

Unified Communications: A Day in the Life

Unified Messaging has evolved. It has evolved into a new comprehensive platform known as Unified Communications. Now, it finally delivers the real business value that has been promised for years. Let's take a look at this technology in action, and then examine the back-end processes that make it all possible.

Unified Communications in Action

Let's say a customer sends an urgent email to place a supply order with their sales representative at the last minute. The employee who receives the email is out of the office. Normally, this would end in a missed opportunity for the supplier. But in this scenario, the rep. listens to the email from their cell phone. The sales rep. then dials into their company PBX, and speaks the name of another sales representative within the company. The system locates the second employee and dials that person at their current location. There is a question about the order, so the second sales rep. uses an instant messenger function to contact a sales manager who is in a meeting. The sales manager answers the question over IM, allowing the order to be completed.


The first sales representative is notified by cell phone that the customer's order has been placed. The employee records a message to the client that the order has been processed successfully. This recording is converted into a WAV file. This file is attached to the original email and sent back to the customer as a reply. From the customer's perspective, they never knew that their sales contact was out of the office. All they know-or care about- is that their order was processed seamlessly.

Behind the Scenes

Unified Communications makes this scenario possible. It starts with intelligent value-based call routing for the most effective and accurate routing decisions. By leveraging software that works with SMTP, POP3, TAPI and Active X standards, a company can create a powerful combination of telephony and computing resources to provide a range of productivity and service enhancing functions.

With this approach, inbound callers are immediately identified by the calling number. Customer database records are retrieved and the incoming call is automatically routed to the most appropriate call-handling agent or department. Internal telephone numbers are seamlessly accessed and dialed from computerized directories such as a company database, an application directory, web pages, portals or a MS Outlook™, Goldmine, Maximizer or ACT! contact folder.

This approach is further enhanced by what is known as "presence". Presence is the ability for the system to instantly know the availability of an employee, and the quickest way to communicate with that individual. Employees announce their "presence" using short message service (SMS) over a mobile phone,



PDA or another mobile communication device. An organization can start to develop presence technology by deploying IM over corporate networks as an addition to e-mail. Then it can be expanded to wider networks that include mobile devices. From there, a company can develop call communication profiles for its entire staff. Calendars, schedules and presence information integrate with the telephone system to automatically reroute incoming calls to the most suitable destination when staff are on leave, in a meeting, or temporarily working off site.

Core Value

So what's the intrinsic value of Unified Communications? It's the simple fact that you can enable your organization to make sure every caller speaks to the right person at the right time, supported with the right information, every time. Through a combination of Interactive Voice Response, (IVR), Text to Speech (TTS) and Click-to-Dial applications, you can automate repetitive tasks and help your employees become more effective. By streamlining multiple internal communication functions, you can deliver substantial productivity gains across your organization. When tailored to the unique needs of your business, Unified Communications delivers robust process improvement in a format that makes great business sense.