

Four ways unified
communications
can transform
your business



Why unified communications?

The current economic climate is challenging. Operating efficiently and making sure every investment has clear ROI is crucial. This has led many small and medium businesses (SMBs) to move their technology and data to the cloud to drive agility, innovation and cost savings. Unified communications (UC) is a key cloud-based technology that SMBs are choosing to invest in.

Implementing a UC solution¹ can result in a:



UC achieves this because it brings all your communication technologies together in one place. Voice and video calling, instant messaging, sharing documents, presenting and more – through one application, on any device.

A UC solution like Microsoft Teams transforms the way people communicate and collaborate, bringing real-world improvements to the employee experience and creating new ways for SMBs to interact digitally with customers.

And with traditional analogue telephones coming to an end in 2025, UC is becoming a high priority as it offers a replacement for telephony systems that must be changed imminently.

With all that in mind, this report focuses on the four main ways that UC can improve your business:

- 1 **Supercharging employee experience and productivity**
- 2 **Transforming customer experience**
- 3 **Reducing and managing your costs**
- 4 **Investing in the future**

1. Real world benefits of integrated cloud unified communications and collaboration, Q1 2021, Metrigy

1 Supercharging employee experience and productivity

The way employees experience their work every day impacts the success of a business.

Companies with a strong employee experience can be up to 25% more profitable and have double the levels of customer satisfaction compared to those with poor employee experience.²

77% of SMBs in the UK have also noticed a boost in morale when they provide employees with new technology

87% of SMBs noted productivity gains after providing new employee tech³

UC improves employee experience and productivity by making communication and collaboration easier.



The impact of fragmented communication

When employees have to use multiple applications to communicate with their colleagues, it's inefficient, frustrating and even overwhelming.

It adds complexity to the working day, with multiple passwords to remember and a multitude of different interfaces to consider.



In fact, switching between applications can waste up to **36 minutes** per day and disrupts our flow of work for up to **9.5 minutes** each time we switch.⁴

Some tools may also not be available on mobile devices, making it impossible to communicate while on the move and harder for frontline employees like delivery drivers, nurses and sales staff to do their job.

² [Building business value with employee experience, MIT Sloan Center for Information Systems Research, 2017](#)
³ [Medium businesses: Fuelling the UK's economic engine, Virgin Media O2 Business, 2022](#)
⁴ [Workgeist Report 21, Qatalog report in collaboration with Cornell University, 2021](#)

Unleashing productivity, improving employee experience

UC avoids the inefficiencies and frustration caused by using multiple tools by having everything available in one single application.

Gareth Bleasdale, Converged Comms Snr Product Manager at Microsoft UK comments:

“Unified communications takes away that headache. It provides a suite of communication tools under a common login and user interface, so users can spend less time deciding which tool to use, and more time focusing on the task at hand. Integrating your corporate directory and user authentication capabilities further streamlines the experience for users, and makes employee onboarding and off-boarding a breeze.”

Cloud-based UC platforms like Microsoft Teams also support working from anywhere. Office workers can have calls directed to whatever desk they may be sitting at. Those working from home can enjoy seamless collaboration. Employees with accessibility issues can also benefit from features such as automatic meeting transcription and captioning of videos.

A mobile workforce can also achieve more on the move via the Microsoft Teams app on their phone.

Fawad Baig, UC Category Lead, Virgin Media O₂ Business explains:

“Your mobile phone is the 21st century Swiss army knife. It’s your tracker. It’s your guide. It’s your entertainer. And for work it’s also your communication and knowledge hub. UC ensures your mobile workforce are fully connected. For example, remote operational teams out in the field can now collaborate with each other, perhaps even for the first time.”

How unified communications helps the entire workforce

The Business Development Executive

Mostly in the office, they might hop from desk to desk, but calls are routed to wherever they sit. Internal and external video meetings can be scheduled with a few clicks. Having one solution helps them stay flexible and productive.

The Senior Manager

Nomadic and time-pressed, they need to travel to different offices but also work from home. They are often on calls or in online meetings, but also share files, give presentations and brainstorm ideas. One communications solution available on their laptop and mobile makes it easier to manage their workload.

The Delivery Driver

Out and about all day, they need to contact customers, check delivery instructions, consult with their boss, receive re-routed customer calls, access product details and co-ordinate movements with the warehouse. Having multiple modes of communication from one mobile phone is essential.

