

# Conversational Access To Unified Communications

*Unified communications (UC) is the merger of social software with enterprise IT, voice processing and call processing resources to support employee productivity and overall business objectives. Adoption has accelerated recently by successful packaging, marketing and go-to-market strategies primarily by three firms that have the greatest impact in setting the overall form, function and direction of enterprise computing and communications: Cisco, IBM and Microsoft. This report evaluates their unification efforts and those of major partners in call processing and contact center automation.*

**July 2007**

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## Key Findings:

After being trumpeted for some time now and implemented in closely controlled deployments, Unified Communications (UC) solutions are finally taking hold in both large-and-small enterprises for the following reasons:

- **The largest players are making the complex simple** – Broadband IP has been a great equalizer; so has established standards for service-oriented architectures (SOA) and simplified presentation of information from multiple sources through Web browsers and IM-like clients.
- **Migration has moved beyond messaging** – Initially, UC meant “Unified Messaging” (UM) and applied solely to enterprise messaging platforms. But UM became a template for an overall change from siloed, single-function, departmental boxes to shared resources for messages to a variety of clients to support more efficient communications among customers and employees.
- **UC deployments are “business-driven”** – Investments are justified by improved customer relations thanks to virtualizing the contact center and turning every employee and database into a customer-facing resource, and enhanced employee productivity resulting from enabling them to share directories, calendars and initiate impromptu conferences in order to consult, collaborate and carry out everyday commerce.
- **Ease of implementation has been addressed** – With off-the-shelf servers, applications and middleware from the largest enterprise middleware providers and well-defined APIs.
- **It is not a rip-and-replace process** – Destroying IT silos, virtualizing contact centers and replacing or “upgrading” switches is done without throwing out existing infrastructure elements.
- **Winning bids leverage existing programs and components** – Solutions include implementation and integration services, software, hardware and services that merge voice processing, call processing and Web services on a broadband, IP-based network.
- **Cisco, IBM and Microsoft play the largest role in defining UC** – Working with partners, these three are poised to have a huge impact in accelerating UC deployments, both through cooperative and competitive initiatives.
- **Reaching a mobile workforce and customer base is next** – Core network and IT resources must be reachable over wireless networks from a variety of devices.

**Table of Contents**

Key Findings: ..... ii

Unified Communications: In the Bulls-Eye ..... 1

    Out of the Switch Closet; Into Data Center ..... 2

    The UC Trinity: Microsoft, IBM and Cisco ..... 3

Microsoft’s Goal: Drive Down Cost and Complexity ..... 4

    Case Study: Gold Systems Voice Enables Exchange ..... 4

    Adding Presence with MOCS ..... 6

IBM Focuses on Social Networking in the Enterprise ..... 6

    Connections: Combinations of Capabilities ..... 7

    Cultivating Communities in the Greenhouse ..... 7

    Lotus Connections Adds Trappings of Web 2.0 ..... 8

Cisco’s Catalytic Role ..... 9

    Re-branding Call Manager into UC Manager ..... 9

    Moving Up the UC Stack ..... 10

The Role of Call Processing Partners ..... 10

    Avaya Pairs with IBM Lotus and Microsoft OCS ..... 11

    Nortel’s Mixed Messages to Marketplace ..... 12

    The Innovative Communications Alliance ..... 13

Future Tense: Mobile, Multi-site and Multi-vendor ..... 14

    All Implementations are Multi-vendor ..... 14

**Table of Figures**

Figure 1: The UC-CAT Connection ..... 1

Figure 2: Stages of IP-Driven UC Development ..... 2

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