

The core benefits of a unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) solution are collaboration and productivity, but UCaaS capabilities need to be driven and shaped by cloud enablement services, including early awareness and education of employees and ongoing support of UCaaS integration into employee workflows and experiences.

Enablement and Adoption: Keys to UCaaS Success

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Introduction

Cloud-based unified communications solutions that seamlessly include voice, messaging, meetings, and video services are increasingly being deployed in organizations, often without critical education and support services that help drive and optimize employee use and business outcomes. While the core benefits of a unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) solution are collaboration and productivity, these outcomes are tempered when UCaaS capabilities are not bolstered by cloud enablement services, including early awareness and education of employees and ongoing support of UCaaS integration into employee workflows and experiences. With pressure mounting on all businesses to drive productivity and improved outcomes across their employee bases, successful UCaaS deployments require more than what many businesses have done regarding education, support, and alignment with workflows.

Needs across businesses have intensified. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant and long-term impacts on the way organizations do business with customers and the way employees work and interact. Businesses have been left to grapple with remote workforce enablement while ensuring business continuity for an extended period.

Today, success with customers and effective sales require major voice, digital messaging, and video capabilities rather than in-person interactions. Finance and sales employees remain accountable for closed-loop paperwork trails and customer success activities despite not being together in a physical office. Internal employee, management, and cross-functional meetings are planned or impromptu but require seamless communications and access to enterprise data and repositories. Successful interactions in today's changed world make the incorporation of communications and collaboration tools into the workflows among employees, business partners, and customers more critical than ever to an organization's success.

AT A GLANCE

KEY STATS

Surveyed organizations intending to implement UCaaS cited the following expected benefits:

- » Increased employee productivity: 84%
- » Improved security and governance: 82%
- » Improved internal employee collaboration: 79%
- » Employees feel more informed/connected: 79%

Business Expectations Drive Need for Optimized Use of Unified Communications Among Employees

IT and business leaders want a streamlined experience that is optimized for the new business world of distributed and remote work. Businesses want conversations with their customers. Customers want businesses that not only are willing to share in a clear exchange of information, knowledge, and understanding but also can provide the journey with clear next steps and outcomes. Familiar, engaging, and supportive experiences must be facilitated by business technologies, whether sales, finance, and support staff are in a traditional four-walled office or not. Employees must be prepared and supported by IT and business leadership through technology implementations that enable efficient and interactive ongoing interactions with customers and other employees as well as according to business processes.

Ensuring People and Processes Are Prepared and Supported Is a Critical Success Factor in UCaaS Deployment

An engaged workforce is essential to high productivity, to the customer experience, and to digital transformation in today's businesses. Given the changed work environment and many employees decentralized in remote work arrangements rather than corporate offices, it has never been so important to include education and support plans when implementing new communications services, such as with a UCaaS solution. Because business units and IT departments come to a UCaaS implementation from different perspectives, prioritizing how technical capabilities fit in strategic business objectives and employees' workflows brings added challenges. Critical factors to ensuring employees can be successful with UCaaS include education, technical, and business support positioned to the business unit and separately to the IT department, along with proactive monitoring and customer service. Repeatability, scalability, and comprehension are core aspects for both the business unit and the IT department.

