

Presence Management: The New Productivity Engine for the Dynamic Workforce

The idea of "Presence" is the new driver behind the latest productivity and corporate collaboration initiatives being deployed by businesses everywhere. In fact, according to Nemertes Research, 92% of IT executives list real-time communication tools such as Presence Technology as one of the factors that help them to manage their remote workforce. But what defines Presence Management, and how can it be put to best use within your organization?

Many companies tend to think they are employing Presence Management when their corporate network shows whether or not an employee is logged-in, but this is only a small fraction of the value that real Presence Management can deliver. Presence done right is the ability to see where people are, what they are doing and how they want to be reached—all in real time. This is accomplished through the use of multi-faceted technologies such as instant messaging, telephony applications and location-based services. Presence done right can change not only the way your business communicates; it can enhance and streamline your entire organizational structure.


Presence in Action

Imagine riding in your car, and you need to check in with your VP of Sales. You dial his or her number. Instead of receiving a voicemail, the Unified Communications platform consults the details of the executive's current status, where that person is located, and whether the call can be taken. If the executive is available, the call is routed to wherever that person may be (through the office extension, cell phone or other number specified).

After the conversation, you determine that you need to have a quick conference with all of the Senior VPs. When you get back to your office, you access a secure online interface that details that status of all of your executive officers. You schedule a meeting time, and everyone is contacted by whichever method that they specified. Your meeting goes off with a minimal interruption in workflow—and you're not going from office to office trying to hunt down your team.

Making the Most of Presence Management

In order to realize the maximum benefit of Presence Management, there are several things to keep in mind. The first is that Presence Management only works to full effect if it is deployed through a Unified Communications platform. Data and voice need to be integrated in order to maximize the connection options available to your employees. If you're like most companies, you have an email infrastructure, a voice infrastructure and a data network infrastructure. For Presence Management to be effective, you need a bridge across all 3 platforms. Fortunately, Presence Management applications are designed to be just such a bridge. Just make sure you select a vendor that can integrate



between the various disparate systems. Ideally, they should provide a full-service solution, rather than making you support multiple products from multiple different vendors.

Next, you'll want to examine how you will provision your users when deploying Presence Management. You'll want your power users to have access to the full breadth of communication possibilities that are available. However, if you operate in an environment such as manufacturing, you may want to consider limiting usage. Offering full Presence Management capabilities to your assembly line workers may actually be counterproductive and a drain on system resources.

When looking at access levels for your organizational team, you will also want to consider the needs of your remote users. Empowering the mobile workforce is one of the strongest benefits that Unified Communications can deliver. But you'll definitely want to control and protect remote access to ensure the privacy and security of all your important corporate communications. Done right, Unified Communications can enable remote users to work as if they were all in the same office.

Finally, user adoption rates must always be of primary concern. When looking at the Presence Management solutions of different vendors, examine how the interfaces will be integrated into the tools that your employees use everyday. If the solution puts a burden on the normal daily workflow of your team, they will not accept or use it.

The best Presence Management technologies work right within Microsoft Outlook. If an employee schedules a meeting using Outlook's calendar function, their Presence status will update automatically. It's that kind of functionality that will build quick acceptance, and enable you to rapidly build productivity across your entire organization.