The Specialist Engineer

The professional engineer is always in demand. They may be on site, in the office or travelling. They need to stay in communication with team members and customers, while reviewing documents securely and quickly. Unified communications removes the barriers to succeeding in their role.

2 Transforming customer experience

Customers now expect to be able to communicate with your organisation however they want, whenever they want. A UC solution enables that.

Fawad Baig, UC Category Lead, Virgin Media O₂ Business says:

“Unified communications helps businesses communicate with customers in multiple ways. Taking or making calls and managing contact through approaches such as automatic call routing or call queues. Using online chat, holding virtual meetings and even managing large customer virtual events. UC ensures every communication channel can be streamlined and efficiently managed.”



Communicating with customers all from one place

40% of SMBs believe investing in the right collaborative tools improves the quality of work delivered to clients.



Using a UC solution where everything is done from one place makes it easier to deliver better customer experiences.

Customer-facing staff can switch more easily across different channels to continue the conversation. They can view the full context of previous interactions such as a previous conversation thread or transcript of a call. And everybody can work smarter internally to help resolve customer issues more quickly.

There are also new opportunities to engage with customers.

A further 40% say a more seamless integration of devices like laptops and smartphones can improve the delivery of products and services to clients.⁵



Gareth Bleasdale, Converged Comms Snr Product Manager at Microsoft UK comments:

“We’re seeing UC solutions disrupting sectors such as healthcare and professional services. For example, patient consultations traditionally held at surgeries can be made more flexible, efficient and accessible.

By offering online appointments, practitioners are better able to accommodate individuals with mobility challenges, language or hearing difficulties, and allow flexibility in scheduling. The option of online appointments simultaneously reduces both the cost to serve, and the proportion of missed appointments, whilst improving the patient experience.”

⁵ [Medium businesses: Fuelling the UK’s economic engine, Virgin Media O2 Business, 2022](#)



How does Microsoft Teams help client communication?

An engineering firm works on a project with a demanding client. The client messages the project manager (PM) needing a quick answer to a question. The PM needs to clarify what the client needs so turns a messaging thread into a voice call with the client via one click.

To get the answer they need input from an engineer who is out on site but available on their smartphone.

The PM effortlessly brings the engineer into the call who answers the question but explains it was covered in more detail in a meeting last month.

Thanks to automatic transcription, the PM also shares the transcript from this meeting with the client there and then, all from Microsoft Teams.

Getting through to the right person

77% of consumers regard a good call service as a positive differentiator for a brand

36% would take their business elsewhere after a poor call experience

It's easy for customers to reach the right person as they are available on their laptop, desk phone or mobile device. You can also use a virtual receptionist service to ensure calls never get missed. And innovations like voicemail to text ensure messages don't get lost.

With unified communications, businesses can stop losing opportunities caused by missed calls or because a customer had a poor experience.⁶

⁶ [Calls not answered and annoying "on hold" music are top customer phone grips, HR News, 2022](#)

3 Reducing and managing your costs

SMBs see a **45% reduction** in the total cost of ownership when using a UC solution such as Microsoft Teams calling solutions compared to a legacy telephony system.⁷ And there are opportunities to better manage costs going forward too.

Moving from capital expenditure to operational expenditure

Cloud-based UC platforms have a different financial model to more traditional approaches to telephony. There's no initial outlay on physical infrastructure. This provides an excellent opportunity for IT and Facilities teams to move their costs from capital expenditure (CapEx) to operational expenditure (OpEx), with far less cost up front and much greater control over annual spend.

Fawad Baig, UC Category Lead, Virgin Media O₂ Business comments:

“In a time of economic downturn there are real budgetary challenges. Moving away from a CapEx intensive initiative is a key priority for most businesses. Investing in unified communications delivers a financial model where businesses can reduce their costs over several years and gain greater control over what they spend.”



⁷ [The total economic impact of Microsoft Teams calling solutions, Forrester report, 2021](#)

Reducing telephony spend

Maintaining a legacy telephony system based on a physical infrastructure has associated ongoing costs.

Equipment needs to be maintained. Specialist repairs need to be carried out. Outdated PBX or ISDN-based telephony systems are also far less scalable than UC solutions.

Businesses may have to extend capacity to deal with additional calls during busy periods but then keep paying for additional lines not used for the rest of the year.

A UC solution that incorporates more flexible pricing avoids this issue by allowing you to pay based on usage, increasing or decreasing capacity based around your needs.

