



THE OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EVALUATE

CLOUD COMMUNICATIONS POST PANDEMIC





What Did We Learn?

Cloud Communications Must Meet Business Needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed everything. Teams suddenly started working remotely en masse. Many businesses quickly purchased a communications solution at the height of the pandemic to accommodate virtual meetings and other new requirements without exploring whether it would completely fulfill their needs.

Three years later, many organizations need to ask themselves some questions: Did it have the reliability and features they wanted? Was it worth the investment?

No one should stick with a solution because they implemented it under duress. If there was a silver lining to the pandemic — in hindsight — it's that companies effectively had a "trial run" with tools and technology that enabled this once-in-a-generation workplace shift.



Assess Your Communications Needs

Businesses have an opportunity to rethink their platforms. That means performing the necessary due diligence they potentially didn't have the luxury of performing amid the chaos of the pandemic.

Are there better features or specific functions that teams used – or specifically avoided? Is a more reliable solution offered? Companies are making a mistake if they think they no longer need the tools that helped them survive the past three years. While the market changed due to the pandemic, the workplace has shifted permanently. Businesses should look at the necessary tools to provide continuity moving forward.

To assess future needs, organizations should start by looking to the past. What was their usage before the pandemic? While it has been gaining popularity, not every business had a cloud-based communication solution before the pandemic necessitated it.

Amid the pandemic, nearly every organization rushed to obtain a Unified Communications (UC) solution if they did not already have one. Some without doing typical or thorough due diligence for what they were purchasing.

Since many contracts are up for renewal, companies can embrace the opportunity to reassess their UC platforms. Those unsatisfied with decisions they made under duress can make changes that will power their organizations forward.

No one wants to repeat the decisions made at the pandemic's start. Even as teams return to the office, organizations should better understand how teams engage with these tools while working remotely.

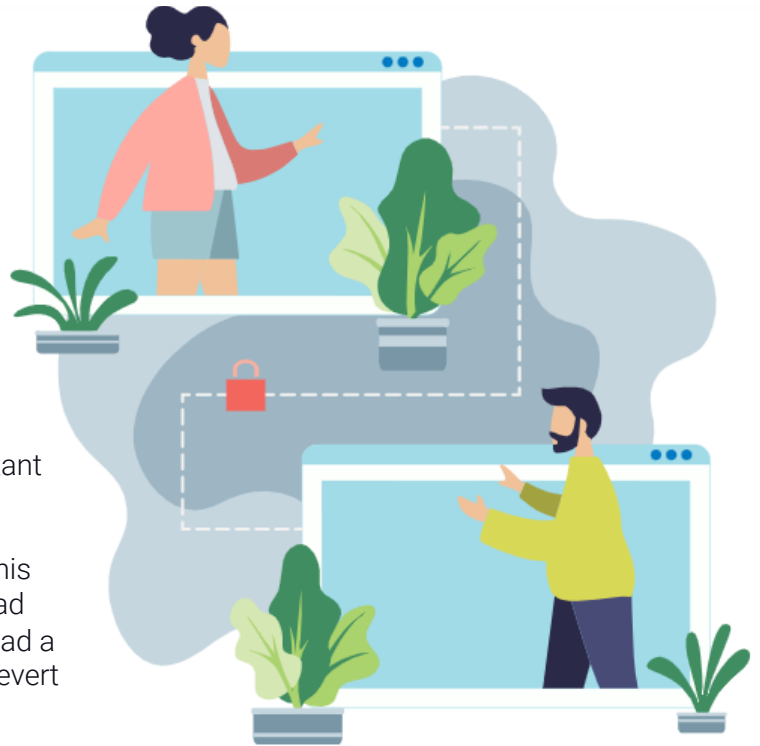


Now is the time to re-evaluate.
What worked in the past may not
be what you need in the future.

Key Pandemic Learnings

Cloud Dependency is Growing:

The popularity of the cloud dramatically increased during the pandemic, and many expected the cloud use to level out post pandemic. However, the pandemic caused a permanent shift in thinking and the way business is done. Traditional telecom infrastructure wasn't created with the constant connectivity and productivity demands of today's modern businesses in mind. It's evolved, and the pandemic-era federal aid has helped further speed this evolution – even in areas that traditionally haven't had the necessary infrastructure. Now that businesses had a taste of the cloud infrastructure, there's no need to revert to the ways of yesteryear.



