

Integrating Unified Communications and Contact Center

Why Breaking Silos Supports Employee and Customer Experience Success

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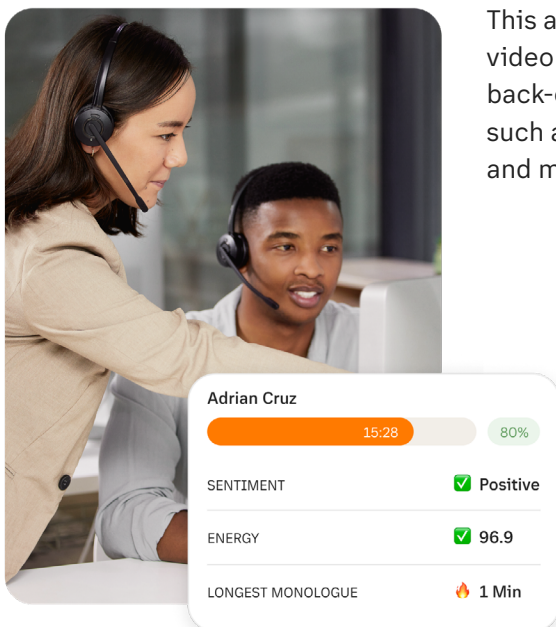


Customer Experience through Everyone

One of the biggest trends in the enterprise communications area today is the integration of unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) and contact center-as-a-service (CCaaS). Businesses are taking this step to improve both the customer and employee experience. Bringing together technologies, including messaging, video, and phone, with customer and CCaaS technologies ensures that the right tools are available to various workers and groups in the organization to provide improved customer and employee experiences.

COMMFusion estimates that 40%-50% of organizations have separate unified communications (UC) and contact center platforms, and workers in one department don't even know about the tools being used in other departments. Breaking down the barriers and silos of UC and contact center creates "Customer Experience through Everyone" (CXE), where anyone within an organization, no matter where the tools are located, can help service customers while providing the right tools to all employees.

This allows customer-facing employees to access UC capabilities such as video and team collaboration. Meanwhile, knowledge workers in various back-office departments can use traditional contact center capabilities such as omnichannel interaction routing and management, screen pops, and more to better serve customers and other employees.



Moving to a Single Platform

While both UC and contact center tools have been available for years, they have yet to be leveraged together to their full extent. Typically, these technologies have been siloed and specialized, with certain types of workers only able to access certain tools. Knowledge workers and employees outside the contact center need access to their organization's contact center and customer engagement tools and platforms, while contact center staff need access to their organization's UC technologies, thus limiting their effectiveness.

There may be different autonomous departments and buying groups that don't talk to each other when making purchasing decisions. These groups make their own buying decisions and end up with different vendors (and certainly different products) for their UC and contact center needs. With different platforms and different vendors, most organizations can only provide a seamless and unified approach to communications and interactions.

Disparate point products can be challenging to manage, creating a nightmare for organizations. Alternatively, integrated, cloud-based solutions providing unified communications, collaboration, and contact center services tie all the pieces together on a single platform.



With a single vendor relationship, deployment, management, and maintenance are greatly simplified, saving time and money.

By streamlining the interaction between contact center agents and subject matter experts, organizations can tap into experience and expertise across the business. Contact center agents can communicate and collaborate with individuals in various parts of the organization to better serve customers in real-time, resulting in improved customer loyalty and increased revenues.

Different Approaches for Different Needs

There are generally two ways organizations can benefit from integrated UC and contact center technologies – through a single vendor/single platform approach or a best-of-breed solution. With pros and cons to each approach, the right solution depends on the organization's needs and priorities.

A single-vendor solution provides simplicity, with only one contract to manage, one platform to maintain, and one vendor to handle support issues. Based on the simplicity and ease, smaller organizations may benefit from a single vendor/single platform solution. On the downside, organizations may be sacrificing product features and quality in favor of simplicity.

Large enterprises with mission-critical contact centers and specific requirements may prefer a best-of-breed solution, providing more robust capabilities required for their workers, agents, and operations. What best-of-breed solutions may lack in terms of ease and simplicity, they make up for in capabilities, features, and general robustness. A best-of-breed approach is often more challenging to purchase, manage, and support, as there are various vendors and products involved. Without the proper front-end and back-end integration, there may be different user interfaces, making the contact center agent's job more complex. In addition, it's challenging to share presence status between agents and others outside the contact center.

There is a third option – a tightly integrated best-of-breed UCaaS and CCaaS offering purchased and supported through a single vendor. This best-of-breed option includes an integrated front-end and back-end, providing a seamless user experience while enabling the two systems to act.

