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# Scoping UC

## Just how far should you go?

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### In a nutshell:

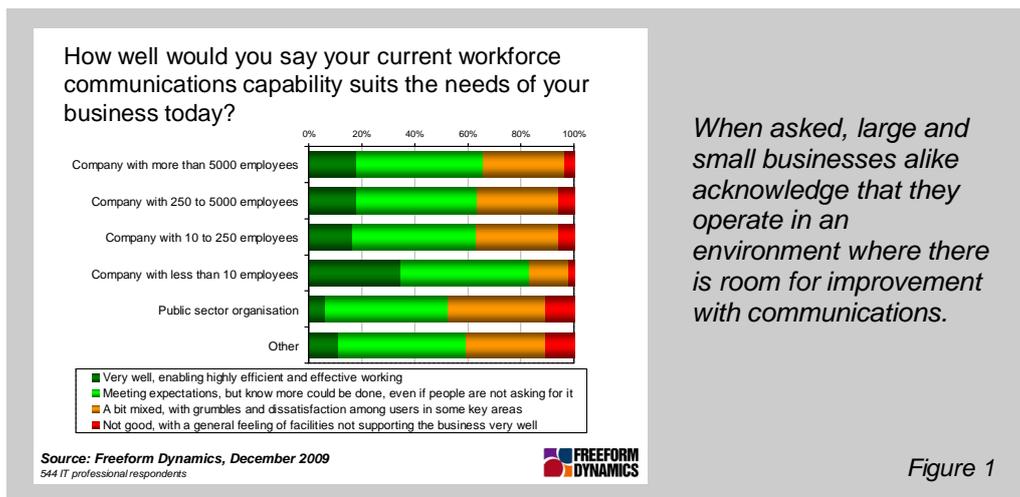
The proliferation of communications channels has set expectations around cost and productivity benefits. Unified Communications (UC) is proffered as a way of helping bring them all together, but as the benefits of UC are more widely acknowledged, just 'how much' UC should businesses be thinking about?

### Key points:

- As a result of a piecemeal approach to adoption of new communications mechanisms, many businesses today find themselves operating in a highly fragmented communications landscape where they are unable to fully reap the range of cost and productivity benefits that such tools ultimately promise
- Unified Communications (UC) solutions such as Unified Directory (UD), Unified Messaging (UM) and rules-based routing are increasingly accepted as a set of tools that bring this fragmented environment together in a coherent and structured way.
- Implementation of UC potentially allows an organisation to take more advantage of emerging mechanisms. As businesses start to evaluate and move forward with UC, a key question they face is the extent to which they implement UC.
- To realise its full benefits, a broader set of UC components will have a greater impact on the business, and, as far as possible, it is much better to aim for a richer set of capabilities from the outset.

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As businesses strive to deal with numerous challenges, from complying with the prevailing regulatory environment to maintaining a competitive edge through customer satisfaction and loyalty initiatives, they are continually forced to re-examine the way they interact both internally and externally. This constant re-evaluation has resulted in a myriad of new communication mechanisms being introduced into the business environment. Companies have long since moved beyond the traditional channels of telephone and email to embrace newer areas such as IM, audio, video and web conferencing, and SMS. But this piecemeal approach to adoption has, unsurprisingly, led to a highly fragmented communications landscape within the workplace. A less than welcome addendum to this is that companies aren't truly able to reap the full range of cost and productivity benefits that new communications tools ultimately promise. Moreover, this approach has resulted in a passive acceptance of fragmentation and disjoints which may not always be front of mind, but is readily acknowledged, as recent research carried out by Freeform Dynamics revealed (see chart below).