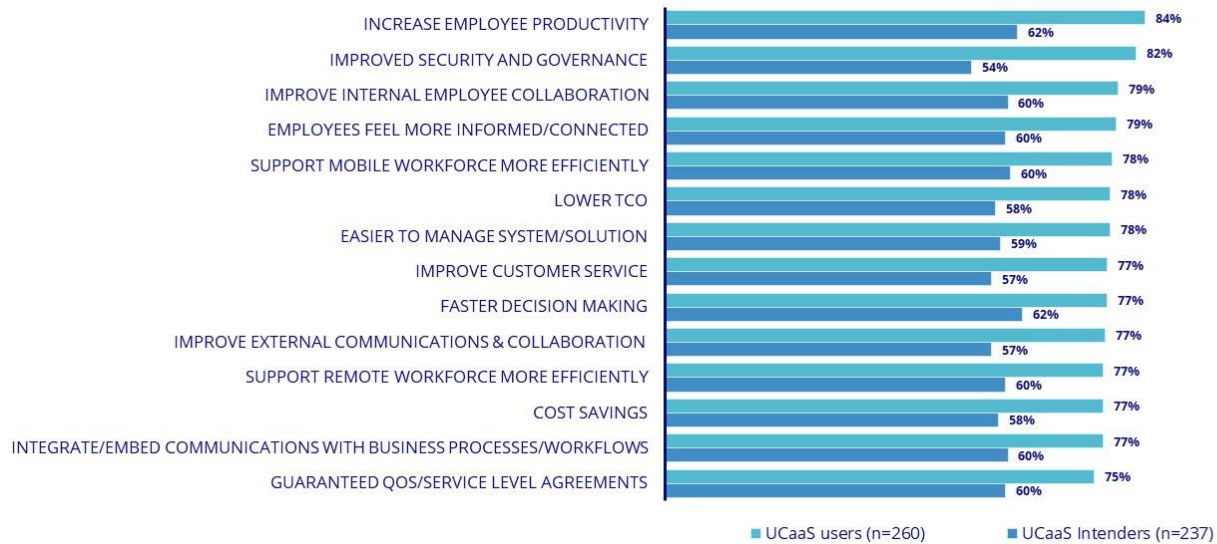
State of the Market and Challenges

Businesses Look to UCaaS to Improve Employee and Customer Experiences

Businesses are evolving, with remote and mobile work becoming the norm. At the same time, competition is becoming more intense, requiring businesses to be more efficient and productive while delighting customers and employees with positive experiences. Consequently, businesses are seeking solutions that provide communications in an integrated solution that drives productivity, collaboration, and faster decision making and ultimately yields more positive employee and customer experiences. As depicted in Figure 1, UCaaS investments are tied to increasing productivity, faster decision making, and improving employee collaboration.

FIGURE 1: *Drivers of UCaaS Investments*

Q How important are/were these factors in your organization's decision to implement UC? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not at all important.



Base = current UCaaS users and UCaaS intenders

Notes:

The data shows the percentage of respondents who rated the factors "very important" or "important."

Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: IDC's U.S. Enterprise Communications Survey, 2019

Cloud-based communications services, often in the form of UCaaS, fit the bill. IDC defines UCaaS as having at least three of the following four features:

- » Advanced IP telephony calling and management (i.e., call control)
- » Web conferencing, audioconferencing, and/or videoconferencing
- » Unified messaging (email, voice, and fax messaging combined)
- » Pervasive presence management and awareness

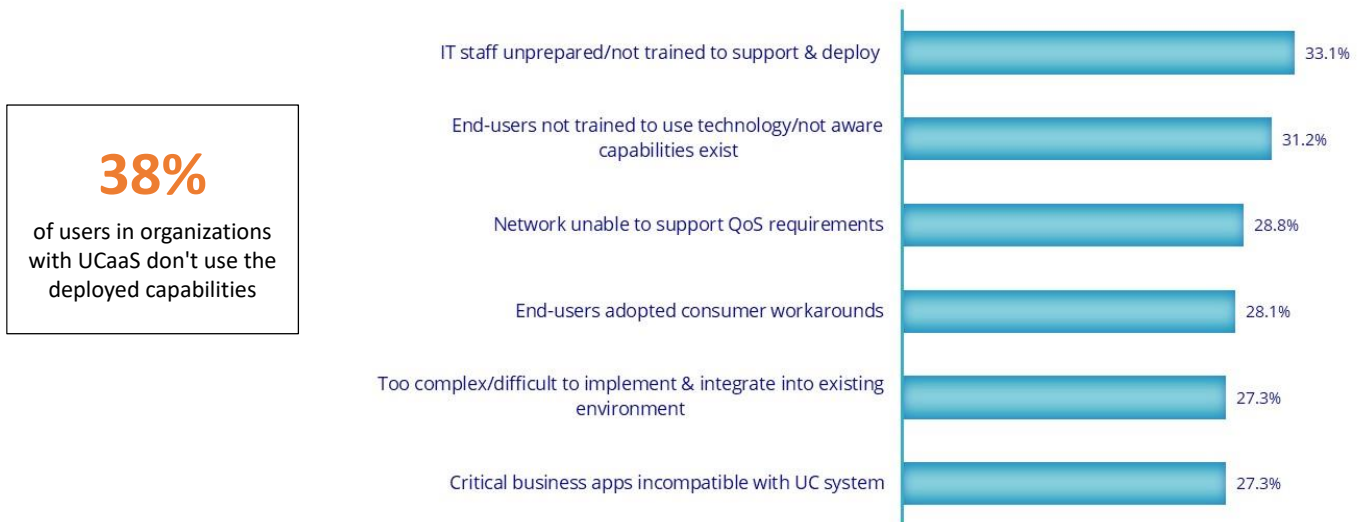
In addition, PBX and UC functionality on mobile devices (i.e., incorporating mobility and fixed/mobile convergence [FMC] into UCaaS solutions via mobile software clients) must be either an available feature or on the road map of near-term releases of UCaaS solutions. Capabilities are provided in the cloud, with business continuity and a consistent service experience intrinsic to the offering.

