

# Collaboration Technologies that Transform Business

## Summary

Today, increasingly, IT managers are being asked the all-important question, “how can collaboration technology transform my business.” Lines of Business (LOB) managers who are the beneficiaries of collaboration initiatives are interested on the impact and on outcomes in their specific business areas. Transformation of the enterprise means bringing internal and external communication under one collaboration platform. Moreover, it means having access to information, files and business applications during the course of collaboration sessions with external teams - without IT intervention.

## Findings

- Over 90 percent of business leaders rank collaboration as a top priority.
- Over 75 percent of UC deployment initiatives typically fail.
- End-users are circumventing their IT by using a variety of 3<sup>rd</sup> party communication tools, such as WhatsApp, text messaging, Skype and Google Hangouts for external communications.
- LOB managers see the dependence on IT to establish UC federation with business partners as a big disadvantage. The other barrier with traditional UC systems which kept the promise of truly unified communications and collaboration at bay for enterprises is the lack of integration into business applications and processes.
- LOB managers have now become the primary buyers for technology.
- Having the right collaboration tools in place with the ability to support all types of collaborative interactions with internal and external participants helps to increase productivity and reduce costs throughout the organization.

## Recommendations

- Assess how people currently work and interact in the organization.
- Understand the participants involved in collaborative interactions (e.g. colleagues, partners, suppliers, contractors, customers and others external to the organization).
- Invest in collaboration technologies that can be brought to bear on business processes to achieve desired outcomes.

## Takeaways

Today, end-users waste a great deal of time switching back and forth between email and a variety of 3<sup>rd</sup> party communication tools, such as WhatsApp, text messaging, Skype and Google Hangouts for real-time - internal and external - collaboration. In addition, end-users are increasingly relying on personal content collaboration tools such as Dropbox and Box to get around limits placed on email file size attachments.

Over 75 percent of UC deployment initiatives typically fail. One of the reasons cited by end-users is most UC deployments are “walled gardens” that do not provide a compelling value proposition over email and consumer-grade tools they use to get their job done.

The root of failure for collaboration initiatives usually fall back on the failure of UC platforms and services to address how people work and what they need to get their work done. IT oftentimes neglects a core part of collaboration is with external people. Traditional UC or UCC platforms lack integration into business applications and processes. A major part of enterprise collaboration is with people outside of the company. Typical UCC systems are limited in fully supporting external collaboration.

Today LOB managers want open collaboration tools where end-users can access their internal and external business contacts, share information & files, and communicate via different modes (IM, voice, video, etc.) from a single interface – without IT intervention.

Enterprise collaboration strategies have to be outcome based with specific objectives in mind to truly be effective.

For companies looking to overcome the security vulnerabilities of consumer based tools federation has emerged as a viable option to connect disparate companies' UC or UCC platforms. Some options emerged and fizzled. NextPlane has remained as a viable

solution to deal with the interoperability issues with its UC Exchange Federation service.

## Analysis

Over 90 percent of business leaders rank collaboration as a top priority. In fact, the number one goal for investments in UC or UCC technologies cited by IT departments is to improve communication and collaboration. However, collaboration technology is worthless if not deliberately applied to how people work, the processes they are involved in and what they are trying to accomplish. Over 95 percent of employees and business executives believe lack of effective communications negatively impacts team alignment and project outcomes.

Despite the facts, over 75 percent of UC deployment initiatives typically fail. Most end-users view their UC tools as “walled gardens” that do not provide a compelling value proposition over email and consumer-grade tools they use to get their job done.

When one peels the onion where UC deployments have failed, one can see aside from email, there is a rampant use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party communication tools, such as WhatsApp, text messaging, Skype and Google Hangouts for real-time - internal and external - collaboration. Moreover, content collaboration offerings such as Dropbox and Box are used frequently to bypass email attachment file size limits. This creates an influx of tools with varying levels of security vulnerabilities.

Most organizations have a UC or UCC infrastructure in place. Whether that be from Cisco, Microsoft, Avaya or Unify. However, most LOB managers feel the promise of truly unified communications and collaboration has not been fully realized. Traditional UC or UCC platforms lack integration into business applications and processes. Also, a major part of enterprise collaboration is with people outside of the company. Typical UCC systems are limited in fully supporting external collaboration. See [Going Beyond UC: Understanding The New Collaboration Paradigm Shift.](#)

With UC platforms' lackluster user adoptions and rampant use of third party messaging tools, lack of user productivity has become a serious concern that has to be considered here. Users not only use a myriad of different tools to communicate with different internal and external people, but also constantly waste time searching across them to find pertinent information.

## How Can Collaboration Technology Transform Business?

Most IT departments are focused solely on technology acquisition. Just giving people tools with a “now go forth and collaborate” mindset.

I spoke with an IT group for a large organization who asked me to review their collaboration technology roadmap and make recommendations. After 12-15 slides of in depth technology plans with a single vendor portfolio in mind, I asked why there was no slide or section on how this technology would convince end-users to reduce their reliance on email, which was never intended as a collaboration tool, and stop using a myriad of 3<sup>rd</sup> party tools for both internal and external communications, when they rollout the new UC platform.

I also spoke with a global beverage company. This is an industry that relies heavily on a globally distributed supply chain, distribution centers, affiliated bottling companies, and logistics. Despite having spent millions on deploying on a new UC solution there’s no shortage of 3<sup>rd</sup> party cloud-based messaging services that their employees go through over the course of the day to stay in touch with their external business counterparts.

There are number of reasons behind this behavior. LOB managers and end users see the dependence on IT to establish UC federation with business partners as a big drawback. The other barrier with traditional UC systems which kept the promise of truly unified communications and collaboration at bay for enterprises is the lack of integration into business applications and processes.

This is a growing problem that is hampering the ability of most enterprises that must do business in a global economy, where efficient collaborative interactions with people external to the organization is a must. Today, partners, suppliers and customers are extended parts of the organization that require bidirectional communication. This growing contingent workforce also includes contractors and freelancers. Also, this becomes a growing community and ecosystem that requires effective collaboration.

Most LOB managers view communications and collaboration as critical to achieving their business goals. As a result, internal and external teams should be able to collaborate in real-time on content and information in a large collaborative ecosystem – without IT intervention. Think of a marketing team who needs to communicate and collaborate with an extended team in preparation for a major event, or a sales team that

needs to address a customers' new product requirements. Both involves a high level of collaboration and communication with internal teams and outside collaborators.

The question IT has to answer for LOB managers is, "How can collaboration technology transform my business?" The answer has to be customized across all internally focused and externally focused departments such as engineering, sales, marketing and HR. How can collaboration tools help sales? How can collaboration tools help in increasing sales revenue?

In the current digital workplace, IT must work closely with LOB managers to select collaboration technologies that maximize business outcomes for their entire enterprise. Technology investments have to be brought to bear on business processes. They have to be measured against key performance indicators (KPIs). So investments in collaboration technology are coming through the lens of what can it do for me? How can it help me get my job done? How can it transform my business process?