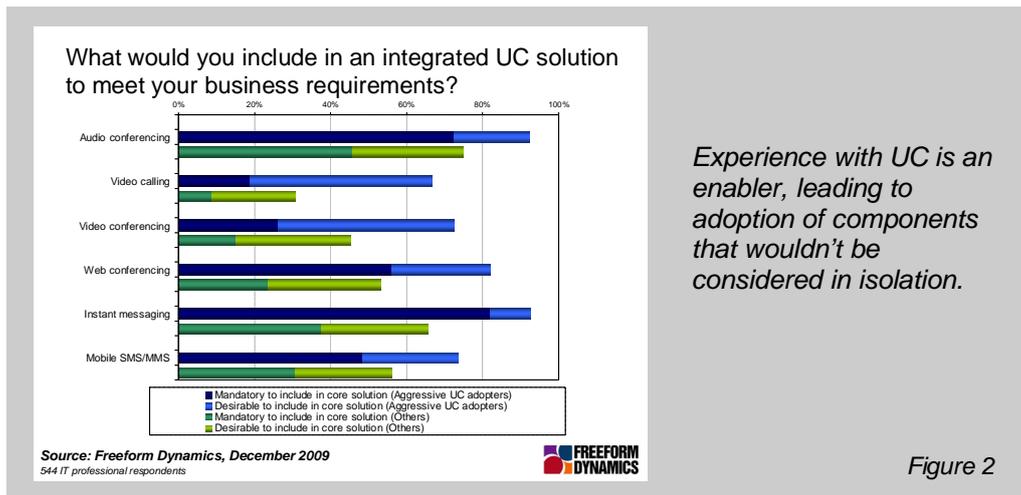


This is precisely where the potential benefits of Unified Communications (UC) are touted as being relevant, as a set of tools to bring this fragmented environment together in a coherent and structured way. But although UC is often thought of as a broad solution set – and in point of fact, this all encompassing term does it no favours – it actually comprises a number of distinct components, including Unified Messaging, Unified Directory, Presence and rules-based routing. When companies think in terms of these individual components, the relevance of UC becomes much clearer and much more meaningful. To date, however, adoption of UC in any broad sense is relatively limited, with most adoption focussing around Unified Directory. But businesses are starting to evaluate UC much more now, or at least have it on the agenda.

As these companies move forward, a key question they face is the extent to which they implement UC. Given the seeming lack of surety around the benefits, the tendency might well be to go for a partial approach and build this up over time, e.g. beginning with unifying the various directories that exist across the business, to minimise risk and capital outlay, and then perhaps bringing in Unified Messaging or single number at a later stage. However, Freeform Dynamics’s research shows that there is, in fact, a ‘multiplier effect’, meaning that the overall value of a comprehensive UC solution is greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, when considering the question of scale of implementation, its value appears boosted as more users are embraced by a deployment.

UC implementations delivering the greatest value tend to be those that include a broad range of functionality and are rolled out broadly across the business, suggesting that in fact, while a cautious, baby-steps approach to UC might be a preferred option for many companies, in order to really reap some serious benefits, businesses should go for a much more aggressive approach. Where a slower approach is necessary, it is much better to consider comprehensive UC in, say, one department, rather than partial UC (e.g. Unified Directory) across the whole of the business.

But there is another interesting take away from this. When we think about the various communications mechanisms, not all have gained equal traction in the workplace, and certain ones, video communications for example, have generally experienced a lukewarm response when considered in isolation. The overlay of UC in a broader, more aggressive way, however, has a very interesting effect, as is clear in the chart below.



What we find is that communications options that many would not see as attractive enough to implement in isolation, are much more readily embraced when they are seen as a component or 'option' within a broader communications solution such as UC. For buyers and users who are formulating or reviewing their plans around UC, it is worth taking note of the impact that UC can have on individual communications solutions. While users may not be inclined to log into a separate video communications system, for example, based on a totally different and unfamiliar call initiation approach, when making a video call is a couple of clicks away in a UC context, that convenience makes all the difference.

The outcome of this is that implementation of UC potentially allows an organisation to take more advantage of emerging mechanisms such as video communications, web conferencing, IM, etc to boost workforce and process efficiency and effectiveness.

UC can bring genuine benefits into the business, however, to truly realise its full benefits, when planning initial activity, even a pilot or proof of concept, a broader set of UC components will have a greater impact on the business, and it is much better to aim for a richer set of capabilities from the outset, rather than focusing on individual functions that will always have limited value when deployed independently.

## About Freeform Dynamics



Freeform Dynamics is a research and analysis firm. We track and report on the business impact of developments in the IT and communications sectors.

As part of this, we use an innovative research methodology to gather feedback directly from those involved in IT strategy, planning, procurement and implementation. Our output is therefore grounded in real-world practicality for use by mainstream business and IT professionals.

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