



# Cloud Communications & the Modern Workplace

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Keeping Your Employees Productive on Any Device, Anywhere



Powering connections



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## Over the years, IT professionals witnessed the vast potential of communications technology to improve productivity, both with IT operations and the organization at large.

And this potential appeared time and time again, as technology continued to evolve. From the emergence of the internet to the ubiquity of smartphones, communications technology makes more people more productive than anyone could have imagined even a decade ago. The key is to make sure that technology stays a step ahead of the needs it must meet, by anticipating shifts in how people work and communicate.

One of those shifts is well underway now, as people move from working together in a traditional office to working together from virtually anywhere. On any given day, many employees work outside the office because they're traveling or teleworking. In fact, 20-25% of the U.S. workforce teleworks to some degree, and 80-90% say they would like to.<sup>1</sup> Not only that, but job postings for remote workers have steadily climbed over the last few years, up 36% from 2014 to 2015, compared to a 26% increase from 2013 to 2014.<sup>2</sup>

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# Work today is an activity, not a location.

This shift completely changes the equation for IT professionals who need to provide the right tools for their workforce. People working away from the office still need all the same business communications tools—phones, videoconferencing, instant messaging and more—to keep working productively. But deploying and managing these tools can often add a layer of network and support complexity for already busy IT teams.

Cloud-based communications technology can be the answer. For IT professionals who need communications systems working together across multiple locations, cloud-based systems are simpler to implement and maintain than traditional on-premises systems. What's more, cloud systems enable employees to quickly and easily connect, communicate and collaborate on any device, anywhere. As a result, IT staff have fewer support tasks, freeing up their time for more strategic initiatives.



## The Challenges of Helping Employees Work Together

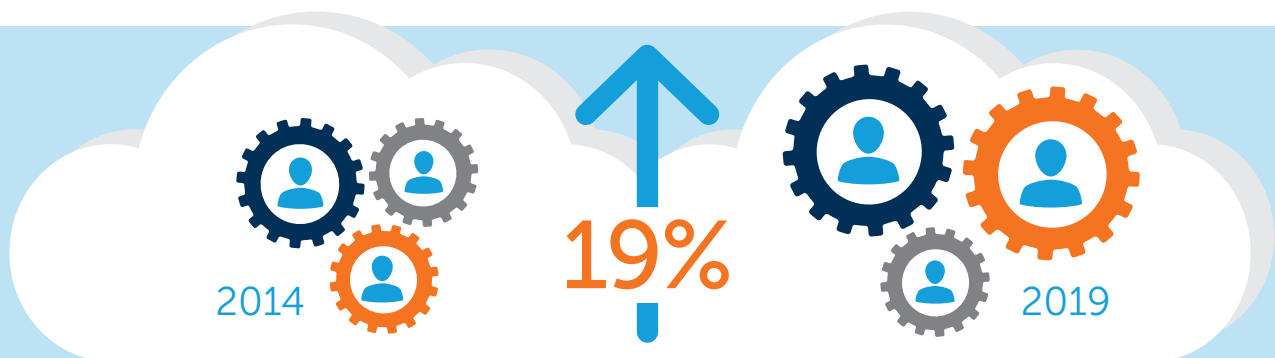
As the workplace evolves to become less and less tethered to a physical location, the challenges of enabling employees to be productive remotely also changes. Today's employees need communications systems to be always available and fully integrated to support their day-to-day activities. They need calls to move smoothly from landlines to mobile devices; they need mobile access to the corporate directory; and they need to switch over from a voice call to a text or instant message.

But delivering all these capabilities—while also maintaining high reliability—requires advanced IT skills that many organizations don't have in-house. Often, companies need dedicated teams to integrate individual components, plan and deploy workloads, and monitor and maintain infrastructure. The entire process can be costly and complex, with a high potential for business disruption. Meanwhile, IT stress levels are already on the rise—with 78% of surveyed IT workers considering their job stressful in 2015, up from 57% in 2013.<sup>3</sup>

Cloud-based communications can give IT teams a way out of this predicament. The solutions bring together voice, IM, presence, mobility and other aspects of communications to ensure that calls and messages flow seamlessly. What's more, cloud-based systems can go a step further to address an entirely new set of challenges in the modern work environment.

As work becomes less about a "place" and more about a state of being, IT organizations also face the challenges of helping entire teams be productive—not just individual employees. Today's teams need the tools to work together effectively, especially when team members are geographically dispersed. And it's not so much about focusing on communication—although that's still important—as it is about focusing on collaboration.

The shift from individual to team productivity is clearly reflected in the growing demand for team collaboration tools, especially in the enterprise social-networking space—a market space that's expected to grow 19% a year through 2019.<sup>4</sup>



Team collaboration tools address the enterprise social-networking market space, which IDC projects to grow 19% from 2014–2019.<sup>4</sup>

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## Meeting the Challenges with Cloud Communications

In the context of teamwork, the latest cloud-based systems not only unify communications, but also integrate key elements of the larger collaborative environment. This enables more people to work together more effectively. Documents become easy to access and share for collaboration, no matter

where employees are working, for example. And IT can manage cloud-based communications tools as a single, integrated set of resources—enabling them to deploy features quickly and affordably without disrupting the business.

