Navigating the Complexity of UC Migration

Unified Communications may seem like a topic rooted in complexity, but a trusted partner can help you smoothly migrate to the ideal communications solution for your business.

Introduction

Each year hundreds of businesses disappear due to reasons from poor planning to poor financing. Data show that between 25% and 44% of startups will not survive the first three years of business. Given the many challenges to just keeping the lights on in a struggling business, why add the extra risk of technology obsolescence. While your competitors collaborate and make use of mobility solutions, your business may be at unnecessary risk by holding on to antiquated computers, cell phones, and fax machines, rather than fully embracing the speed and agility of a Unified Communication (UC) system.

A UC solution enables the collaborative use of multiple communication methods to improve user productivity and business processes. It allows mobile/borderless access to corporate resources and provides faster business decision-making processes to compete and win in the marketplace.

Does that sound complex? Yes – and we agree.

Although the business communication landscape is indeed complex, close collaboration with a trusted partner will allow you to navigate and smoothly migrate to the best UC solution for your business. The right partner must be an industry-insider that is independent from the major Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and has adopted a customer-advocacy approach that does what is best for you – not a particular OEM.
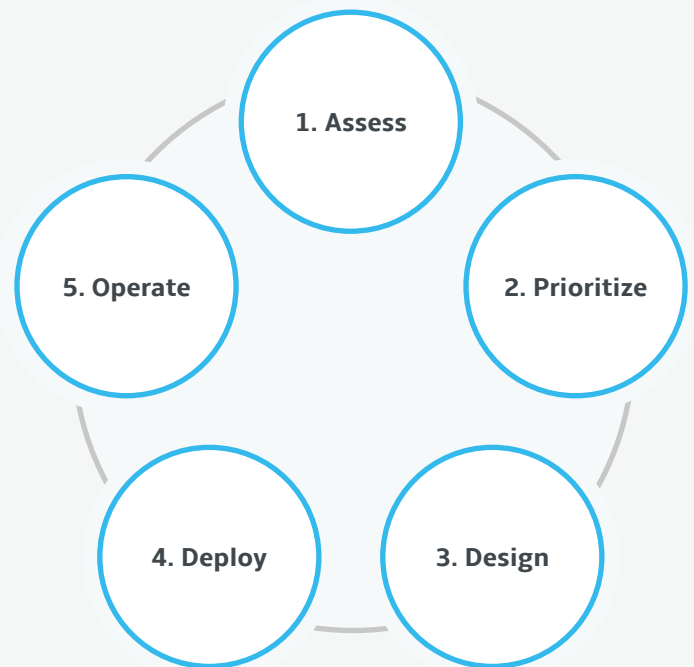
Figure 1: Steps in UC migration

Assess the current state of the telecommunication infrastructure

Taking the time to perform a thorough assessment of your organization's current telecommunication assets and resources is an important step towards structuring a successful UC migration plan. The assessment should consider several elements of your business communication system including the risk of system failure, the business value of the current system, and considerations related to the readiness of the organization to accept and benefit from a new UC system. In the complex and intimidating world of Unified Communications, and when considering the investment required and years for an acceptable Return on Investment to be realized, it is imperative that this decision be the right one for your business. After all, your business is unique.

It is wise for corporate executives to seek and find a trusted partner that will be able to navigate these difficult waters with your company's best interest in mind, not an arbitrary sales quota met at your expense.

The right trusted partner will work with you to assess the communication needs and business drivers in your company, as well as the organizational readiness needed to successfully design, deploy, and utilize an effective UC program.

