



White Paper

Unified Communications for Enterprises: Buyers Guide

Businesses Must Prioritize Investments in Convenient, Robust, and Mobile All-In-One Communications Tools



9 Trends

Top 5 Workspace Delivery Priorities

What are your organization's biggest priorities when it comes to delivering applications, data, and desktop/devices?



11 Feature

3-Month UC Return on Investment

Security is essential for any business. Read how human error impacted IMB, Microsoft, Slack, and Zoom.



15 Tips

Evolving Your Communication

To turn your collaboration and communications into a competitive advantage, ask yourself these questions.



20 Spotlight

6 Key UC Components: A Buyers Guide

Many types of technology and tools can streamline your day-to-day operations. So, what qualifications should be sought out when selecting a UC provider?

CONTENTS

4

SUMMARY **WHAT TO EXPECT**

5

TECHNOLOGY'S ADVANCED PACE **THE CONSTANT OF CHANGE**

7

CURRENT SOLUTIONS LANDSCAPE **DISJOINTED TOOLS FALL SHORT**

7 Siloed Solutions: Every Department for Themselves

8 Human Latency

9 Scaling Concerns: Not Just for Seasonal-Growth Companies

10

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES **HOW POOR UC AFFECTS BUSINESSES**

10 Siloed Tools Create a Ripple Effect

11 Human Latency: Time Wasted is Money Lost

12 Scaling Ramifications: Poorly Implemented UC

13

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS **THE BACKBONE FOR TODAY'S WORKFORCE**

14 Dismantled Silos Still Require a Unified Communication Tool

17 Presence Tools: Overcoming Human Latency

17 Scalable UC: More Than a Convenience – It's a Requirement

19

UC IS BEST POSITIONED FOR **ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, ANY NETWORK**

20 6 Key UC Components: A Buyers Guide

SUMMARY

WHAT TO EXPECT

If COVID-19 taught us anything, it is that change is constant and large industry changes are not always predictable. While collaboration and communication tools have always been important, the worldwide shift to working from home caught many organizations by surprise and demonstrated that we took in-person communication for granted.

Without the advantage of in-person communication, organizations that hadn't previously optimized their internal and external communication solutions struggled. **Often, the emphasis to optimize technology is placed on the physical on-premises infrastructure**, while the same consideration and planning is not always applied to cloud-based tools. **60% of companies don't have a long-term strategy for their internal communications.** No matter how big or small your company is, you need to have a long-term strategy for internal communications.¹

Technological innovation has not only changed the underlying communications protocols for solutions like a (private branch exchange) PBX, it has also expanded the scope and usability of the enterprise communications. **Given the rapid evolution of technology, businesses must prioritize investments in convenient and robust all-in-one communications tools that are mobile, aid in breaking down silos, remove human latency roadblocks, and support short- and long-term business scalability.**



TECHNOLOGY'S ADVANCED PACE

THE CONSTANT OF CHANGE

Every organization expect technology to advance over time and should have strategies in place to deal with such changes. However, it's easy to forget the magnitude of potential changes (like COVID-19) and many organizations are unprepared for an industry-wide disruption. Without the luxury of in-person communication, issues such as siloed communication, human latency, and scalability concerns were exacerbated.

The recent pandemic effected large strides in the adoption of unified communications (UC) solution to enhance work-from-home capabilities:

42%

of companies have increased cloud application and unified communication adoption.

67%

of organizations are moving significant portions of their Unified Communications solutions to the cloud.

85%

of the world's leading companies feel that APIs that extend business communications for both employees and customers are crucial to business growth.

99%

of people would happily choose to work remotely at least part-time for the remainder of their careers.

77%

of employees say remote working helps their company lower operating costs

625%

increase in downloads of video chat and online conference apps, with 121% increase in daily active users in North America.

25%

lower employee turnover in companies with remote working opportunities than those that don't offer.

Source:

Retrieved 16 December 2021 from [Web Hosting Professional: Remote Working Statistics](#)

Retrieved 16 February 2021 from [GetVoIP: The State of Unified Communications in 2020](#)

THE COMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE AT A GLANCE

Yesterday

- PBX
- VoIP Desk Phone
- Business Extensions
- Voicemail (Telephone Tag)
- Business Mobile Phone
- Business Travel

Today and Tomorrow

- Unified Communications
- Smartphones, Tablets
- Anywhere, Anytime, Any Network Access
- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)
- Instant Messaging
- Video Conferencing
- Screen Sharing
- Presence

UC TRENDS

- **Smartphone traffic** is set to exceed desktop PC traffic by **2022**.
- **61%** of businesses with traditional phone systems adopt VoIP phone systems at the end of their contract.
- Trendsetting organizations were found to be **150%** more likely to use mobile communications solutions than follower organizations who tend to play catch up.

