USING UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS TO ENABLE A MOBILE WORKFORCE

An examination of corporate adoption of Unified Communications to support mobile workers.

A Jabra report, in conjunction with Frost & Sullivan
SUMMARY

According to nearly 70% of companies that have implemented Unified Communications, mobile workers are early adopters of UC tools and effectively leverage UC in the field. However, many companies appear to be lacking in their support of UC to enable a mobile workforce. In fact, fewer than four out of every 10 UC workers currently access UC applications off site.

Companies cited several reasons for adopting UC technologies, with the majority expressing a desire to increase employee productivity and improve business processes. Yet supporting mobile workers and distributed teams ranked low among the reasons for the UC implementation. And while many organizations also cited the global recession as a key factor in deploying UC technologies, the benefits they expected to gain centered more around productivity and cost savings than increased worker mobility.

When it comes to specific UC tools and their impact on the organization, many companies agree that IP telephony is transforming the way employees work. The biggest benefits companies expect to receive from these solutions include improved communication and collaboration among employees. Yet again, enhancing the mobility of employees ranked as a lower priority. Nevertheless, companies in United States and Japan place a higher priority on using UC technologies to enhance employee mobility than their counterparts worldwide.

Although companies have placed a seemingly low priority on enabling worker mobility, employees are expressing a clear need for mobile applications. Nearly seven out of 10 workers currently use smartphones for business purposes, and nearly 60% use tablets for work. Nearly seven out of 10 organizations expect the use of these new technologies to increase over the next few years.

More than six out of 10 of companies agreed that headsets play an important role in employee adoption of UC technologies, yet only about 40% are supporting them as part of their Unified Communications strategy. Those that are using headsets cited many benefits associated with them, the biggest of which included hands-free usage and improved audio quality.
**BACKGROUND**

The use of Unified Communications (UC) is becoming increasingly prevalent across companies today. Organizations are turning to these technologies to streamline processes, reduce costs and enable both onsite and offsite workers to work more efficiently and productively. Most companies see their mobile workers as early adopters of UC and ones who effectively leverage UC in the field. Yet it appears that many companies are lacking in their support of UC to enable their mobile workers. Support for mobile workers and distributed teams ranked far lower than other reasons for adopting UC, such as increased productivity and improved business processes.

In June 2012 Jabra and analysis institute Frost & Sullivan conducted a study to evaluate companies’ strategic use of UC, including decision making, benefits, implementation challenges and expected return on UC technology investment. The study included interviews with 302 IT managers or similar key IT decision makers with responsibility for implementing Unified Communications in their company. Organizations surveyed included ones across Australia, France, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom and United States. Specific industries included Finance and Insurance, IT and Telecommunications, Manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare, Public Sector (excluding Healthcare) and Technology.

**KEY FINDINGS**

1. Nearly seven out of 10 companies that have deployed Unified Communication applications agree that mobile workers tend to be the earliest adopters of UC tools.

   Responses to the question, “To what extent do you agree with the following statements: ‘The mobile worker is an early adopter of Unified Communications tools and effectively leverages the tools in the field’” included:

   - 22%: Totally agree
   - 47%: Agree
   - 26%: Neither agree nor disagree
   - 4%: Disagree
   - 2%: Totally disagree

2. IT managers in the United States, in particular, are leaders in viewing mobile workers as early adopters of UC.

3. 76% of IT managers in the United States agreed that mobile workers are early adopters of UC tools.

   By contrast, just 58% in Germany agreed that mobile workers are early adopters of UC tools.

3. When asked why they implemented Unified Communications, most companies cited a desire to increase productivity and improve business processes. With just 13%, better support for mobile workers ranked as a far lesser reason for the UC implementation.

   Responses to the question, “Which of the following were the two main drivers in the decision to implement Unified Communications?” included:

   - Increase productivity
   - Business process enhancement
   - Improve system operation and management
   - Return on investment
   - Improve customer service
   - Better support for mobile workers
   - Better support for distributed teams

4. While companies are using Unified Communication technologies to enable workers to work productively from any location, fewer than four out of every 10 UC workers access UC applications off site.

   - 61% of users work on site with access to corporate UC applications.
   - 39% of users work off site or from home and remotely access UC applications.
   - IT and Telecommunications organizations have the highest percentage of workers who remotely access UC applications, with 43%.
Public Sector (excluding Healthcare) employers have the smallest percentage of workers who remotely access UC applications, with 33%.