Greater Mobility:

Cloud communications provide a better way to connect regardless of where teams are working. Three years after the pandemic, employees no longer work from any single location. They are in the office, at home, in a coffee shop, and visiting customers. Using the device of a person's choice is paramount to maintaining productivity. But as an organization emerges into its "new normal," it must critically assess its solutions. Does it meet the team's needs today, and, more importantly, will it help the team maintain its mobility as it grows and evolves? There is no right or wrong answer for a company. If a solution works, great! Keep it in place and tailor it as needed. If it doesn't, now is the time to acknowledge that and make a change as appropriate.

Need for Increased Security:

During the pandemic, many companies were victims of meeting crashers due to the poor security of their platforms. Often, these uninvited guests would hijack the chat and disrupt meetings. It's clear now that stricter security protocols are no longer a "nice to have," they are a must. There is a heightened need for security with end-to-end encryption and the ability to lock a meeting room so sensitive conversations remain private and secure beyond scheduled meetings. End-to-end encryption is necessary to secure functionality, messages, and other features.

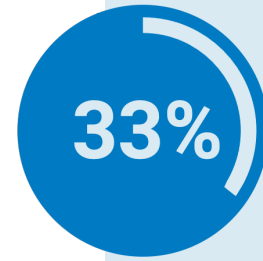
Messaging:

Teams opted for easier ways to communicate like messaging versus traditional email. While messaging helped facilitate instantaneous collaboration and interaction, it often left employees using various communication platforms. Because businesses moved quickly to support employee needs during the pandemic, they stood up separate messaging platforms. While the functionality gets the job done, it leaves users in a swivel chair between various systems adding unnecessary complexity in their day. Businesses should look for a solutions with messaging included with other collaboration, meeting, and calling functionality to ease this burden.

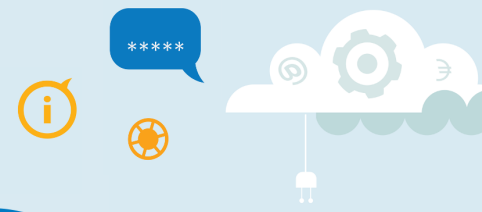


Onboarding and Training New Users is Critical:

[According to a HubSpot survey taken during the pandemic](#), less than one in three employees said they had received guidelines for using unified communication tools. The report found that some meeting overloads stem from a lack of employee guidelines and best practices. That may be partly because of teams working from disparate locations. However, it brings with it an opportunity for organizations to provide training and reinforce best practices. As organizations increase their UC investment, they should be mindful of potential misuse; gradual adoption must be a focus.



of employees received training or guidelines for unified communications



Enabled Better Teamwork:

Having collaboration tools accessible enabled better teamwork. Plus, the ability to virtually meet and add video created a way for people to connect regardless of where they are. According to a [report by Owl Labs](#), in 2021, most people who worked from home (70 percent) said virtual meetings were less stressful, while a similar number (64 percent) now prefer hybrid meetings. Cloud communications can be an incredibly powerful tool to bring employees together, but the solution must include the right collaboration features.



of remote workers said virtual meetings were less stressful

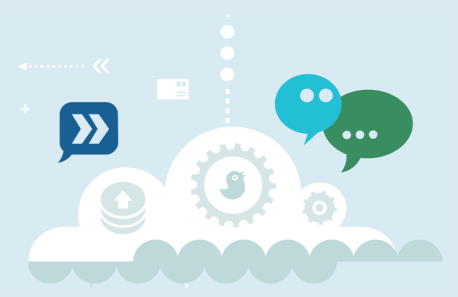


Collaboration Tools are Popular, But Consolidation is Necessary:

A 2021 [Gartner study found](#) that workers increasingly use “digital workplace technology,” whether collaboration, real-time mobile messaging or file storage and sharing. Using collaboration tools is on the rise, and many businesses often enabled a cloud-based phone system plus multiple apps during the pandemic to make work easier for employees. The problem is that now employees must switch between multiple systems to handle various business communications. Companies that adopted these tools from various vendors and platforms to support remote work need to look at combining them moving forward. Opting for a solution with functionality that can be consolidated into a single app is critical.



of workers are using collaboration tools for work



What to Look for in a Cloud Communications Solution

Feature Functionality and Integration: Cloud communications has become more than just calling, messaging and meeting. There are many great features to take advantage of, whether meeting recordings, transcriptions, breakout rooms or whiteboarding and annotation. To engender widespread adoption, any tool must support a better user experience. The optimal user experience doesn't need elaborate features; it could be something as simple as calendar integration, remote desktop control, screen sharing, animated meeting reactions and gesture recognition or a personalized meeting room with a user's unique URL for easy access.



