Driving end user adoption of Unified Communications is key to working smarter not harder

Successfully deploying UC within an organization involves much more than a clean cutover, operative equipment or step-by-step training.

In order to transition end users to adopt a toolset that enables them to work smarter not harder, prior to roll-out they need to be enthused about the possibilities afforded by the technology change that will positively affect them personally and the way they go about their day-to-day activities.

By Arnout van Loon
Professional Services – Siemens Enterprise Communications
Executive Summary

Major changes in workflows or processes are not always embraced in business environments, even if such change would bring significant benefits.

Increased globalization is one example. Internal face-to-face teamwork that traditionally formed the backbone of business performance is today more remote, mobile and dispersed. To mitigate this, new technologies have evolved that pave the way for virtual teams. However what’s often forgotten is mitigating the human risks associated with rolling out these technologies across an organization, especially when the change will impact the daily working habits of the entire end user population, such as with Unified Communications (UC). Users are the key ROI drivers for UC. If they don’t fully embrace UC’s many time-saving functionalities through lack of awareness or resistance to change, the financial return is lost.

The Professional Services group within Siemens Enterprise Communications provides a wide range of support, training, analytical and investigative tools to help enterprises deploy and adapt to new ways of working. Described is the philosophical rationale and an optimal approach required to properly prepare workers for UC. This is achieved by involving end-users from the start (i.e. capturing of the requirements), differentiating them according to job profiles and focusing on a change program.

At Siemens Enterprise Communication we have developed a Mastery Program which focuses on how organizations can encourage and influence their user committees to work smarter, not harder. This program encompasses many exciting and proven techniques which are orchestrated by our specialist “UC Ambassador’s” who actively work with customers and their users to embrace a ‘New World of Work’. 
Not long ago, businesses of all sizes could rely on a stable of team members who were co-located at one site and could interact face-to-face on a daily basis to discuss and resolve on-going challenges. In many cases, a team spirit − even an esprit de corps − grew among these employees resulting in significant personal satisfaction through their highly valuable contributions to the enterprise.

More recently, growing globalization, compact digital IT devices and networked communications enabled a more distributed organization. Now, we are often remote, mobile and dispersed. Virtual teams are quickly ‘crowd-sourced’ based on business needs, skills and knowledge. These are called ‘flash teams’ in today’s popular culture. Major business media are reporting on the emerging office-less enterprise − one that has no fixed office spaces. Companies working that way claim up to 50% savings in operating and infrastructure costs1, not to mention increased flexibility.

But virtual office work has a major shortcoming that can potentially erode some of those savings; the ending of live, face-to-face teamwork that quietly but effectively contributed so much to profitable business performance in the past. Despite the consumer IT revolution’s huge business benefits, many have commented “it’s just not the same” meeting through the virtual workspace. Teamwork has been diluted.

Consider the following results from a recent Siemens Enterprise Communications survey:

Clearly there is an opportunity to improve the connectedness of virtual team members and facilitate real, "vibrant conversations" by relegating technology issues to the background. It’s ironic because we have so many communication options, and the opportunity to connect and flourish is better than ever. But harnessing these capabilities into a set of integrated and harmonized tools has been a challenge. Hence, the advent of UC to simply and seamlessly overcome the physical distances between mobile and virtual team members, improve engagement and enable productive conversations and dialog − while removing complexity.

However, what’s often forgotten is the importance of mitigating the human risks associated with rolling out new technology across an organization, especially when the change will impact the daily working habits of the entire user population, such as with UC. Many companies launch UC without carefully thinking it through and preparing end-users. As a result, much of UC’s promise goes unfulfilled as poorly prepared staffs quickly become frustrated, intimidated or confused and, without readily available support or encouragement, fallback on old familiar, unproductive ways.

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1 Step Into the Office-Less Company, Wall Street Journal, Sept. 4 2012
To thrive in the new virtualized teaming world, users expect technology that collapses the distance between distributed members without usability hassles – enabling meaningful collaboration and achieving outcomes regardless of where the work is being done. It’s really the users who, when properly acclimated to these technologies, eagerly embrace all their work- and time-saving features making the investment profitable. Users drive the ROI of any ICT tool by using it to its fullest. Conversely, if not enough staff embrace a solution or quietly resist it, its cost to implement may devolve into a huge waste of money as most time- and efficiency-savings are lost.

