving environment will require change. Or more specifically, the ability to embrace and support regular change in line with shifting consumer demands and priorities. The backbone of any such system is your communications, the ability to keep data flowing wherever it is needed – and to help your team to work more effectively.

Annotations

¹ Why the future office will be as much about fun as work – BBC News – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36342595>

² Work-life 3.0: Understanding how we'll work next – PricewaterHouse Coopers – <https://www.pwc.com/ee/et/publications/pub/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-future-of-work-june-2016.pdf>

³ The Multibillion Dollar Cost of Poor Customer Service – NewVoiceMedia – <https://www.vonage.com/business/perspectives/the-multibillion-dollar-cost-of-poor-customer-service-infographic/>

⁵ Connecting with Customers Report – LivePerson - http://info.liveperson.com/rs/liveperson/images/LivePerson_Connecting_With_Customers_Report_UK.pdf

⁷ How Your Customers' Expectations Have Changed in the Age of the Customer – Salesforce – <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2017/07/customers-expectations-in-age-of-the-customer.html>

⁸ How Sales Reps Spend Their Time – Pace Productivity - <https://www.paceproductivity.com/single-post/2017/02/09/How-Sales-Reps-Spend-Their-Time>

⁹ Small-Midsize Business Communications: Hidden Cost – SIS Research - <https://www.greenbook.org/marketing-research/small-midsize-business-communications-hidden-costs>

¹⁰ Gartner Says Eight of Ten Dollars Enterprises Spend on IT is "Dead Money" – Gartner – <https://web.archive.org/web/20151012084528/http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/497088>

¹¹ Customer Centricity: Knowledge is Power in the Age of the Customers – Aberdeen Research - <https://www.verint.com/Assets/resources/resource-types/analyst-documents/13068-kb-customer-centricity.pdf>

¹² Meaningful Brands Survey 2019 – Havas – <https://www.meaningful-brands.com/en>

¹³ Gartner Survey Finds Importance of Customer Experience on the Rise — Marketing Is on the Hook – Gartner – <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/2857722>

¹⁴ American Express Global Customer Barometer 2017 – https://business.americanexpress.com/sg/~/_media/Files/GCP/sg2/business-trends-insights/Amex_GCSB_Infographics.pdf?la=en-GB

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