Unified Communications:
A two-part webinar series

May, 2015

In May of 2015, ITWC held a two-part webinar series on the topic of Unified Communications. These webinars were facilitated by Jim Love, CIO and Chief Digital Officer, ITWC and Steven Van Binsbergen, Senior Director, Solutions Marketing, Rogers Communications. The following represents a summary of two editorial articles written about the webinars plus other relevant commentary and the responses to poll questions asked of the audience.

Unified communications isn't new as a concept, but participants heard that the vision is finally being realized – driven by demand for the substantive benefits which arise for users and business.

In *Understanding the Drivers of Unified Communications*, Love said breaking down the communication silos of voice, video, email and data is where unified communications can drive business value.

"The real promise and power comes in bringing those siloes together, and that's the promise of unified communications we've yet to realize," said Love.

Advances in technology though are bringing us closer than ever before. Steven Van Binsbergen, senior director of solutions marketing with Rogers, agreed that unified communications has been around for a long time. What's changing is that the original vision is finally being realized.

It's not about a list of technologies, but rather a unification of technology. A unified communications solution needs to be independent of network technology, whether wireless or wireline, and independent of hardware, software, and device.

"I think the intent was always seamless anytime/anywhere collaboration on any device," said Van Binsbergen. "Now we're actually at a point where we can demonstrate how that works."

For the business, unified communications offers a range of clear benefits that drive business value. It helps to drive security, regardless of device or location, ensuring corporate data and communication security is maximized. It also integrates seamlessly with your IT infrastructure and reduces the IT and telecommunications spend in your operating budget.

The real drivers though noted Van Binsbergen, are focused around the workers who are asking more and more of their workplace technology.

"Customers asked us why is it I can get so much more out of the technology in my personal life than I do in my business life, and that got us thinking about what people really want to get out of technology," said Van Binsbergen.

One driver of unified communications is the "massive" move to flexible work, which sees users wanting the ability to be productive from anywhere, anytime on any device and measure outcomes, not time in the office.

"They want to be able to use their business technology like they use their personal technology and wonder why they can find anything on Google but can't find a sales sheet," said Van Binsbergen.

It's not just how we want to work that's changing, but where, and on what device.

"We used to be tethered to our workplace," said Van Binsbergen. "Now with wireless there's the promise of anytime, anywhere collaboration and communication."

The change is pervasive. Applications are moving from on-device licenses to subscriptions in the cloud, and our interface is moving from mouse to touch. We're leaving behind the desktop PC for tablets and smartphones and are cutting the wired cord to go wireless. We're also heavily influenced by the consumer world – the top 25 mobile applications are all consumer-focused tools such as Facebook and YouTube.

If businesses are looking for more reasons to move to unified communications, a big one is that the flexible workplace which it enables is a big driver of employee satisfaction. In fact, 33 per cent of Canadians – including half of millennials — said they would sacrifice something, including salary, to work remotely.

"And if you care about attracting and retaining the right people, 60 per cent of people are making a job choice based on the work flexibility policies of a company," said Van Binsbergen.
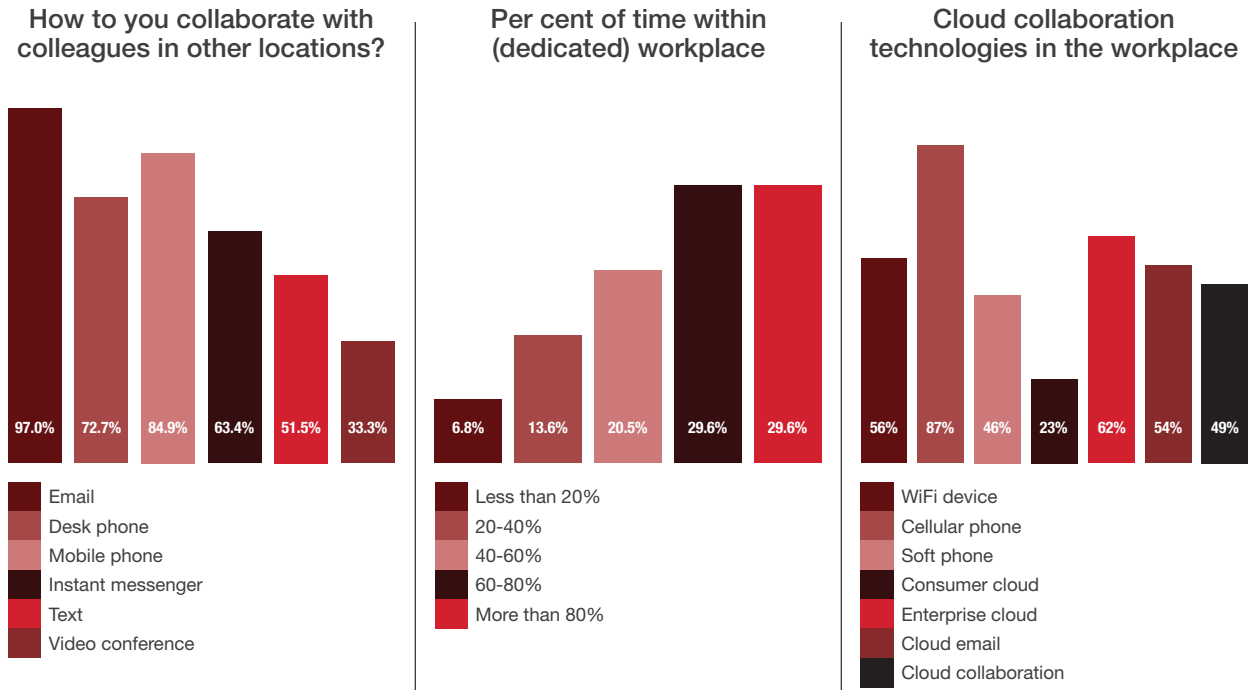
The reality is over 70 per cent of the workforce is mobile at some time. Mobile workers can also be described as a flexible workers; not always at their desk but not always mobile, they could be a salesperson, a field worker or just someone who needs to work from home now and again.