Even worse, employees may bypass or ignore those features and revert to old work habits.

How can a company motivate its employees to effectively use technology to its fullest? Our recent global research study2 shows that while the vast majority of organizations rely on remote, distributed and mobile team members today, only a small minority report having sufficient tools to enable effective team collaboration and coherent information sharing. And fewer have formal training to ensure productivity with the tools they do have.

Therefore, our experience shows that effective change is achieved when users:

1. Understand the business reasons for change
2. Receive training that focuses only on the core functions that will immediately and positively impact their daily working lives
3. Follow a transition program that motivates and nurtures them in such a way that encourages them to embrace the new toolset rather than resist it.

This process starts with integrating the focus on the end user with the focus on the technology. And by adhering to the following guidelines:

1. Involve end users groups from start of the UC Journey – pre implementation
2. Profile end-user groups based on their existing business functions and identify the need for different elements of the toolset that are most applicable in their day to day roles. For example within one business function, HR, you might have office workers who rarely if ever move from their desk (Static profile) and also HR managers who work from any office in the company estate or from home and need to communicate with managers across the business (Nomadic profile).
3. Focus on end-user adoption.

2 Siemens Enterprise Communications original global research, October 2012
Proactively involve users from the start; split into groups

Siemens Enterprise Communications has witnessed some businesses engage with their end-users after UC solutions have been purchased, or even after implementation. In almost every case, this approach results in failure because UC is more than advanced, highly efficient technology; it’s about changing the way users execute their daily work. It is therefore critical that the end-user community is engaged in an UC project from the very start, even at the point of selecting vendors and defining requirements.

Furthermore, we recommend not lumping all end-users into a single user group. A sales representative has a different job profile than that of a CFO, salary administrator or engineer. Different job roles demand different requirements from UC. Key to end-user adoption is deploying UC features that directly impact end user’s daily work tasks and personal lives, by enabling them to work from home. These user groups can cross business functions as they are more in line with individual job roles and every day working tasks.

Align technology with end user groups based on different business needs

Focus on a ‘change program’

Successful end-user adoption is achieved by integrating change management early into the overall UC program. We’ve been high successful in setting up dedicated programs focusing ‘mindset change’. This helps neutralize the end-users’ desire to retain old work habits in favor of adopting new ones.

Based on our experience, Siemens Enterprise Communications’ Professional Services group has developed a unique training and change plan called “The OpenScape Mastery Program”. Its primary purpose is to help businesses understand the benefits of dynamic working, and support their staff to act as advocates for the new way of working.
Mastery Program empowers users to work smarter

With its many years of experience, Siemens Enterprise Communications has developed a change program which drives success and therefore ROI to help move the customer’s organization into the "New World of Work". Its focus is on working smarter; not harder.

The Mastery Program has three basic parts:
- UC Ambassador
- End user training and enablement
- Internal branding

Training and enablement

Elements enabling end-users to embrace UC are:

- amplifyTEAMS, a Siemens Enterprise Communications vision and methodology that dramatically improves business performance by fostering better, more productive teamwork using technology to enable real, vibrant conversations. Methodology includes customer or project specific trainings as part of the UC implementation phase.

- End user training programs, conducted by the Academy of Professional Training within Siemens Enterprise Communications. These programs can be regularly attended during and after UC implementation to broaden new employee’s skills or as refresher training. The training is contextualized for each customer and not only covers "how to" carry out certain UC function" but also "explains where they can be useful" use examples taken from the customer’s existing business practices.

Once users have initial training, they are granted access to a hosted UC Collaboration Portal from where they will find FAQs and Best Practices. Also available is Computer Based Training which provides immediate access to engaging online learning for static users.

Internal branding

As communications is key to successfully introducing UC, one of the first steps is to make people aware of what is coming at them and/or what is happening.

Siemens Enterprise Communications is able to help setup and execute an Internal Awareness Program in alignment with the customer through its Professional Services. The customers best know their employees and what will work in introducing new things into the organization. In some cases, the customer may have their own communication department. The Professional Services group prefers to drive this internal awareness program as close as possible with the customer’s internal communication and/or HR professionals.