Source: GetVoIP. The State of Unified Communications in 2020



CURRENT SOLUTIONS LANDSCAPE

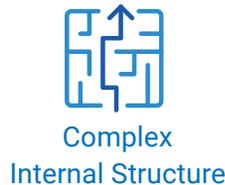
DISJOINTED TOOLS FALL SHORT

Siloed Solutions: Every Department for Themselves

Silos are so prevalent that organizations can struggle with them without ever knowing a term for the issue exists. When a company's individual moving parts find themselves working toward their own individual goals, even when they're part of larger organizational goals, it's natural for information, skillsets, and employees to become isolated. This is **exacerbated in geographically diverse environments, in which physical distance can insulate departments** that should ostensibly work in lockstep. There are a significant number of technological and management challenges organizations face with remote working (see figure 1). When teams don't communicate enough, they risk wasting precious time due to the duplication of work or missed deadlines because projects were not properly coordinated. In fact, **28% of employees cite poor communication as the reason for not being able to deliver work on time.**²

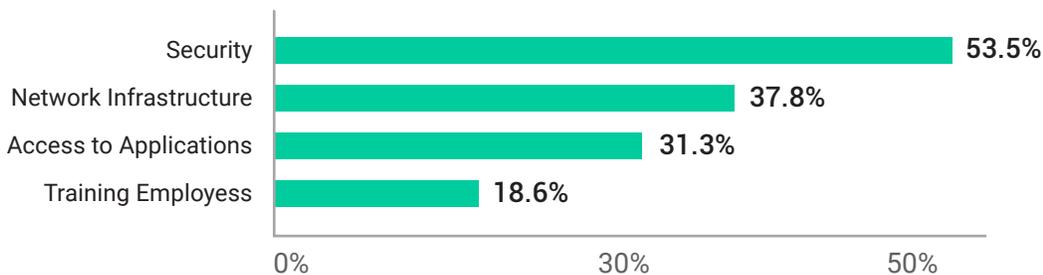
Mobility is a growing trend for workers. Given employees have become more nomadic out of necessity to sustain working during a pandemic, they need access to consistent tools while they are away from their desks. Statista estimates **mobile workers in the US will increase by 19% by 2024, increasing to 93.5 million mobile workers** (see figure 2).

The silo effect can be caused by:



WFH Challenges

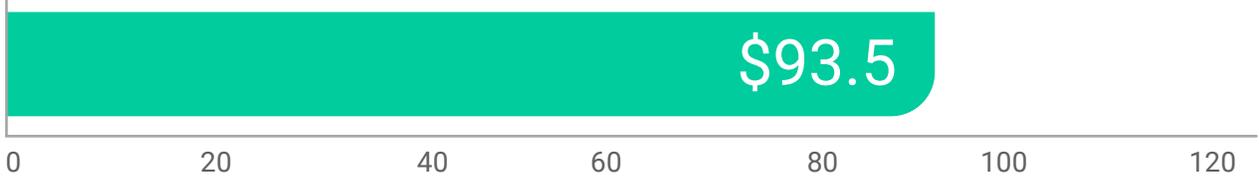
Figure 1



Source: Spiceworks – State of Virtualization

Projected Number of Mobile Workers in the US in 2024 (in Millions)

Figure 2



Source: Statista – Mobile Worker Population Forecast

Human Latency

Human latency is the amount of time a business process is pending or delayed while waiting for the humans to act upon it. There are a significant number of examples where technology has intervened to help reduce the impact of human latency and improve efficiencies, such as:

- **Instant Messaging:** Dialog can occur without waiting for all parties to be available for a phone call.
- **Audio and Video Conferencing:** Meetings that don't require transportation time.
- **Collaborative Workspace:** Chat rooms where collaborative processes don't have to wait until everyone is available at the same time.
- **Presence or Agent State:** Software that can identify an agent's status (available, busy, or away) to expedite locating an available agent to assist with an internal inquiry or serve a customer.