Collaboration



Messaging



Meetings



Enterprise VoIP

Cost Analysis: The review of any platform must include an examination of its costs. But organizations shouldn't mistake cost for value. Across providers, an organization should consider how many participants can join a meeting, if the meeting time is capped, how many minutes a team can meet if using VoIP to dial in and if any specific feature functionality is included in each price point across providers.

Reliability: Reliability and continuity are critical for a telephone and communications solution. When exploring cloud-based communications, teams should look at how they can leverage more reliable offerings with redundancy in case of an outage or disaster. As the pandemic proved, there is no such thing as planning for the worst-case scenario.

Implementation & Migration: The best solution is worthless if it isn't integrated into an organization. Choosing a new platform requires companies to consider the implementation and migration model and whether the company provides resources to help streamline the migration. It's also imperative to explore how the provider will help once the migration is complete and as it's implemented across an organization.

Support Model: A provider's support might be the biggest differentiator. Levels of support vary from one provider to the next. For example, some providers offer technical support, while others offer training as part of their services. Companies should also consider a provider's availability. Is it 24/7 or only during business hours? Companies today need reliable partners; they don't need vendors who give them a solution and walk away. The right partner will ensure that any solution solves a business problem and will be around to answer questions and help tailor an offering as the need evolves.

Security and Compliance: Arguably, the most important element of any platform is its security features. As many organizations learned amid the pandemic as their teams worked remotely, the world is a dangerous place. Bad actors are constantly on the lookout for organizations to target. At a minimum, any cloud communications solution should include end-to-end encryption and encrypted cloud recordings. Additionally, locked private room functionality, a meeting lobby and roles-based access can help reduce the likelihood of unwanted meeting crashers.

Key Provisions of a Cloud Communications Solution

Cloud communications like Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) has countless business benefits. With many team members continuing to work remotely, two common challenges businesses experience when managing a remote workforce are a lack of communication or collaboration and low productivity when they don't have the right tools.

Unified Communications is a powerful complement to a company's remote workforce management and should be integrated into any remote workforce management strategy. UCaaS empowers organizations to streamline, providing all the tools team members need to communicate under a single umbrella. Streamlining is not just about communication quality. There are benefits to the organization's everyday operations.

Organizations often require several platforms and resources. UCaaS allows for integrating various applications and services, such as CRM and cloud service platforms. The advantage of this is that when communication tools are integrated with other platforms, communication and collaboration are inherently integrated with team members' daily tasks, initiatives, and projects.

No matter where a team member works — whether it's in the office or a remote location — or what device they use, UCaaS ensures reliable mobility. This flexibility fosters growth and productivity and bolsters critical business fundamentals such as internal and external collaboration and customer service.



Be Prepared. Ask the Right Questions.

Demand accelerated from the pandemic, with many Americans converting to remote work almost overnight, increasing the need for better collaboration, connectivity, and security.

Technology cannot be a bandage to cover operational shortcomings. It must empower teams and drive the business forward. Leaders must first identify their teams' needs, then develop a plan to address them. It requires a candid discussion about technology's role in an organization, the potential vulnerabilities and what it will take to close the gaps. Businesses should take the opportunity to ask these questions:

- Does my communications solution have all the features my employees need to be successful?
- Is my communications solution secure?
- Is my communications solution reliable and support business continuity?
- Does my communications solution provide business insights to understand usage and performance?
- Can my communications solution scale easily?
- Does my business communications provider offer the support experience I want?
- Does my communications solution integrate with my other business software?

How TPx Can Help

The TPx team addresses this demand with an enhanced unified communications solution, UCx with Webex, which gives businesses a better way to collaborate with employees and increase productivity. The single platform combines enterprise phone services with best-in-class collaboration technology from Webex by Cisco leveraging rapid innovation through powerful AI and audio intelligence to enhance focus, inclusiveness and effectiveness for meetings.

UCx with Webex transforms the way employees work with a single solution that includes video meetings, whiteboarding, secure messaging, file sharing, built-in call control functionality and more to increase employee productivity and streamline teamwork. Because UCx with Webex is a hosted service, you'll always have immediate access to new features and updates as soon as they become available, without having to do anything. This award-winning solution features some of the strongest security functionality within the unified communications industry and is backed by 24/7 access to experienced support professionals and a 100% SLA uptime guarantee when paired with our SD-WAN service.

TPx provides various cloud communications options to best fit your needs from a complete unified communications solution to our Smartvoice SIP trunking option that helps businesses make the most out of their legacy PBX solution. But most importantly, TPx partners with you to meet your unique IT needs. We're a one stop shop for cloud communications, security, network, internet, and managed IT needs. Ready to accelerate your IT? [Connect with us](#) and learn how we can help drive your business forward.

