

CIOs Are Betting on Unified Communications in the Cloud. Should you?

A survey of CIOs conducted by IDG and CBTS finds executives plan to bring Unified Communications to the cloud for enhanced productivity and agility

FOR OPTIMAL PRODUCTIVITY, your company's employees need to be able to connect easily with partners, customers, and one another on any device, from any location. Many organizations today make that happen with unified communications (UC), which unites voicemail, email, instant messaging, video calls, conferencing, and other communication and collaboration tools through a single interface. As with many other business applications, that interface is increasingly cloud based. A recent IDG survey indicates that Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) will account for the majority of UC implementations within the next year. Notably, the survey also shows that companies are shifting UC to the cloud less for the cost savings than for the promise of increased productivity and agility.

FINDING #1: The future of UC is in the cloud — and the future is soon.

IDG's survey found that 70% of UC deployments will be cloud-based a year from now, and virtually all will be cloud-based in five years. Among respondents that either already have or plan to implement UCaaS, 28% have already done so, and 42% plan to do so within the next 12 months. Another 16% expect to implement UCaaS in the next one to three years, while the remaining 14% intend to do so in the next three to five years.

FINDING #2: Companies are actively looking to upgrade or augment their existing UC solutions.

The majority of survey respondents are no strangers to UC. Of those planning to deploy UCaaS, more than half say it will replace an existing solution, with 28% replacing an on-premise UC solution and another 28% trading one cloud-based solution for another. Another 32% intend to create a hybrid UC system by augmenting

72% of respondents surveyed placed **RELIABILITY** in their top five criteria for considering a vendor than any other factor, with 22% calling it their top priority.

Source: IDG Research 2017

an existing on-premise solution with UCaaS. The remaining 12%, who currently have no UC solution, plan a "cloud first" approach by moving directly to UCaaS.

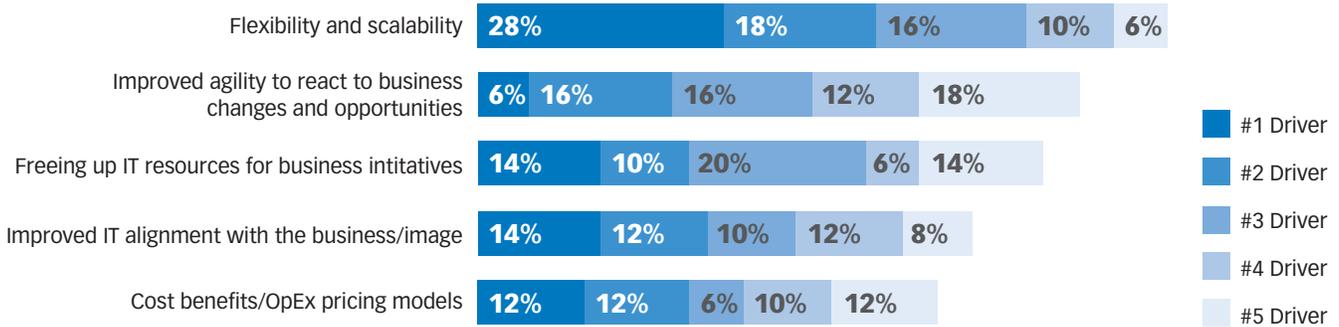
Even with this overall change in UC deployment, technologies are at different stages of implementation. Over the next 12 months, respondents are most likely to upgrade or refine existing mobility, collaboration tools, and corporate conferencing that combines audio, video, and web presence. They're most likely to be in the process of implementing new VoIP, collaboration tools, and unified messaging that integrates email, voicemail, and instant messages. And they're most likely to be actively researching desktop video conferencing, mobility, and telepresence technology.

FINDING #3: UCaaS is seen as key to increased productivity and agility.

While companies usually migrate business applications to the cloud to save money, the primary driver behind UCaaS adoption seems to be not reducing costs but increasing business speed and responsiveness. An overwhelming 82% of respondents cite the desire for increased productivity as one of their top five reasons for investing in UCaaS, and 34% call it their primary reason to invest.

TOP FIVE BUSINESS DRIVERS BEHIND DECISION TO DEPLOY CLOUD-BASED UC

SOURCE: IDG Research



The desire to consolidate technologies takes second place, with 78% putting it in their top five investment drivers and 16% calling it their primary reason. That’s followed by the desire for increased collaboration, a top five reason for 66% and the primary reason for 10%.

Unsurprisingly, respondents’ reasons for investing in UCaaS align with their business goals in implementing it. Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) call greater flexibility and scalability one of their top five business goals, with 28% assigning it first place. More than two-thirds (68%) list improved agility among their top five business goals, though only 6% ranked it number one. Almost as many (64%) say that freeing resources for business initiatives is a top-five business goal for UCaaS, with 14% calling it their primary business goal.

Flexibility, scalability, and agility make it easier for employees to work more productively and collaborate more effectively. At the same time, consolidating technology reduces the amount of time IT must spend managing a heterogeneous collection of communication and collaboration tools. Indeed, CBTS, a leading technology provider to enterprise and midmarket clients in all industries across the U.S. and Canada, reports that large healthcare organizations and state/local governments, in particular, are actively seeking solutions that let them to focus on business initiatives rather than infrastructure management.

FINDING #4: Companies are demanding UCaaS vendors they can rely on.

Respondents value one thing above all in evaluating a UCaaS vendor: reliability. Significantly more respondents (72%) placed that in their top five criteria for considering a vendor than any other factor, with 22% calling it their top priority. The quality of a vendor’s technical support comes in a distant second, with 54% placing it among their top five criteria, though only 4% rank it first. Close behind is a proven track record and references, with 52% calling it a top-five necessity but just 10% saying it’s most important.

Given that most providers in the UC space use similar technologies, the IDG survey suggests that the 56% of respondents replacing an existing UC solution are less dissatisfied with the solution itself than the vendor providing it.

That rings true to Tony King, director of solution design for UCaaS at technology provider and consultancy, CBTS. King says the primary reason CBTS customers cite for changing providers is customer service, noting, “Most vendors in this space have few differentiating features and functions, so they have to compete on good communication and addressing issues in a timely manner.”

Looking beyond the basics

Accordingly, organizations investigating UCaaS must look beyond the hosted technology and managed maintenance implicit in every cloud service to assess vendors based on reliability, customer service, and overall technical know-how.

Being a top global provider of the industry-leading UCaaS platform isn’t enough. The right vendor should enhance its in-house expertise through partnerships with and certifications from leading technology manufacturers. Its solution should include custom integration with other key business applications to meet customers’ unique business challenges and needs. It should be able to guarantee 99.99% uptime and maintain a domestic support team rather than outsourcing to an overseas third party. And finally, in a fast-moving business environment, the vendor’s fee should include employee moves, adds, changes, and disconnects at no additional charge.

For a UCaaS implementation that delivers on its promise, companies should choose a vendor with years of experience providing and customizing quality communications solutions while complying with industry-wide security standards.

Learn more about UCaaS and how CBTS can provide the business agility, scalability, reliability and cost-effectiveness you need to innovate and grow, at [CBTS.com](https://www.cbts.com)