This combination of flexible pricing and no longer having to maintain legacy infrastructure leads to overall cost reduction.



Reducing technology spend

UC platforms also provide opportunities to reduce other IT costs.

Having one solution covering collaboration and communication means existing solutions with overlapping capabilities can be retired, reducing annual licensing and management costs.

A Microsoft 365 license has security built in, so overall it can prove to be very reasonable.

Gareth Bleasdale, Converged Comms Snr Product Manager at Microsoft UK comments:

“IT teams are expected to be experts in every platform the organisation has deployed – providing support to employees, life-cycle managing, making sure the services are compliant, whilst delivering value for money against those investments.”

When you’re supporting separate telephony, web conferencing, video conferencing and productivity solutions this workload can rapidly become unmanageable. Microsoft Teams provides opportunities to streamline your digital estate – simplifying management, reducing costs and making life easier for end users.”

4 Investing in the future

By investing in a cloud-based UC solution now, you can beat the 2025 deadline for the switch-off of analogue telephone services, making your business more agile and competitive with more opportunities to innovate.

Establishing continuity, supporting change

With hybrid and remote working at scale now permanent for many businesses, UC solutions are enabling seamless work from both the office and home.

Unified communications is now a central part of many business continuity plans in the face of disruptive incidents such as extreme weather events. And it's also reducing the need for travel, helping businesses meet their net zero commitments.

Because employees are already using Microsoft Teams, new features are seamlessly updated into an application they are already familiar with. Mobile users don't have to download a new app. One solution for everybody and everything.

Microsoft Teams delivered **450 new features** and improvements during 2022 alone.

Fawad Baig, UC Category Lead, Virgin Media O₂ Business comments:

“A strong UC solution has an ever-increasing set of services and capabilities that are all incredibly useful. Microsoft Teams keeps on introducing innovations such as meeting recording with automatic transcription and translation into sixty languages. These capabilities usually take a lot of effort to launch, but they're just automatically updated in the platform.”





Getting ready for tomorrow

Although solutions like Microsoft Teams have made use of AI for some time, it's the introduction of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT that has really caught the public's imagination. And it's coming to the Teams experience.

Microsoft Teams Premium already uses a Large Language Model based on ChatGPT to provide real time translation. And soon it will be able to automate note taking, assign meeting tasks and generate "chapters" from a recording. It will also create a personalised timeline so an individual can jump to the most relevant section when viewing a recording.

But in the future, AI-powered UC solutions will go even further. Automation will eliminate mundane and repetitive tasks. Intelligent analysis will provide insights and increase our ability to respond effectively to our colleagues and our customers.

The 'Metaverse' is also progressing, where we will eventually be able to meet in an immersive virtual world incorporating both augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). Such technologies will further break down the barriers between in-person and online meetings.

Gareth Bleasdale, Converged Comms Snr Product Manager at Microsoft UK comments:

"There are some very exciting opportunities to transform meetings and our wider experience of work, and we're only at the start of that journey."

Next steps



Achieve more with Virgin Media O₂ Business

We help you achieve more with a unified communications package that combines our reliable mobile and internet connectivity with Microsoft Teams software and your choice of hardware, bringing all your communications together in one place.



One provider for everything

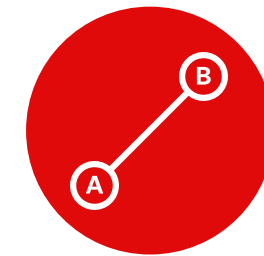
Two great brands with decades of experience have come together to deliver a best-in-class unified communications solution.

The latest devices and audio-visual equipment, 24/7 technical support as standard,⁸ dedicated internet access across your sites and flexible calling plans.



Remove the hassle

With a range of flexible support options based around your needs, we remove the hassle so that you can focus on running your business. With a dedicated customer success manager and the ability to upgrade or add services if you need to, we provide peace of mind to cover all your UC needs.



Minimal disruption, easy migration

Working with you in partnership, our implementation team help ensure there is continuity when you migrate to our unified communications solution. We minimise any disruption for operations, employees and customers so it feels like business as usual.⁹

8. When you purchase Direct Routing with Microsoft Teams, 24/7 tech support forms part of your package and cannot be removed.

9. The managed migration service is optional and will incur an additional cost unless you already have fixed-line services with O2 Business.

Discover how unified communications
can help your business to achieve more.

Talk to your account
manager or call us on
0800 298 8848