"There's more and more information that shows flexible workers with the right tools can accomplish a lot more," said Van Binsbergen.

Changing workspaces are also helping to drive unified communications forward as businesses look to create workplaces focused more around collaboration. Today, workers spend about half their time doing isolated things in their cubes and half their time doing collaborative things, and the collaborative part of their day is growing dramatically. However, Van Binsbergen said most workspaces are still configured for the Mad Men-era with 90 per cent of space dedicated to fixed workspaces and just 10 per cent to collaboration.

"As companies try to align how workers need and want to work with their workspace, there are opportunities to save on real estate and space costs," said Van Binsbergen. "The challenge is: "how you do it in a productive way?" You need quiet work areas like libraries with no phone calls – an isolation space – and then collaboration areas."

RESPONSES TO POLL QUESTIONS – PART 1

How to you collaborate with colleagues in other locations?

97.0% 72.7% 84.9% 63.4% 51.5% 33.3%

- Email
- Desk phone
- Mobile phone
- Instant messenger
- Text
- Video conference

Per cent of time within (dedicated) workplace

6.8% 13.6% 20.5% 29.6% 29.6%

- Less than 20%
- 20-40%
- 40-60%
- 60-80%
- More than 80%

Cloud collaboration technologies in the workplace

56% 87% 46% 23% 62% 54% 49%

- WiFi device
- Cellular phone
- Soft phone
- Consumer cloud
- Enterprise cloud
- Cloud email
- Cloud collaboration

In Part 1 of this webinar series, *Unlocking the Value of Unified Communications*, the speakers outlined seven specific benefits companies can realize by adopting UC, and how companies can realize savings on every employee by enabling flexible and remote work and by modernizing their connectivity and collaboration solutions.

1. Worker productivity

Unified communications allows a company to have more flexible work policies, enabling employees to work remotely, from home or while on the road, from time-to-time as appropriate. Van Binsbergen noted that studies show this can increase worker productivity by 10 to 20 per cent as employees will often use time formerly spent commuting to get work done, even if it's outside of the usual work hours.

"Productivity gains are possible for a remote or flex work scenario but they need to be for the right kind of work," said Van Binsbergen, cautioning that each role should be examined to ensure flexible work will be a fit – a receptionist, for example, probably needs to be at the front desk. In addition, personality fit needs to be looked at as some people end up feeling isolated.

2. Real estate cost

When more of a company`s workers are working at least some of the time on the road or from home, there are some interesting things that can be done with regards to real estate – if all of your people aren't at the office all the time, you don't need a dedicated office or cubicle for each of them and you can have a smaller office footprint.

Typically, a company spends from $2,500 to $5,000 per employee every year on real estate, depending on the city and office location. Van Binsbergen said having some employees work from remote locations can save $3,000 or more per employee annually, while even a flexible work scenario can cut the bill by $1,000.

3. Employee engagement

Research shows that employee engagement increases with flexible workplace programs. Flexible work programs have a 64 per cent positive impact on engagement, 65 per cent on motivation and 73 per cent on satisfaction. They also help keep down employee turnover rates, with 33 per cent of companies that have a flexibility culture reporting a low voluntary turnover rate, compared to 22 per cent of companies that don't have flexible work programs.

"And 60 per cent of people say they make their job choice based on flexible work programs," said Van Binsbergen.

4. Collaboration tools cost

Cutting the cord on your desk phone can mean big savings. "Why does anyone have a desktop phone and a wireless phone?" asked Van Binsbergen. "You can't have two conversations at once."