UCaaS Usage Challenged Due to Lack of Employee Awareness and Support

Despite the best intentions on the part of businesses to deploy UCaaS, 38% of users in businesses with UCaaS are not using the deployed capabilities, as depicted in Figure 2. The top barriers to usage include the IT staff being unable to support the deployment and the lack of end-user training/awareness.

FIGURE 2: **Obstacles to UCaaS Usage**

- Q What percentage of your organization's employees use the deployed UCaaS capabilities?
What are the top 3 barriers to usage of your organization's deployed UCaaS capabilities?**



n = 260

Base = current UCaaS users

Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

Source: IDC's U.S. Enterprise Communications Survey, 2019

Many Businesses Have Unmet Needs That Hold Back UCaaS Use

Despite organizations' need to engage in all aspects of unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) for success, including voice, video, and messaging, usage among employees is lackluster in many businesses. Implementation of UCaaS without the availability of support and expertise in the organization leaves any unified communications solution at risk of missing goals the businesses had for it. Without ongoing IT and business processes, employee workflow support, and education, organizations will find it difficult to ensure widespread use of the solution. Constraints on IT budget, skills, and time are among the challenges that organizations expect to face over the next three years, in addition to incorporation of new and emerging technologies.

Benefits

Cultural change is needed to make interfacing with UCaaS technology work for employees and for optimal business outcomes. Beyond the obvious compelling advantages of cloud-based communications services, such as reliability, security, and cost-effective scalability, are the employee and customer experience benefits such as improved productivity, improved customer interactions and satisfaction, and improved employee satisfaction. The following cloud enablement services, including training, adoption, and support services, give:

- » Employees the confidence and understanding to use UCaaS features in their daily activities.
- » IT the resources and bandwidth to analyze and support UCaaS usage, affording opportunities to identify lightly used capabilities and flag them for education and awareness follow-up campaigns.
- » Business management a partner in the vision for how UCaaS can be woven through employees' daily workflows to improve productivity and job and customer satisfaction.

Trends

Business needs have evolved over the past few years, with UCaaS solutions rising to meet the needs. The major trends are as follows:

- » Businesses face an overwhelming and urgent need for tools that support remote work first. UCaaS solutions give businesses the communications services in the cloud that their employees so desperately need. With supportive change management resources, education, and support services, UCaaS can be integrated into employees' workflows, optimizing the time investment, satisfaction, and outcomes of employees' daily tasks as well as interactions with customers.
- » UCaaS solutions have evolved to provide comprehensive change management and support services. The solutions extend beyond common support profiles and self-service management and administrative dashboard tools. Comprehensive support services provide more than just flexibility in the implementation options. Comprehensive UCaaS change management and support services are purposefully designed and customized to each business while grounded in best practices across communications deployments in the cloud. Importantly, comprehensive support services are composed of both UCaaS technical readiness and organizational readiness solutions. Together these solutions ensure that deployment and product capabilities work and work well, that technical integrations are achieved as planned, and that people and workflows are ready. Readiness means users have been made aware of and educated on UCaaS, and continuous analysis of UCaaS usage deems usage satisfactory and extensive across the employee base.
- » Usage of UCaaS solutions continues to increase dramatically as businesses increasingly face a changing work environment. Close to two-thirds (62%) of all businesses are using UCaaS or plan to use UCaaS within the next two years, which is significantly higher than two years prior. This is reflective of businesses' growing appetite for as-a-service solutions deployed in the cloud and their growing appetite for communications and collaboration services specifically. The flexibility and breadth of communications options available in UCaaS solutions are impressive to many organizations looking to balance the need to scale communications across voice, messaging, meeting rooms, and video cost effectively as the size of their business waxes and wanes.