“Companies that want to separate themselves from the pack would be well-served to begin deploying UC tools to allow employees to work from remote locations, such as from their homes,” says Rob Arnold, Program, Frost & Sullivan. “This is a great way for employers to demonstrate their commitment to promoting a better work/life balance and use it as a benefit to attract and retain top talent.”

As discussed in Jabra Business Brief: “UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS - from the server room to the boardroom,” IP telephony is a cornerstone of the UC philosophy, and many companies agree that it has already transformed the way in which employees work, with communication and collaboration with others as the primary benefits.

Responses to the question, “In your opinion, how have IP telephony and PC-based soft clients changed the way employees work?” include:

- 56%: Better communication.
- 41%: More collaboration.
- 36%: Increased productivity.
- 30%: Work more effectively from remote sites.
- 24%: Improved engagement and collaboration with remote workers.
- 14%: Fewer “face-to-face” meetings.

U.S. organizations are leaders in the benefits they’re receiving from IP telephony and PC-based soft clients, compared with organizations in other countries.

To the question, “In your opinion, how have IP telephony and PC-based soft clients changed the way employees work?”...

- 64% of U.S. organizations said “Better communication” (compared with 56% average across all nations surveyed).
- 62% of U.S. organizations said “More collaboration” (compared with 41% average across all nations).
- 46% of U.S. organizations said “Increased productivity” (compared with 36% average across all nations).
- 40% said “Work more effectively from remote sites” (compared with 30% average).
- 32% said “Improved engagement and collaboration with remote workers (compared with 24% average).

Manufacturing organizations, by a wide margin, are leaders in seeing IP telephony and PC-based soft clients as ways to improve engagement and collaboration with remote workers.

When asked, “In your opinion, how have IP telephony and PC-based soft clients changed the way employees work?”...

- 34% of Manufacturing companies said they use IP telephony to “improve engagement and collaboration with remote workers.”
- 22% of IT/Telecommunication companies cited “improve engagement and collaboration with remote workers.”
- 22% of Public sector (excluding Healthcare) companies said “improve engagement and collaboration with remote workers.”
- 18% of Finance and Insurance said “improve engagement and collaboration with remote workers.”
Employers see improving collaboration and productivity across geographically dispersed teams and reducing costs as the biggest benefits of their UC voice applications. Enhancing the mobility of employees ranks as a lower priority.

Responses to the question, “Which are the two most important benefits for the voice applications in your Unified Communications toolbox?” included:

- 53%: Improve collaboration and productivity across geographically dispersed teams.
- 44%: Reduce costs.
- 39%: Improve customer service.
- 31%: Accelerate decision making.
- 24%: Enhance employee mobility.
- 9%: Reduce travel.

Companies in United States and Japan place the highest priority on using UC technologies to enhance employee mobility, while ones in Germany place a low priority on it.

- 28% of respondents in the United States and Japan rank “Enhance employee mobility” among the top two most important benefits of UC voice applications....
- While only 18% of respondents in Germany place “Enhance employee mobility” among the top two most important benefits.

Companies in Australia and Japan place the highest priority on using UC technologies to reduce travel, while ones in the United States and Germany place a low priority on it.

- 18% of respondents in Australia and 12% in Japan rank “Reduce travel” among the top two most important benefits of UC voice applications....
- While only 4% of respondents in the United States and Germany place “Reduce travel” among the top two most important benefits.

Today's workers are increasingly requesting to use mobile devices to perform their job duties, as evidenced by nearly seven out of 10 workers currently using smartphones for business purposes.

- 40% of employees are using company-paid smartphones for business purposes.
- 29% of employees are using their own smartphones for business purposes.

This trend toward increased employee use of mobility-enabling devices can also be seen in the rapid proliferation of tablets, with 57% of employees already using tablets for business purposes.

- 33% of employees are using company-paid tablets for business purposes.
- 24% of employees are using their personal tablets for business purposes.

Nearly seven out of 10 organizations expect use of these new technologies to increase over the next few years.

- 68% of respondents expect the use of company-paid smartphones to increase over the next two to three years.
- 67% of respondents expect the use of company-paid tablets to increase over the next two to three years.

“As we see from the rapid explosion of smartphones and tablets in the workplace, today’s employees are crying out for increased mobility in their work activities,” says Rob Arnold, Program Manager, Frost & Sullivan. “We fully expect that companies that understand this and embrace UC tools to enable increased mobility will be the clear winners of retaining and attracting top talent.”