While moving all voice traffic to the mobile network will mean a larger spend on the data plan, Van Binsbergen said it's more than offset by the savings realized by dumping the wired desk phone and all the analogue infrastructure required to support it.

By dumping the desk phone for a softphone and moving Microsoft Office and Exchange from an on-premise by-machine license to hosted Office 365 in the cloud, Van Binsbergen noted that organizations can realize annual per employee savings of over $1,000.

"This is where IT folks can provide a more flexible and collaborative solution and take $1,000 out of their costs which they then can reinvest in more innovative things," he said.

For a 2,000 employee company that makes those collaborative tool changes and structures its office workforce to 1/3 remote workers, 1/3 hybrid workers and 1/3 always-in-office workers, the combined savings could reach up to $5 million every year.

5. Connectivity cloud

Replacing legacy systems for voice and data can help you achieve communications-related savings of up to 25 per cent, or $100 per user.

6. Seamless mobility

The seamless integration of mobility allows for the realization of flexible work, either inside or outside the office. The flexible office IT environment includes managed Wi-Fi, a softphone and call transfer, with a combination of

floater cubes for isolated work and more conference rooms and open areas for collaborative work, with the technology moving between zones with the person. The remote office scenario replaces the managed WiFi with a cellular connection.
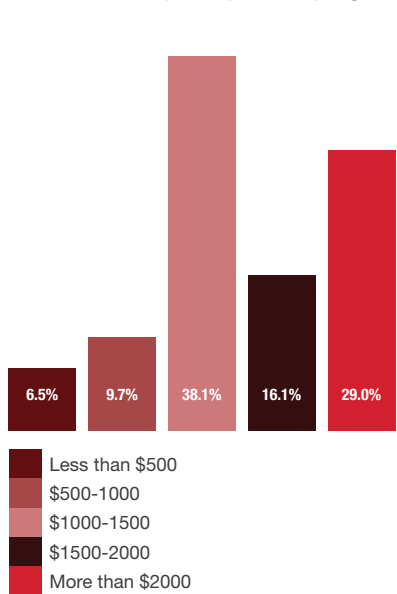
7. Centralized control

As more and more devices enter the network, fueled by flexible and remote work and the Internet of Things, giving the IT department a "single pane of glass" to manage everything is crucial – and that centralized management is enabled by the unified communications solutions offered by vendors such as Rogers.
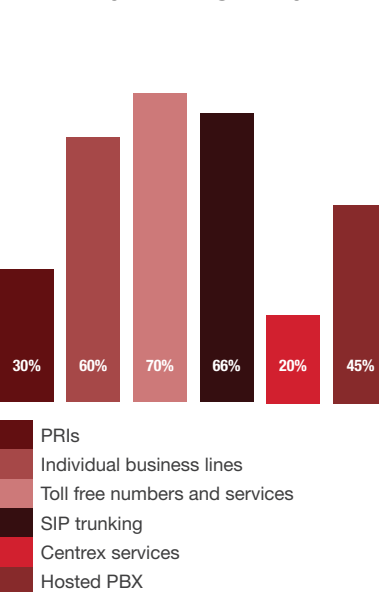
"As the network becomes more complex, IT professionals will be looking for better tools to manage it," said Van Binsbergen. "They need a one pane of glass view that allows them to manage all devices, from anywhere, at any time."
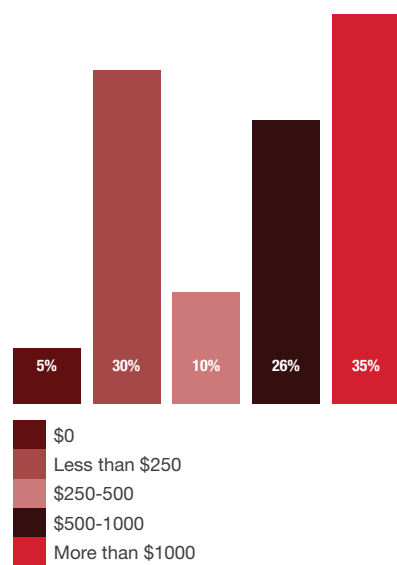
RESPONSES TO POLL QUESTIONS – PART 2

Annual ICT spent per employee

| 6.5% | 9.7% | 38.1% | 16.1% | 29.0% |

- Less than $500
- $500-1000
- $1000-1500
- $1500-2000
- More than $2000

What legacy telecom services are you using today?

| 30% | 60% | 70% | 66% | 20% | 45% |

- PRIs
- Individual business lines
- Toll free numbers and services
- SIP trunking
- Centrex services
- Hosted PBX

Savings you think you could realize

| 5% | 30% | 10% | 26% | 35% |

- $0
- Less than $250
- $250-500
- $500-1000
- More than $1000

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