

UC Implementation: Not Just **Plug-and-play**



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With the right solution, provider, and adoption approach, you can upgrade your communications and business capabilities.

A New Communication System—and a New Culture

Any business that's been operating for more than a few years is probably the veteran of at least one new phone system installation. And if your company is like most, you've found that even when you choose a system for its array of features and functionalities, it still becomes out-moded faster than you intended. Keeping up with customer and vendor expectations can mean going through the whole process again, only to learn of new capabilities that are introduced to the market just as you get the hang of the new call transfer process.

A hosted, cloud-based, mobile unified communications system gets you off that merry-go-round once and for all. Equally important, it migrates your company from a telephony mindset to one that embraces a single tool for managing voice, text, email, conferencing, document sharing, and more. Adopting that unified approach to communication positions your company to optimize its efficiency, productivity, and real-time decision-making capabilities. In other



words, it unifies not only your communications, but also your competitive strengths.

That signals more than a change in equipment and services. This transition is cultural as much as it is technological, and you have to prepare for the change institutionally and at the individual employee level.

Your team will have the ability to truly multitask and do so productively. What's available on their desktops will be equally accessible from their mobile devices. They'll be able to move among platforms and apps without dropping calls, waiting for a new window to open, or pausing negotiations while a file downloads. Everything will upgrade automatically, and system maintenance and security will be handled by your service provider's experts, so you and your people can focus on what you do best.



“People resist change when they are not invited to share their concerns and ideas that position them for success,” says Shawn Murphy, CEO and senior partner at WorqIQ.

At the same time, there's no getting around the need to adapt to change. And even positive change can spark discomfort and resistance within an organization. So, part of successful adoption of unified communications involves successful introduction of its benefits to your staff.

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When you as the business owner present the change in terms of its benefits to the business, this logic-based approach can backfire, he adds. “Our brains perceive change as a threat. It's a survival response. When a technology change is announced, employees don't consider the value to the company first. They begin evaluating how they are impacted.”

You'll have more success and get swifter buy-in if you "help employees move beyond their self-interests" and "consistently and genuinely invite them to get their fingerprints on shaping solutions that impact them directly," Murphy says.

What to Look for in a Provider

A good service provider can aid you in the process of gathering and disseminating information that will reassure employees about the change. A good general rule of thumb is to focus the team's attention on the system's benefits rather than its features and to relate those benefits to the way employees work now.

The overriding benefit of a cloud-based system is that when new capabilities launch or existing features are enhanced, they're immediately

accessible to you. All that's required of you and your team is to upgrade the application. That process will be familiar to anyone who has ever pushed the "upgrade" button on a mobile device to get the latest version of a favorite app.



A key benefit your provider should be able to deliver is reliability. With a traditional PBX system, you often had one service provider who delivered the trunking to the PBX and another—a system integrator or value-added reseller—who installed the equipment. It was often up to you as the business owner

to coordinate the service provider's and system integrator's work so that your business received the complete solution it needed.

Look for a cloud service provider that delivers the network and application together. That eliminates the possibility of you having to navigate finger-pointing and attempts to shift blame between the voice and network providers. "You want to know who is responsible for your ex-

perience,” says Eric Hyman, director of product marketing at Comcast Business. “When buying a solution, consider who is going to be responsible for that call quality and how it is going to be maintained.”

Another benefit your provider should be able to deliver is scalability, which can have an impact on how easily your operations can grow, expand, or simply deal with seasonality. “How easy is it for the solution to grow as you grow? With a cloud solution, it could be as simple as shipping another telephone, while everything else is delivered via cloud,” Hyman says. “With a premise-based solution, you may need to have your PBX programmed for that additional seat and wonder if you have enough trunking to handle the call volume as your business grows.”

Getting Ready for Transition and Change

When you find a provider who checks all the boxes, you may be tempted to sell the choice internally by touting

Comcast Business VoiceEdge: A Comprehensive Solution

A successful unified communications implementation requires a hosted, cloud-based, mobile solution. It should run over an advanced voice platform that is easy to manage, scalable, and able to integrate enterprise applications. Comcast Business VoiceEdge delivers five essential qualities you should seek in a solution and solution provider:

- **Reliability.** You need your phones, data access, and Internet to work. Comcast sees its role as keeping your business running smoothly, and its customer satisfaction levels confirm its commitment to reliability.
- **Feature functionality.** Know which features you rely on and will be running most. Comcast will work with you to make sure those areas of functionality are among your solution’s strengths.
- **Ease of use.** “You want a service that’s frictionless so it will be adopted by the organization,” Hyman says. “Too often, you deploy a solution because it was cost-effective—but nobody is using it.” Comcast will help ensure that the features you need are accessible and can be used seamlessly by your internal team and their contacts outside the company.
- **Financial stability.** You need a company that’s investing in the solution and its success, which suggests strong prospects for a long-term and mutually beneficial partnership. Comcast’s unified communications business is growing.
- **Continuous investment.** Likewise, Comcast is investing in continued upgrades and enhancements. We know that to be a good partner, we need to maintain a track record of delivering more features and functionality that support your ability to focus on revenue growth versus keeping the lights on.



the need it fills or the benefits it delivers. But Murphy advises taking a step back before you get to those message points. “Show that you care about helping employees succeed in the new environment,” he says. “Listen to their ideas and concerns. Treat employees like the valued partners they are.”