Improving employee collaboration is a top consideration for most organizations (see figure 3). Human latency becomes more pronounced as technology grows more useful, and **97% of workers believe that communication impacts tasks every day.**³ When was the last time you waited on a coworker to respond to a critical email about a customer's technical issue or a project was temporarily stalled as you waited on a co-worker to complete paperwork you desperately needed? Larger organizations can really feel the burn if they are utilizing old, outdated, poor quality or inadequately scaled communication tools. This is the reason so many midsize and enterprise companies strive for things such as agility and responsiveness.

Quantified Communications found that businesses as small as 100 employees spend on average 17 hours a week clarifying unclear communication, which translates to an annual cost of at least \$525,000.⁴



of corporate executives, educators, and employees cite ineffective communication and poor collaboration as reasons for failures in the workplace.⁵

Top 5 Workspace Delivery Priorities

Figure 3

What are your organization's biggest priorities when it comes to delivering applications, data, and desktop/devices? (Percentage of respondents, N=354, multiple responses accepted)



Source: [Spiceworks – State of Virtualization](#)

Scaling Concerns: Not Just for Seasonal-Growth Companies

Businesses grow. Businesses shrink. And so do their needs. Organizations with busy seasons and a high need for seasonal employees may have to coordinate a large influx of employees for several months but have only a smaller core of permanent workers throughout the rest of the year. In the past, businesses with inconsistent communications needs had to use what they had available, often at higher price points given the temporary nature of their needs. It was only organizations that were able to order in scale, or support orders of magnitude, that could provision and remove users as needed to better suit their organizations fluctuating needs.

While this industry challenge is not as prevalent now as 10 years ago, economies of scale are still thriving and having a communications strategy is still just a vital to an organizations success. A current pitfall is the “set and forget” mentality, or the absence of a strategic cadence to evaluate their current tool sets. **Even organizations that had taken the time and effort to select a modern enterprise tool may find it isn't the perfect tool forever.** It is rare for businesses to operate at the same size for long, with growth patterns ranging from predictable and seasonal to unpredictable such as we saw with COVID-19 (see figure 4). For these reasons, it's essential to have a **scalable UC tool, to weather anticipated and unanticipated technology changes.**

Industry Seasonality – Mean Deviation in %

Figure 4



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey – selective industries, 1987–2004.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

HOW POOR UC AFFECTS BUSINESSES

Siloed Tools Create a Ripple Effect

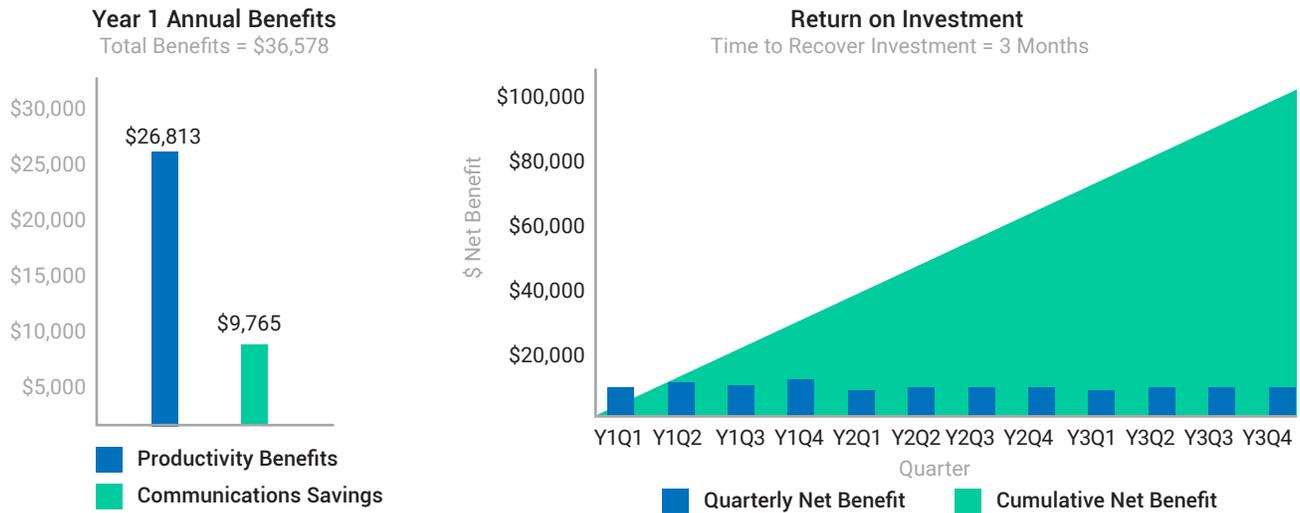
While it seems justifiable to have different solutions for different departments, it results in a disjointed set of tools that creates ripple effects throughout the organization, impacting productivity, employee satisfaction, increasing security risks, reducing cost savings, and more (see figure 5). For example, employees on average spend 2.5 hours a day looking for information they need to do their jobs, and employee productivity increases 20–25% in organizations where employees are more connected.⁶