Risk of System Failure Analysis

The goal for this element of the assessment is to establish the risk to your current system – does it have a clean bill of health or are there areas of significant risk that must be quickly addressed. Although different organizations can have a different set of characteristics. This process includes assessment of several key characteristics, but the common ones are:

- *Hardware failure rate*

- *Software failure rate*

- *Ability to perform*

Business value analysis

The goal for this element is to establish how the installed system supports your business – it points to the business drivers that dominated your business at the time of decision. Today, your business drivers may have radically changed in importance. Mobility may be the driver of sales in the company, or video collaboration may be a key win theme that is propelling your sales forward. Similar to previous step, you will define what characteristics are important to your organization. Some samples from this category are:

- *Contribution to profit/loss*
- *Level of usage*
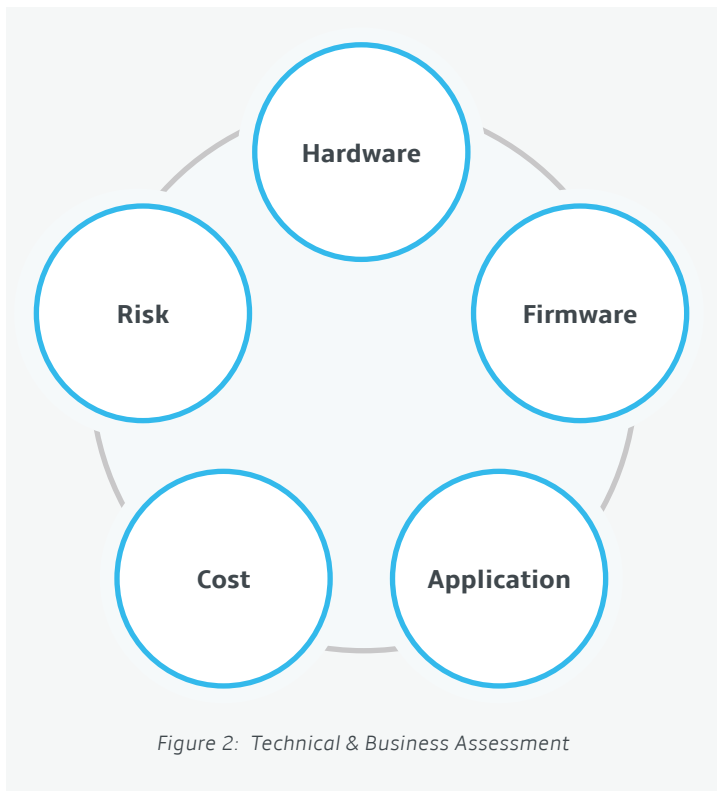- *Ability to meet business objectives*
- *Level of customer satisfaction*

Figure 2: Technical & Business Assessment

Organizational analysis

The goal for this element is to establish whether the organization has sufficient understanding of the business requirements as set forth by all key stakeholders, and adequate resources for both maintenance of the existing communication system as well as the planned UC upgrade. This analysis will seek to identify:

- *Key business requirements*
- *Key stakeholders*
- *Level of staff resources and skillsets*
- *Budget level*

Identify and Prioritize unique business drivers

Let your business objectives drives the technology solution. Not the other way around. Technology is the tool to help you to achieve your business goals. Keeping this in mind will help you to come up with a migration plan that is justifiable from business, technological & organizational perspective.

As an industry-insider, the partner brings to the table unique insights such as industry-trend in general, as well as adoption in your specific business vertical. Equipped with this knowledge, the partner will work with you to discuss your specific business objectives, and identify ways that UC can be the catalyst to achieve those objectives.

Some examples for business drivers are:

• *Lower the cost of building/facility and travel expenses*

• *Increase customer satisfaction through contact center that can handle various mode of communication (voice call, email, web chat, text, etc.)*

• *Recruit and integrate experts in remote locations into your work force*

• *Increase sales through social media integrated marketing strategy*

• *Lower the cost of doing business through system consolidation*

The outcome of this process will set the stage for a tailored and customized UC roadmap that is specific to your business objectives, budget cycle and time frame.

Design the UC solution

A rip-and-replace design is usually the strategy commonly advised by new equipment vendors. A trusted partner who has adopted a customer-advocacy approach, however, will take a more critical look at the existing infrastructure and invest the time and research needed to design the UC solution that is most beneficial to the customer.

A trusted partner will look for ways to achieve a company's business objectives by maximizing the value of their previous investment and incorporating new solutions only when it is necessary to achieve those objectives.