The key is for users to easily access the capabilities they need without going back and forth between interfaces and platforms, enabling teams to work together to enhance employee and customer experiences.



Bringing the Buyers Together

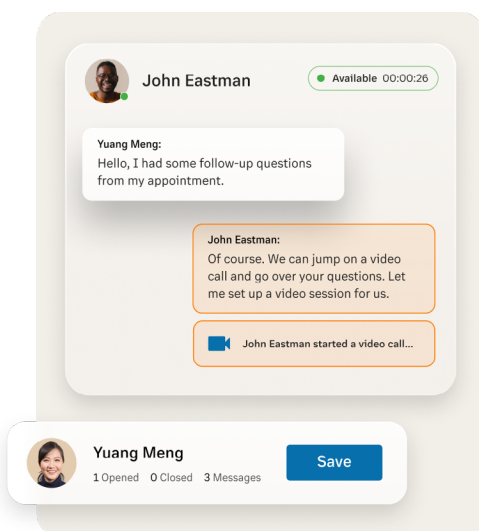
Today's cloud-based systems make it relatively easy to integrate UCaaS and CCaaS solutions from a technology perspective, but organizations still need to overcome organizational silos with different buying groups. While the IT team is generally responsible for purchasing UCaaS services, the contact center management team is responsible for contact center products. These groups have different priorities and must be part of the decision-making team and work together toward a solution.

While it's generally easier for smaller companies to involve the right decision-makers, it's often more challenging for larger, more decentralized organizations with multiple teams and specific needs.

The best way to bring together the different influencers and decision-makers is to focus on use cases, outcomes, and objectives.

By understanding how an integrated UC/contact center solution is used in various use cases, and the business value and productivity benefits it provides, these groups can work together to find the best solution to meet their needs.

Highlighting benefits, such as increased contact center agent productivity, improved customer and agent experiences, more satisfied customers, increased revenues, and better communication and collaboration throughout the organization, helps to show the business value of an integrated solution. Focus on the impact on the business, rather than the technology itself, and how an integrated solution will help both the UC and the contact center users.



Use Cases & Success Stories

The most common use case for integrated UCaaS/CCaaS is enabling various groups and departments outside the contact center team to communicate while servicing customers, leading to better customer experiences and satisfaction. Contact center agents providing customer service can reach out to other departments and individuals to quickly get information or to easily transfer a customer to a different department. Using UC tools such as chat messaging and video conferencing to reach out to others in the organization for additional information helps agents answer customer questions in real-time. Leveraging the UCaaS' presence capabilities to see which subject matter experts (SME) in the organization are available, agents send a quick chat or even conference the expert in a call, providing the sought-after first contact resolution (FCR).

Caliber Home Loans improves CX by connecting employees

For example, Caliber Home Loans, a private, national mortgage lender with branches across the US, found that using RingCentral Contact Center for sales and service in the front office, along with RingCentral MVP in the back office, helps create connectivity and provides flexibility between the different groups. Caliber Home Loans is a mortgage origination and servicing company with 2,400 RingCentral Contact Center seats and approximately 6,000 RingCentral MVP users. According to Brian Braly, VP Contact Center, Caliber Home Loans, "In the past, if we had to transfer a customer from the contact center to someone in the back office, it was a blind spot, and the back-office worker didn't have information on the caller or the issue.



Now, with an integrated solution, contact center agents can see who's available and hand off the call to the right person, creating a better customer experience.

These capabilities also extend to Caliber's back-office workers handling escrows, taxes, and other functions which aren't considered part of the contact center. As Braly notes, "Providing them with the same contact center tools would be technology overkill and isn't necessary, but having an integrated solution lets them stay connected and have the flexibility they need."

Akumin makes customer communication easier for everyone

Another RingCentral customer, Akumin Inc, a full-service outpatient diagnostic imaging center, also found tremendous value in RingCentral's integrated UCaaS and CCaaS solutions. As an outpatient imaging provider with 250 fixed sites, 400 mobile trailers equipped with MRIs and CT scanners, and 33 sites for radiology oncology throughout 11 states, Akumin's contact center drives its revenue, and "every phone call is a dollar." As Rohit Navani, EVP and CCO, noted, "It's all about the patient journey; we want to make it easy for customers." He explains, "In the past if someone called the contact center but actually needed to call the clinic, they had to hang up and make a new call. Now, we can seamlessly transfer a phone call, or use messaging to get the information needed, which builds patient/customer loyalty and stickiness. Being on the same platform for UCaaS and CCaaS is huge for us."

Collaboration is Key for Caliber and Akumin's Success

For Caliber Home Loans, messaging and collaborating between the contact center and back-office workers helps to close the loop more quickly during calls. "If an agent can ask a question while on a call with a customer, it creates a much better customer experience," notes Braly.