An internal communications strategy enhances information flow not only between departments but also within teams. Without a unified communications tool in place, employees cannot properly coordinate their efforts effectively. At the end of the day, your entire business may suffer from low employee productivity. In the US alone, productivity loss costs \$550 billion a year.⁷ In addition, contacting customers or colleagues on software that has poor quality can be damaging to your organization's reputation, so it's critical to select the right software. Unified communication software should be easy to use and have the right quality for the application.

39% of employees around the world feel that people don't collaborate enough within their organization, yet 75% of employers rate collaboration and teamwork as "very important."⁸

3-Month Unified Communications Return on Investment

Figure 5



These savings provide a positive Return on Investment (ROI) within 3 months and a very strong business case going forward.

Assumptions: company PBX size: 100 seats; Bria seats: 15; Productivity improvements: 2 minutes per day and 1 fewer trips; Cost savings: desk phone purchase avoided, \$20 per month per seats mobile expense savings, and 20 minutes of international long distance via mobile avoided.

Source: Alianza

Human Latency: Time Wasted is Money Lost

Did you know that **62% of emails receive by employees are not important, and it takes more than one minute to recover from reading an email?**⁹ Your employees' time is precious, so you don't want them to be interrupted with unimportant or irrelevant emails. And with email overload, important importation is likely to be missed. To avoid this, organizations must reassess their unified communications strategy to include using an employee communications app where you can engage your employees with your content.

Human latency also impacts an organization's ability to be competitive in the market. The way you communicate and engage with your employees has a direct impact on your business's success, either making it more competitive or falling behind in comparison. **Organizations with effective change and communication programs are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their peers.**¹⁰ In addition, **70% of all online conferencing meetings by the year 2022 will be huddle-room meetings.**¹¹ **Can your organization afford to be left out?**

“Businesses need to equip themselves to compete in this new normal because if they don't, they could face the same fate as those organizations that have struggled and failed.” — Punit Renjen, CEO, Deloitte Global

Scaling Ramifications: Poorly Implemented UC

All organizations have some degree of seasonal or predictable changes, and without a solution that scales to needs, your organization is confined to make rapid, and potentially unsavory, decisions that have unforeseen short- and long-term consequences. For example:¹²

- **85%** of participants of online meetings experience issues with the software and staying connected.
- **42%** of individuals attending online meetings will become frustrated before the meeting begins because they can't join a meeting easily.
- **\$34 billion** a year in revenue is lost each year due to poor conference calls.
- **86%** of business owners consider workplace issues to be the direct result of inadequate communications tools.

Today, more than 30% of organizations operate hybrid strategies that include a mix of on-premises and cloud platforms, but operating disjointed applications can create some challenges:

- **IT must administer multiple platforms**, often with different user credentials and security management capabilities.
- **Users must determine the right application to use for each given need** and will find it confusing to navigate between different apps to accomplish tasks.
- **Integrating multiple collaboration applications** with other business platforms, such as CRM, ERP, or HR, is cumbersome.

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

THE BACKBONE FOR TODAY'S WORKFORCE

Unified communications solutions are more than just voice services added to a PBX. They provide employees with multiple modes of communications including voice, instant messaging, SMS, presence, video calling, screen sharing, and more. You could deploy non-integrated services from multiple vendors (such as different clients for voice, messaging, screen sharing), but navigating disparate solutions for each service is frustrating for employees and a nightmare for IT to maintain.

Today, organizations are looking for two things: convenient communications services that support the way they work, and for these tools to be available on any device, network, platform, or infrastructure stack. Similarly, IT managers want a secure centralized method to manage, to efficiently deploy, upgrade, and maintain these services from anywhere in a cost-effective manner.

Communication is pivotal for the success of remote teams, and adopting the right tools and software plays a key role in facilitating this. It is crucial to encourage easy and frequent communication among team members.

