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APPLYING TECHNOLOGY. AMPLIFYING RESULTS.

TWD WHITE PAPER

What Unified Communications Delivery Model Is Right For You?

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This whitepaper explores the various ways in which organizations can deploy a UC solution and each method's unique features, benefits and requirements. It also helps readers decide which option would be most beneficial to their specific organization.

Introduction

The modern day workforce is growing more mobile with each passing year. With telework increasing by nearly 80 percent[1] since 2005, capabilities such as chat, video teleconferencing (VTC) and real-time presence increasingly are a necessity for workers looking to remain connected by more than a conference call. But there's a problem inherent with implementing so many new communications technologies at once: interoperability. To fix this, organizations need to implement one unified solution that allows all employees to communicate and collaborate on one platform, regardless of location or device. This is Unified Communications (UC).

UC Delivery Models

UC helps organizations consolidate their mobile computing, data, voice, video, desktop and file-sharing onto a single platform, eliminating the need to maintain multiple infrastructures and applications. Solutions for UC can be delivered in a variety of ways though – and what works for one organization may not necessarily be the best option for another. UC delivery methods typically fall into one of three general models:

1. **Full Ownership:** The organization owns, operates and maintains the solution in its own space.

2. **Managed Service:** The organization may own the solution but outsources operations, maintenance and upgrades, or may outsource ownership as well.

3. **Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS):** The entire solution is owned, operated and maintained by a service provider and typically delivered from the cloud. The organization subscribes to a monthly service to access UC capabilities.

[1] Source: Global Workplace Analytics, *Latest Telecommuting Statistics*, www.GlobalWorkplaceAnalytics.com.

Full Ownership

Full ownership of the UC solution means the organization has full responsibility for procuring all hardware and software and for operations, maintenance and upgrades. In most cases, the solution is procured from and installed by a company that specializes in UC technology integration. After the solution is implemented, the organization assumes full responsibility. This model often is the most complicated and requires the largest amount of effort and investment, but also offers the greatest control and ability to customize.

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Features:

- Full ownership and control after installation
- Control over integration with other technologies and organizations
- Lives on the organization's network, within its security perimeter
- Allows for a full suite of capabilities and features

Benefits:

- Staff can develop expertise and experience in the UC solution
- Provides a platform for UC application development
- Architecture is customizable to the specific needs of the organization
- Maximizes bandwidth efficiency and system redundancy and survivability for geographically dispersed organizations

Requirements:

- A skilled onsite IT staff that is able to: configure, monitor, administer, troubleshoot and repair the UC solution; integrate it with other systems; apply updates, patches and fixes; backup and restore the solution and understand upgrade paths
- Sufficient in-house help desk support services
- Hardware space and/or a virtualized environment for running the UC applications
- Management of software licensing
- Capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operational expenditure (OPEX) budget

Note: Solution scalability requires investment in more hardware, software and/or licensing and possibly additional staff.

Who is the full ownership model right for?

Let's use as an example a large enterprise organization that handles sensitive information with strict security requirements. The organization's staff includes software developers and IT help desk personnel spread throughout the world at various field offices. An organization of this size, and with these strict security requirements, would benefit most from the full-ownership approach to UC. As a general rule of thumb, companies that could benefit from this model include:

- System integration companies
- Large, dispersed organizations
- Organizations with complex system integration requirements or that deal with classified networks, sensitive information or strict security requirements

Managed Service

UC through a managed service delivery model means the operations, maintenance and upgrades to the organization's self-owned hardware and software solution are outsourced to a managed service provider. In most cases, the same managed service provider also procures and installs the UC solution on the organization's network. This model requires less input and effort than the full-ownership model, but still is more complicated and involved than a UCaaS approach.

The managed service model requires less input and effort than the full-ownership model, but still is more complicated and involved than a UCaaS approach.