More than three-quarters of companies have replaced at least some of their deskphones with headsets, a move that may enable additional use of Unified Communications by home or remote workers.

- 76% of companies surveyed have replaced at least some of their deskphones with headsets.
- Replacement rates of phones with headsets were similar regardless of the size organization.
As discussed in Jabra Business Brief: “Overcoming the Challenges of Implementing Unified Communications,” most organizations said that the global recession was a key factor in deciding to roll out UC technologies. Yet the benefits they expected to gain were more centered around productivity increases and cost savings than increased worker mobility.

Responses to the question, “In what ways did the recession influence your decision to implement Unified Communications?” included:

- 57%: We anticipated cost savings.
- 52%: We anticipated productivity increases.
- 42%: We needed to become more agile, by improving collaboration.
- 39%: We consolidated our IT environment.
- 22%: We reduced IT complexity.
- 16%: We are responding to an increased demand for worker mobility.

15 Similarly, increased worker mobility also ranked low when companies were asked about the benefits they expected to gain from implementing IP telephony.

Responses to the question, “In what ways did the recession influence your decision to activate IP telephony?” included:

- 63%: We anticipated cost savings.
- 49%: We anticipated productivity increases.
- 41%: We needed to become more agile, by improving collaboration.
- 40%: We consolidated our IT environment.
- 25%: We reduced IT complexity.

- 15%: We are responding to an increased demand for worker mobility.

16 More than six out of 10 of companies agreed that headsets play an important role in employee adoption of Unified Communication technologies.

Responses to the question, “To what extend do you agree with the following sentence: ‘The headset (usage and availability) plays an important role in the adoption and acceptance of the Unified Communications?’” included:

- 16%: Totally agree.
- 45%: Agree.
- 27%: Neither agree nor disagree.
- 8%: Disagree.
- 3%: Totally disagree.

17 “It is also our experience that headsets play an important role in UC adoption and acceptance,” says Holger Reisinger, Jabra Vice President of Marketing, Products and Alliances. “Our hands-free communication solutions are the result of an ongoing dialogue with the people who use our...
products. Headsets are critical to a positive first experience with Unified Communications and there we emphasize a highly intuitive user experience and outstanding voice quality in our devices.

On the other hand only four out of 10 organizations are supporting headsets as a complement to the hardware they’re implementing as part of their UC strategy.

Responses to the question, “Which devices will be supported in your Unified Communications strategy?” included:

- 73%: Laptops.
- 66%: Mobile phones and smartphones.
- 61%: Tablets.
- 48%: Deskphones.
- 41%: Headsets.

The United States and Germany placed the highest priority on using headsets to improve engagement and collaboration with off-site workers, while the United Kingdom placed the lowest.

- 36% of respondents in the United States and 34% in Germany rank “improved engagement and collaboration with off-site workers” among the top two benefits of headset usage.
- While just 15% of respondents in the United Kingdom rank “improved engagement and collaboration with off-site workers” among the top two most benefits.

Companies cited many benefits associated with using headsets as part of their UC strategy, the biggest of which were hands-free usage and improved audio quality. Improved collaboration and increased productivity ranked lower.

Responses to the question, “In your opinion, what are the two most positive aspects of the headset usage in terms of adoption of Unified Communications?” included:

- 58%: Employees enjoy having their hands free when on calls.
- 42%: Improved audio quality leads to increased use of voice applications.
FIND OUT MORE

A critical factor in making UC work is by looking at it from the end-user’s perspective. Minimizing end-user effort means quick adoption, thereby maximizing usage and return on investment. Now that mobility in UC moves from being a luxury to mainstream, Jabra aims to support decision makers by supplying the best headset/audio solutions for their end-users to support a successful rollout of Unified Communications.

To find out more about which Jabra headset solutions are relevant for specific working environments, please contact Jabra at www.jabra.com/uc.

ABOUT JABRA

Jabra is the brand of GN Netcom, a subsidiary of GN Store Nord A/S (GN) - listed on NASDAQ OMX. Jabra employs approximately 850 people worldwide and in 2011 produced an annual revenue which amounted to DKK 2,106 million. Jabra is a world leader in the development, manufacturing, and marketing of a broad range of handsfree communications solutions. With a reputation for innovation, reliability, and ease of use that goes back more than two decades, Jabra’s consumer and business divisions produce corded and wireless headsets, plus mobile and in-office speakerphones that empower individuals and businesses through increased freedom of movement, comfort, and functionality.