TANGIBLE ENTERPRISE BENEFITS

Savings

- Avoid purchasing desk phones or other BYOD hardware
- Reduce reimbursement for mobile calling expenses
- Reduce international calling costs
- Reduce the cost of PSTN calling for intra-company calls

Productivity

- More responsive and connected "anytime, anywhere" employees
- More effective conferencing and less travel
- Lower IT administrative effort

Dismantled Silos Still Require a Unified Communication Tool

Organizations that manage to break down silos and improve their internal communications are far more likely to outperform their competition, but **removing silos all together is not enough**. To stay ahead of the market and grow your business, your organization needs to rethink its overall communication strategy (see figure 6). By using collaboration tools, **businesses are reducing their need to hold in-person meetings by an average of 30%**.¹³

Regardless of how your organization is laid out, “unified” is the operative term in unified communications when silo problems arise. UC tools allow organizations to communicate as one entity and turn the “one business” mantra into an actionable, functional practice.

The benefits of a de-siloed office can manifest in a lot of ways. Information can be shared more freely, making it easier for departments to understand how their contributions play into the greater good. The always-on, always-connected features allow colleagues to reach out to one another no matter where both parties work. If information is contained among departments, UC tools can help you unify your whole business.



Evolving Your Communication Strategy

Figure 6

To turn your collaboration and communications into a competitive advantage, ask yourself questions such as:

?

Do your current tools release regular network integrity and security updates? If not, the burden falls to your IT team.

?

Are communication channels siloed due to overlapping functionality?

?

How are silos impacting your business right now?

?

Can you measure those impacts on your business?

?

Are communication costs snowballing due to disjointed applications that are not suitable for use company-wide?

?

What channels (voice, messaging, video, etc.) do you want to use?

?

Are remote workers utilizing personal communication platforms that restrict IT from supporting and maintaining corporate security standards?

?

Are you using the right technologies to drive adoption?

?

Are your current solutions location agnostic to support of a remote workforce?

?

How can you leverage your current platforms while allowing for the ability to easily scale to adapt to seasonal needs or rapid industry changes?

?

Do you want internal communications to be customized based on your employees' roles within the organization?

?

What solutions provide network and device flexibility, therefore protecting the organization's initial CAPEX-heavy investment?

?

What is your organization's long-term strategy to address remote working?

?

Does the current suite of communication tools provide holistic collaboration that will future proof your organization against another industry disruptive event?

?

How do you plan to measure the effectiveness of your internal communications in the future?

Unified communications have been implemented with great passion in call centers, and the resulting improvements in both customer satisfaction and business profitability, including cost savings and revenue growth, are matters of record. Why won't we do this in the rest of the business?

BENEFITS OF UC ¹⁴

- **50%** of employee turnover is reduced by the presence of an effective communication system.
- Mobile video in unified communications is **2x** more likely to improve the customer service experience.
- Video conferencing is the **second most preferred method** of communication between teams with the first being in-person meetings.
- **75%** of CEOs predict that video-assisted meetings will eventually replace traditional conference calling.
- **34.3%** of businesses have reduced IT spending by an average of \$161k a year by eliminating redundant apps and shifting to cloud-based unified communications as a service (UCaaS) solutions.



Presence Tools: Overcoming Human Latency

Although any number of unified communications benefits can help companies overcome latency problems, presence tools which display users' availability are the real star. The response-critical aspect of patient billing in the volume-thirsty healthcare industry can really show what presence can do. For instance, front-line agents can see which cross-departmental agents are available so they can send an instant message to confirm availability before transferring the call, with none of the confusion or delay multiple active calls can cause.

In all cases of human latency, the emphasis needs to be on changing processes to relentlessly reduce the time, cost, and delays that exist due to communication inefficiencies, especially those that involve waiting for an individual to respond, decide, or act.

Additional benefits of UC solutions include:

- **81%** of employees feel that collaboration apps improve the overall productivity of the company.¹⁵
- **76%** of attendees using video conferencing for collaboration while working remotely report experiencing enhanced work-life balance.
- **50%** of employee turnover is reduced by the presence of an effective communication system.
- **55%** of employees feel that a mobile app would help them become more engaged with their company.¹⁶

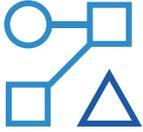
Scalable UC: More Than a Convenience – It's a Requirement

Seasonal-growth companies aren't the only ones who benefit from scalable solutions. Organizations with predictable growth patterns also need tools that support communication and collaboration while also accounting for attrition and other headcount-changes and providing IT the ability to provision users faster and easier than ever before. The same applies for organizations that aim to expand into new locations without paying exorbitant fees for on-premises wiring and installation fees.