Considering Fuze

Fuze is a worldwide provider of a cloud communications and contact center platform to enterprises. This UCaaS platform supports seamless communications, specifically unified voice with unmetered calling to more than 110 countries with over 50 carrier relationships, HD video calling and conferencing, chatting, content sharing, and contact center functions. The company's AI analytics, integrations with other enterprise software and services offerings, user experience, and customer success management program help enterprises succeed with their unified communications deployment and usage. The Fuze Hub gives administrators the ability to add, remove, and manage users. The Fuze Data Platform enables administrators to view and delve into adoption and usage of Fuze across their employee base.

Fuze recognizes that a successful enterprise UCaaS implementation requires formal, intensive adoption support. The company has developed tiered support and success offerings designed with this in mind. Fuze Success Plans are available to enterprises in one of three packages: Core, Enhanced, and Premier:

- » The Core version comes with the UCaaS subscription and provides an adoption playbook, self-help, end-user and administration guides, and Fuze View, which is a usage analytics snapshot, as well as support service-level agreements (SLAs), a three-month trial of real-time network monitoring, and access to a Customer Success Associate.
- » The Enhanced version is available for an additional cost and adds services such as Fuze Discover licenses that give additional detail on usage trends and analytics, guided adoption services, and end-user training discounts at 20%. The Enhanced version also includes Enhanced Support SLAs, a Case Manager, and a 20% discount on Real-Time Network Monitoring as well as an assigned Customer Success Manager and Bi-Annual Business Review.
- » The Premier version of Fuze Success Plans includes services in Core in addition to more Fuze Discover licenses, 20% discounts on end-user training and Real-Time Network Monitoring. Additionally, enterprises gain premier support SLAs, a Technical Account Manager, an assigned Customer Success Manager, quarterly business reviews, monthly success summaries, an annual solution review, and more.

Fuze continues to put a priority on successful implementation and usage of its real-time unified communications solutions in the cloud with its product and support services strategy.

Challenges

Driving adoption in enterprises that may have some resistance to putting a comprehensive unified communications plan in place poses a challenge to UCaaS service providers. While not a roadblock to successful unified communications platform implementations, such resistance can slow down widespread adoption and usage. Vendors such as Fuze have experience with driving adoption in enterprises despite the tendency of some organizations to resist change. Today's changed work environment, with many employees working remotely, helps underscore the need for change and the need to communicate seamlessly.

Awareness, education of employees, and ongoing support of administrators, integrations, and employee usage are critical to UCaaS success in enterprises.

Conclusion

Effective implementation is only one piece of what defines enterprise success with UCaaS. Awareness, education of employees, and ongoing support of administrators, integrations, and employee usage are critical to UCaaS success in enterprises. Collaboration, productivity, and improved relationships with an enterprise's customers are more important than ever in today's new business environment. Employees may be outside the four walls of the enterprise location, yet business must continue. UCaaS offerings that prioritize ongoing education and support give enterprises an advantage in the ever-changing business environment.

About the Analyst



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Denise Lund is a Research Director on IDC's worldwide telecom team. Her research focuses on advanced communications services including VoIP and unified communications as a service (UCaaS). In this position, she provides coverage of voice communications, including fixed and legacy voice (local, long distance, and PRI ISDN) and IP voice (hosted VOIP with/without UC, SIP trunking, IP phone) as well as emerging migration and usage trends occurring in the voice market.



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