The next level in the collaborative contact center is adding video to the mix. When a customer can show a video of a broken appliance or the damage to their car after an accident, and an agent can share how-to videos or walk through the proper way to fill out a form or complete a process, then issues can be solved much more quickly.

Visually sharing information using video can be especially useful for companies like Akumin. As Navani explains, video is also helpful when agents want a quick video chat with a physician.

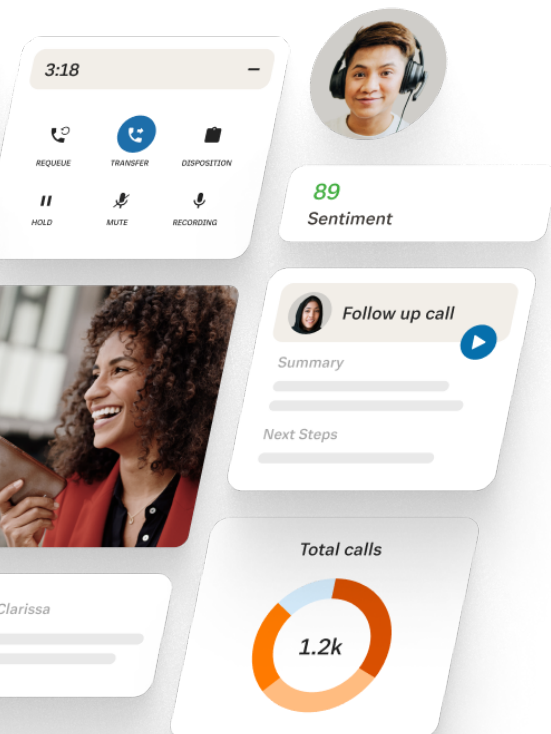
An integrated UCaaS/CCaaS solution lets the agent, and even the customer, collaborate with the expert over the phone or through a video call, and share their computer screen, documents, etc., regardless of where the expert is located, creating the "collaborative contact center." By integrating contact center, team collaboration, messaging, and even video capabilities, agents, customers, and SMEs can collaborate to quickly resolve the customer's issue.

5 Business Benefits of Integrated UCaaS/CCaaS

- Integrated UCaaS and CCaaS capabilities break down silos for better experiences for contact center agents and customers.
- Businesses and organizations can reduce costs as well as manage and support issues.
- Improve customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention, increasing sales and revenues.
- Contact center agents can get outside assistance to provide the right answer to customers the first time, resulting in increased job satisfaction and improved metrics, such as first contact resolution.
- Customers get the information they need from the right individual without being put on hold or requiring a callback, saving time and reducing frustration.

RingCentral customers Caliber Home Loans and Akumin found that the benefits center around seamless engagement between agents and others, improved customer experiences, and revenue generation. For Caliber Home Loans, it's about flexibility and control, providing a better customer experience and improved customer satisfaction. As Braly noted, "We previously had a disconnect between the front and back office, which was a problem we wanted to solve." Since customers don't have to wait for a return phone call, agents can respond in real time, creating first-contact resolution, and reducing repeat phone calls, ultimately saving time and money.

For Akumin's Navani, the benefits are centered around driving revenue, noting that when it's easy for patients and clinics to interact, it builds loyalty. He also appreciates having a single vendor for UCaaS and CCaaS, noting, "We're in the radiology business, not the technology business. We don't want multiple vendors for different things, and we try to consolidate as much as we can." Both Caliber and Akumin note that RingCentral's UCaaS and CCaaS integration is seamless from the customer and agent perspective.



Conclusion

While organizations' digital transformation strategies, including the move to cloud services, have been in the works for years, the pandemic dramatically accelerated this transition.

Both businesses and employees recognise the benefits of remote work, and hybrid work is here to stay. Communication systems have to support workers, allowing them to work how and where they prefer.

Legacy premises-based phone systems don't provide the flexibility demanded today and in the future. Only modern cloud-based services can support mobile, remote and hybrid workers' needs, along with the business continuity that organisations require.

It's time to move to the cloud.

About the Author



Blair Pleasant is President & Principal Analyst of COMMfusion LLC and a co-founder of BCStrategies. As a communications industry analyst, she provides strategic consulting services and market analysis on business communication applications, technologies, and markets, aimed at helping end-user and vendor clients both strategically and tactically.

She is a frequent speaker and participant in industry conferences, webinars, podcasts and other events to help educate others about the evolving unified communications and collaboration and contact centre markets. Blair's blogs and articles can be found on: bcstrategies.com and commfusion.com, as well as nojitter.com.

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