Features:

- Control over integration of the UC solution with other technologies and organizations
- Lives on the organization's network, within its security perimeter
- Allows for a full suite of capabilities and features
- Operations, maintenance and/or upgrade responsibilities are outsourced

Benefits:

- No need to worry about hiring and retaining in-house IT staff trained in UC technology
- Organization easily can transition into or out of self-management
- Licensing usually is managed by the managed service provider
- Architecture is customizable to the specific needs of the organization
- Maximizes bandwidth efficiency and system redundancy and survivability for geographically dispersed organizations

Requirements:

- Set defined Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that the provider must adhere to
- Hardware space and/or a virtualized environment for running the UC applications
- Physical space for help desk services if an on-premise presence is desired
- Project management and oversight of the provider
- CAPEX and OPEX budget for procurement and upgrades

Note: Solution scalability requires investment in more hardware, software and/or licensing and possibly additional staff.

Who is the managed service model right for?

The managed service model generally benefits medium to large organizations that require customized UC solutions, have complex system integration requirements or are geographically dispersed. For example, a large-sized organization who has employees spread throughout various regions of the United States, but limited existing IT staff or resources, would benefit most from this model. Generally, organizations with one or more of the following characteristics would be served best by this model of UC delivery:

- Medium to large in size
- Limited IT/UC technology focus or internal resources
- Require customized UC solutions and/or complex system integration
- Geographically dispersed
- Maintain classified networks, sensitive information or have strict security requirements

Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS)

In this model, the entire solution is owned or hosted by another company that is responsible fully for operations, maintenance and upgrades. Any organization using this service would pay a fixed-rate subscription fee for access to the solution, and the service provider would be responsible for providing uninterrupted UC services. An organization implementing this solution typically would buy subscriptions based on need and number of users. While this is the simplest, easiest and quickest UC program to get up and running, it often is a pre-packaged solution that may not allow for customization or a flexible feature set.

While the UCaaS model is the simplest, easiest and quickest UC program to get up and running, it often is a pre-packaged solution that may not allow for customization or a flexible feature set.

Features:

- Simplest delivery model
- Accessible through a web browser or client software
- Subscription-based
- Purchased and scaled up or down on an as-needed basis

Benefits:

- No need for in-house IT staff to be experienced in UC
- Quick and easy to implement
- Hosting company takes all responsibility for the solution and its upkeep
- Little to no upfront investment required
- Little to no risk
- Software-based solution allows use on almost any computing device – desktop or mobile
- Hosting company is responsible for architecting a solution for geographically dispersed companies

Requirements:

- Sufficiently robust network to support the traffic and required bandwidth
- Client software or plug-ins still have to be installed on computers
- OPEX budget

Who is the UCaaS model right for?

The UCaaS model is the simplest, most flexible option available and is beneficial particularly for small to medium organizations with no special security requirements. Let's consider as an example a small business that is looking for a way to connect its base of 50 employees – the majority of whom telework. This organization would be a great candidate for the UCaaS model. Generally, organizations with one or more of the following characteristics could benefit from this approach:

- Small to medium in size
- Fluctuating staff size and/or locations
- Limited IT/UC technology focus and research
- No desire or ability to invest heavily in UC infrastructure

Choosing the Best Option

Trying to decide which UC delivery model is most beneficial to an organization can sound like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. By taking a step back to look at the scope of the organization – including number of employees, locations, technical expertise on-hand and what communications technologies are in place already – the answer usually becomes clear-cut.

UC implementation can optimize an organization's control of its communications systems by putting everything in a central, reliable and predictable environment. Choosing the right implementation model is critical for achieving the greatest benefits from a UC environment – but all models, in the end, will allow employees to communicate and collaborate wherever the work may take them, on any approved device and in a way that is inherent to desktop, tablet and smartphone users. Regardless of which model is selected, UC can create cost savings, reduce travel needs and drive employee performance and efficiency.

About TWD

TWD has more than 20 years of experience in the design, implementation, and management of voice, video and data solutions. We offer all three UC delivery models – full ownership, managed service, and UCaaS – all of which provide innovative and leading-edge UC capabilities and benefits, backed by the specialized expertise of our team of UC professionals. TWD works closely with organizations to understand their specific mission or business, user and budget requirements in order to implement a UC solution that works best for their specific needs.

For more information or to request a demonstration, contact David Parker at parkerd@twd.com or (703) 341.4072, or visit www.twd.com.