After completing the discovery and analysis session, you are in a good position to evaluate strategies other than rip-and-replace. Two common alternatives include a Continued Maintenance Solution and a Reengineer with Reuse Solution:

Continued Maintenance

This choice would make sense when you believe that business objectives can be met without making substantial changes to the existing system.

Reengineer with reuse

New components can be added to your current infrastructure when the existing system doesn't provide the functionality needed to achieve the business objectives.
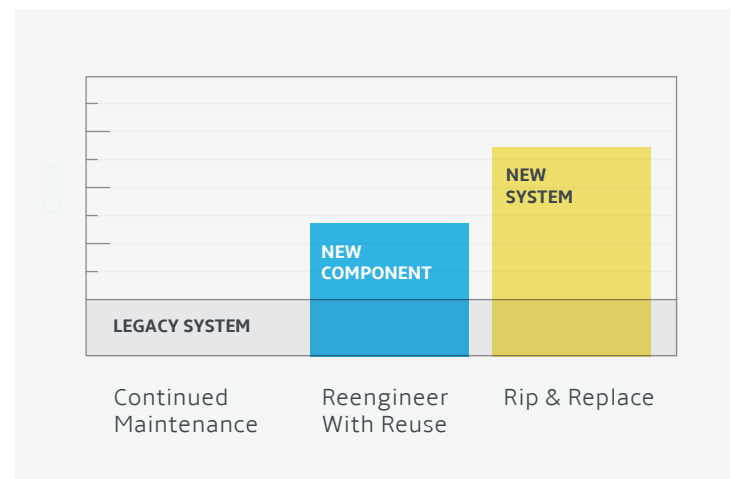
Plan the deployment strategy

The next stage, planning for implementation and deployment, is critical. A trusted partner should aide you in identifying the project timeline, network and technology modifications, and financial considerations such as Return on Investment and Total Cost of Ownership (ROI and TCO). Finally, we will verify your solution and smoothly deploy it across your enterprise, significantly enhancing your company's productivity and efficiency.

Engage an industry partner early

Armed with this information, your next step is to engage an industry partner and develop the trusted partner relationship that is necessary for the success of your UC solution and migration. Continuant develops the trusted partner relationship by beginning the Strategy and Design process and getting to know you.

Discovery and analysis session

We learn the "ins and outs" of your business to create a solution that helps your company achieve its goals. This includes learning everything we can about your business, from your equipment to the carrier to your business goals as they relate to the competitive landscape surrounding your company.

UC3 Design Workshop

Continuant will assign key technical resources from both legacy and new system OEMs to collaborate with you. We will produce a system design that addresses the objectives revealed in the discovery and analysis session. You will then be invited to Continuant's headquarters for a proof of concept workshop in our UC3 (Unified Communications Collaboration Center) where you will get hands-on and interact with your new system environment.

Controlled Roll-out

In this stage, you may want to select a small group of people or sites for pilot roll-out. The initial feedback from this pilot phase will be incorporated into the overall design before we go full-production on your new system.

Implementation and Cutover

Continuant will form a project team, led by a Project Manager, to oversee the entire implementation process. With expert Continuant engineers on-site for installation and cutover, you will feel confident that we still have you covered if anything unexpected occurs.

Training is a final key factor to successful implementation and adoption of your business' new technologies. After all, the new technology is worthless if your team doesn't use the tools. Rest assured that our expert resources will perform the training needed for your administrators or end-users and ensure that adoption is well on its way.

Full production support

When the cutover is done and the system has been in full production mode, Continuant will proactively monitor the health and performance of your system from our geo-redundant data-centers to make sure that it delivers the optimum value to your business.

Ultimately, a trusted partner is in it for the long-haul. You can rely on them for the day-to-day support of your new UC solution.

Conclusion

Migrating to UC is a complex topic that needs to be handled carefully. On the other hand, you don't have to be paralyzed by the myriad of options out there.

Working closely with a trusted partner as you go through the process will result in a balanced approach that sets your business up for relevancy, competitiveness and successful in the market place.

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