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### Most important communications features, according to IT pros<sup>5</sup>



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Cloud-based communications solutions reduce complexity by moving organizations away from legacy systems to flexible cloud-based services—providing people with the freedom to work from anywhere, while minimizing administrative demands on IT. With cloud communications, 100% of the responsibility for running and maintaining the system falls to the cloud provider. Surprise service outage? The provider is on the hook. Big software update? It's up to the cloud provider again. Interoperability issue? The cloud provider can put its expertise to use.

**Freed from the need to manage communications tools, IT professionals can focus on more value-added activities, from server virtualization to BYOD to advanced security.** Capacity can be scaled up—as needed—and scaled back down with the same speed. There's no need for IT to provide "on-demand" staffing. Changes can also be managed consistently with minimal manual effort, ensuring cost efficiency for the company as a whole, and time savings for IT staff in particular.

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## Productivity Gains in all Types of Places

How do cloud-based communications solutions perform in the real world? Let's look at some examples where cloud-based communications tools enabled IT teams to improve employee productivity, across a wide range of industries.



### CASE IN POINT:

#### More Productive Communications for Airport Workers on the Move

The IT team for an aviation company needed to connect more than 100 mobile employees working throughout an airport. By deploying a cloud-based communications solution, employees can now use their phones for calling, instant messaging, video and other capabilities to stay in close, constant communication via WiFi. As a result, they're communicating far more efficiently than when they were racking up cell charges looking for people they couldn't even be sure were on the premises at any given time. Best of all, IT manages all team operations from a central location.



### CASE IN POINT:

#### More Effective Collaboration and Coordination in 32 Countries

At a satellite communications company, the IT team needed a more efficient infrastructure to support 2,500 employees in 32 countries. Thanks to a cloud-based communications solution that integrates seamlessly with existing systems, employees can now use a single, familiar interface to communicate and collaborate more effectively. The IT staff used open APIs to connect the communications solution with satellite control systems, maximizing its existing infrastructure while improving operations.



### CASE IN POINT:

#### More Reliable Communications for Employees, Fewer Headaches for IT

The IT team for an 80-dealer auto sales company was tasked with improving the reliability of its communications. By deploying a cloud-based communications solution with integrated handsets, dealership employees can now reach each other when they need immediate information to help a customer. The solution has also helped simplify and streamline administration, such as reducing the time it takes to add new users.

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## The Five Essential Qualities for Cloud Communications

Not all cloud-based communications solutions will enable you to fully realize the potential for productivity and cost-efficiency. Some are no more than a loose assemblage of disparate systems that aren't really "unified," making them time-consuming and cumbersome to deploy and manage. Some are not readily deployed in the cloud, hamstringing companies eager to include communications in their cloud strategies. Some lack the flexibility to adapt to changing challenges in business environments, and they quickly outlive their usefulness. To avoid getting stuck with a solution that doesn't deliver as promised, look for the following essential qualities:

### 1 True unification

Watch out for cloud-based communications solutions that aren't really unified, but are instead just a collection of different platforms that all have their own hardware and software requirements and unique management tools. To maximize IT productivity and minimize administrative costs, you want a solution that makes it possible to manage all communication and collaboration capabilities from a single interface. You also want a solution that can be provisioned from Active Directory at the outset, to speed deployment and ease migration. Templates for adding new users and applications will make implementation and ongoing management easier, too.

### 2 Flexible deployment

If you're eager to deploy unified communications as part of a fully developed, cloud-based, "everything as a service" strategy in your organization, you need a solution that's designed specifically to be delivered as a service. On the other hand, if your strategy is still evolving, you need a solution that can go to work immediately in your existing hardware-based, on-premises IT environment. But what happens when your cloud strategy is fully formed and you're ready to move on? The ideal solution should offer the flexibility to change as your business evolves—working on-premises today, in the cloud tomorrow, and as a service next year.

### 3 Easy integration

Your cloud communications solution is not an island; it needs to integrate seamlessly with your existing infrastructure and business applications—from productivity suites like Microsoft Office or Google Apps for Work to applications that are offered as a service, such as Salesforce.com. To achieve this integration, you need at a minimum a robust set of APIs. Ideally, your service provider will also be part of a developer ecosystem that provides support for any custom integration work that's required. Your cloud solution should be capable of connecting people in different roles, so that, for example, a call center agent can easily interact with someone in the back office to resolve an issue with a customer on the phone.



# The [cloud-based communication] market is forecasted to grow 10.5% a year:<sup>6</sup>



## 4 Mobile optimized

When people are working anywhere and everywhere, productivity depends on the ability to stay in touch, collaborate remotely, and have a consistent experience regardless of location. It's not enough for mobile clients to merely mimic design and functionality; they need to be built from the ground-up to work on mobile devices. They also need to provide a uniform experience across devices to smooth switching between phones and tablets and between corporate and personal devices. Cloud-based communications solutions should also offer automated provisioning to quickly get employees up and running on the applications they depend on every day.

## 5 Built on innovation

Cloud communications technology constantly evolves to meet the changing needs of dynamic business environments. That's why you need a vendor with a record of innovation and a history of delivering new solutions with carrier-grade reliability. And as the market for cloud-based communications solutions grows (forecasted to increase by 10.5% a year until 2020<sup>6</sup>), experience in cloud-based subscription services is becoming more and more important, too.



## Learn more

To learn how Mitel's cloud communication offerings can transform your productivity, visit [www.ask-tig.com](http://www.ask-tig.com) or call us at 630-350.0700



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