Versatility in your real-time communications system helps a business succeed. While a series of smaller third-party solutions could do the job, UC solutions come with a high level of interoperability, carrier-grade calling, voicemail, messaging, voice and video conferencing, and more streamlined deployment and management. With the right package, communication with customers and colleagues will improve across the enterprise.

By 2022, experts predict that internet video traffic and worldwide IP video traffic will increase by 4 times the 2017 volumes.¹⁷

4 Ways to Scale:



Choose a communications platform that supports flexibility



Move to the cloud



Use a provider with managed edge capabilities



Be proactive about scaling

What is a Managed Edge Service?

Managed edge services process data near the periphery of a network, closer to where it is consumed and produced. A managed edge security solution can help you establish complete data control with end-to-end encryption and access management tools including service and network monitoring. A UC provider can support you with security, management, implementation, solution design, and support.



UC IS BEST POSITIONED FOR

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, ANY NETWORK

In a world where working from home and remote work tools are critical, **unified communication is more than just a convenience – it is a requirement.** Aside from the obvious increase in productivity and cost savings, the measure of UC impact will be seen in **how businesses can reshape their legacy of arcane, highly manual, individualized, and latency prone communications** to optimize their business processes and not just the employee's convenience. Enterprises need a client solution that will work with their current communications infrastructure and on a wide variety of laptops, smartphones, and tablets.

Invest in convenient communication tools that are mobile, aid in breaking down silos, remove human latency roadblocks, and significantly support short- and long-term business scalability.

UC Advantages Include:¹⁸

- Easier collaboration through a single platform using file sharing, chat, and conferencing.
- Reduced administration and maintenance costs via cloud providers
- High reliability since most service providers have 99% or greater service level agreements (SLAs).
- Flexibility for employee collaboration from within the office.

Nemertes found the top five key capabilities sought after by organizations for their collaboration tools included:¹⁷



End-to-End
Encryption
41.1%



Video and Audio
Conferencing
40.4%



Low Cost
36.3%



On-Premises Option
32.6%



Message Export
24.4%

6 Key UC Components: A Buyers Guide

A mature UC provider can deliver the quality and compatibility you need. Look for a UC provider that offers a tech-forward solution with automatic software updates, security enhancements, and new features, so your organization can stay competitive. **Many types of technology and tools can streamline your day-to-day operations.**

So, what qualifications should be sought out when selecting a UC provider?

- ① **Quality:** An established UC provider will have a long track record with millions of tested and deployed UC clients. This ensures they have worked out the kinks when it comes to a streamlined deployment, solutions design, and tool quality.
- ② **Common Platform & Interface:** Select a UC tool that has a similar interface across all devices and operating systems. This allows users can transition from one device to another without any additional training or confusion about the interface.
- ③ **Customizability:** The ability to customize features for your specific business requirements is key. Some requirements are cosmetic, like branding; some are functional, requiring the inclusion or exclusion of certain features or controls; and some require the inclusion of business capabilities driven by proprietary enterprise systems.
- ④ **Compatibility:** Companies may use an assortment of PBXs, conference bridges, SBCs, video MCU, and other equipment on the back end, which may change over time for any number of reasons. A mature UC provider will be agnostic and work seamlessly with organizational changes in the core network.
- ⑤ **Unbiased Focus on Future Technology:** A UC provider that is quick to embrace emerging technologies, including flexible SDKs, RCS, and WebRTC, will provide your organization a greater range of infrastructure flexibility. It also places the engineering work required for software upgrades, feature developments, and security enhancements with the UC provider rather than your organization.
- ⑥ **Easy to Install:** It's an obvious but vital requirement to ensure the deployment, provisioning, and maintenance does not create down time or place an unnecessary burden on IT and support staff.



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¹ Retrieved 16 Feb 2021 from [Smarp: 10 Shocking Internal Communications Stats You Can't Ignore](#)

² Retrieved 17 Feb 2021 from [Expert Market: Communication in the Workplace Statistics for 2021](#)

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⁴ Retrieved 16 Feb 2021 from [Smarp: 10 Shocking Internal Communications Stats You Can't Ignore](#)

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¹¹ Retrieved 16 Feb 2021 from [GetVoIP: The State of Unified Communications in 2020](#)

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¹⁹ "Visual Communications and Collaboration Research Study: 2020-21", Nemertes, June 2020