Inevitably, there will be resisters on the team, and some may be quite vocal in expressing their opposition to the

change. Murphy encourages you to listen to their concerns but cautions against creating a platform for them to raise the volume on minority complaints. “The belief that getting resisters on board makes it easier for others to buy in to the change is a myth,” he says. “More time spent winning over employees who will challenge the project only alienates supporters of the change from getting involved or speaking up.”

One strategy he has found productive with WorqIQ clients is to create short-term work groups, each of which is given “a specific assignment related to the tech change,” he says. “By tapping into the group’s experiences and work realities you not only get more solid solutions but also commitment to the changes. Why? The change isn’t thrust upon employees. Instead, they are included in developing solutions.”

Understand, too, that everyone will need some time to master the practical implications of the change. It’s not just a matter of culture. Adoption takes time, and your implementation schedule needs to include training sessions and familiarization with the resources available to help everyone get the most out of the upgrades in functionality from your old system.

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That's another area in which your service provider should be able to offer support. You want a company that doesn't just sell the solution, but offers the resources necessary to bring everyone up to speed in its optimal use.

And those resources should encompass a variety of learning modules and processes, because people master information and training in different ways. For some, quick text-based reference guides will be sufficient. Others will prefer to receive information that's reinforced visually, and for them, training videos may be the most effective solution. And for more complex questions, advanced functionality, and strategic use, webinars can provide additional layers of knowledge that help convert unified communications into a productivity tool throughout your workplace.

Timing, Troubleshooting, and Long-term Success

Unified communications solutions don't follow the "rip and replace" playbook. To begin with, you need to build a realistic timeline for ramping up to replacement, adoption, and troubleshooting needs. It's also smart to think at the outset about your long-term needs and how you'll need the system to scale with your business well into the future.

In terms of the installation itself, make sure you know what the service provider does and does not deliver. Its expectations of your role in the process have to

Key Training Issues/Resources

Training is a cyclical process. A good service provider begins with the basics, responds to frequently asked questions as they arise, and elicits customer feedback on an ongoing basis so that like the solution, the support continues to evolve.

From its [Business VoiceEdge Support](#) page, Comcast addresses key training issues with a range of resources, including:

- End-user guides on topics like popular features, business apps, Apple and Google apps, and use of the receptionist console.
- Technical administrator guides to teleworker instructions for Business VoiceEdge, softphone information for Windows and Macs, and call detail report references.
- Interactive and self-paced virtual courses on phone basics and advanced features.
- A library of videos on such topics as managing features online and managing companion applications.
- Weekly "ask a trainer" sessions hosted every Friday.



align with your own capacity and tolerance for “do-it-yourself” requirements. “A company may just ship you the phones and walk you through the installation

process or expect you to follow videos and instructions on how to set yourself up,” Hyman says. “With a more professional installation, the service provider will have a technician come to your site to deliver and install the service. Most customers want the latter.”

Support can begin with the pre-sales team and continue through the sales, installation, and follow-up phases, he says. That’s essential to remember, because there’s no fixed timetable for getting your unified communications solution up and running. The timetable can vary from days to weeks, Hyman says, depending on how big and dispersed your organization is and how complex your needs are. One example: you may want to create one communications experience for employees and another for executives.

From the pre-sales phase forward, a good service provider should be listening to your plans and expectations and

Anticipating—and Addressing—Implementation Issues

Adopting a unified communications solution isn’t about technology bragging rights or increasing your company’s cool quotient. It’s about integrating the tools you need to fulfill your company’s performance potential. Here are some steps you can take to ensure a solid transition as you implement UC:

- Your first step in developing an implementation plan should be identifying the business needs that can be addressed with enhanced communications. Be sure to get team members’ input so they feel involved and invested from the start.
- Confer with your service provider to determine which features and functionality meet your business needs or address current pain points.
- With a cloud-based system, you can add more features as your needs evolve. But focus on what you need now as step one in your implementation plan.
- Allocate training time for staff members to master those key features. To maximize employee buy-in, make sure they understand how the change will simplify their work lives or reduce frustrations they’ve experienced.
- Once the new system is implemented, solicit employee feedback on how well the solution is addressing the needs you targeted. Go back to your service provider for suggestions on how to fine-tune the service to close any gaps.
- Remember that this is a “living” solution, so repeat this process as your business and its needs evolve.

should be able to work with you to create a realistic and viable implementation schedule. Whatever the timetable, you should be able to count on the provider to keep you informed about how the roll-out will progress and minimize surprises in the process.

Finally, you need to account for the human element in adoption of any new technology—especially a technology that for certain functions mirrors one your employees carry in their own pockets. With unified communications, your team members can access data and engage via voice, email, text, conferencing, document sharing, and collaboration platforms from their own command central, regardless of where they're located. All that communication is part of your company's intellectual property and competitive edge, so you need it protected by the caliber of security available via a cloud implementation—a caliber of security individual employees cannot replicate on their own mobile devices.

To discourage them from doing what's easy and familiar now and instead doing what's more productive for the long term, give them time to get used to the new system, and make sure they know how to access those training resources. In the end, that's what the best solution providers deliver: not just unified communications, but capacity to get the best out of each member of your team and to be empowered collectively to optimize your company's performance and profitability.

Comcast Business VoiceEdge Resources

These online tools and references can help you learn more about all the capabilities Comcast Business VoiceEdge has to offer.

- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Features and Add-Ons](#)
- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Interactive Learning Sessions](#)
- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Community](#)
- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Select](#)
- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Support](#)
- [Comcast Business VoiceEdge Self-Help Videos](#)