Material is available which includes ready to use standard examples presented via videos, quizzes, or presentations. Critical to internal branding is the focus on different end user groups as each will have their own dedicated UC functionality. Professional Services recently began offering customized UC Workshops targeted at the needs of functions including HR, CIOs, CEOs, financial or business managers.

The enthusiastic adoption of UC by end-users, which facilitates effective collaboration in the New Way of Work and optimizes ROI, is an integral part of the overall Siemens Enterprise Communications amplifyTEAMS and UC Journey approach. To learn how this approach can unleash the full potential of your virtual teams, send an email to: UCJourney@siemens-enterprise.com

What does this program provide?

It gives customers examples of how to encourage people to adopt UC, and helps them learn how to use the technology so that it contributes to the drivers behind their organization’s purchase of the technology.
UC Ambassador

Behavioral change doesn’t magically happen when UC is deployed throughout an organisation; it has to be nurtured and encouraged through a comprehensive blend of user initiatives. The Professional Services group of Siemens Enterprise Communications has therefore developed the UC Ambassador program. Engagement by the SEN UC Ambassador starts prior to deployment of the UC solution and runs throughout the deployment, roll out and business as usual phases of the project. The role of the UC Ambassador is to:

• Work with senior management in the customer organisation to clarify the vision for a UC enabled workplace.
• Work with the customer to identify new ways of working with UC to unlock business efficiencies and cost savings and put in place success measurements for end-user adoption of the UC solution.
• Work with the customer to create an organizational awareness program aimed at explaining the vision of a UC enabled workplace and how each user contributes to its ultimate success. This program is tailored for each customer and may include; personal communications, corporate video hosted on the intranet, UC road shows and group awareness sessions.
• Work with the customer to identify a suitable UC pilot group and manage the UC pilot; training pilot users, capturing usability feedback and integrating this into the training and full UC roll out.
• Identify and enable Change Agents within the customer organisation who will support in profiling user types across the organisation and be “advocates” for the benefits of UC solution. The Change Agents are trained and actively supported by our UC specialists to become proficient with the new toolset in order to seed adoption and model best practice.
• Liaise with the SEN and customer’s training organizations to contextualize end user training to meet the customer’s vision. The feedback from the UC Ambassador programme will ensure that the training sessions are tailored to the UC system’s elements that are immediately relevant to a particular job and user profile.

• Measure the success of user adoption post deployment through a series of focus groups and online feedback mechanisms and support the customer with their ongoing roadmap.

Regarding ‘Change Agents’, Professional Services has found that enlisting the help and support of multiple “Champions of Change” can raise user adoption rates exponentially. These ‘Change Agents’ are trained and actively supported by our specialists to be proficient with the new toolset, and encourage their colleagues to use them, too. Change agents are trained and supported so:

• They know how the ‘New World of Work’ functions
• They can explain these concepts to their colleagues
• They understand how the ‘New World of Work’ helps the organization be profitable.
Preparing for UC ‘at-a-glance’

- Shift corporate thinking “from ports to people.” Enterprises should move from delivering communication devices connected to a technology platform, towards a truly mobile toolset that empowers users to become high performing individuals that can be contacted regardless of where they may be. Success is no longer about delivering transactional communication; it’s in creating and enabling an ecosystem around the user.

- Align the user experience with new work lifestyles. Mobility is now the norm and users expect tools they use at work to be as simple and elegant as the devices used in their personal lives. Enterprises should deploy communication solutions that allow users to effortlessly move among media – voice, text, video and social – all with a consistent, intuitive and ‘joyful’ user experience.

- Embed UC in the way business works. Communication solutions must be closely integrated with existing applications, directories, social networks and groupware enterprises already use, and must reduce the complexity and simplify the users’ view of content to provide only the information needed in the format they prefer.

Your Expert Contact
Arnout van Loon
Vice President Professional Services and Solutions EMPAC
arnout.van-loon@siemens-enterprise.com
ONS: +31 (307) 101-337

Siemens Enterprise Communications is a joint venture of The Gores Group and Siemens AG, and includes Enterasys Networks, a provider of network infrastructure and security solutions, creating a complementary and complete enterprise communications solutions portfolio.

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Hofmannstr. 51 D-80200 Munich, 02/2013

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