GlobalMeet

Top 10 Ways To Modernise Your Collaboration Through UC

A Knowledge Network Article By Nick Wood On Behalf Of PGi

People have become accustomed to having a rich choice of communication services in both their work and private lives, such as voice; email; messaging – either one-to-one or one-to-many; and video-calling and conferencing, among others.

Given the high degree of awareness of, and willingness to use these various applications, it has become even more important for unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) providers to ensure their products are just as intuitive to use, and even more reliable than popular mass-market apps like FaceTime and WhatsApp.

As this top-10 rundown highlights, there is more to offering a compelling UC&C service than simply giving it a snappy title name and hoping that will be enough.

1. Sell The Way Customers Are Buying

Savvy enterprises don't just opt for the first good-looking UC&C solution they see; nor do they simply pick the one that everyone else is using. Enterprises spend a good deal of time examining what they need and consider the options that address those needs most effectively. Depending on the size and nature of the enterprise, a single UC&C platform that does it all and spans the entire organisation from top to bottom might not make sense. What's more, some enterprises might want to trial UC&C with one or more teams before rolling it out to the wider business.

UC&C providers need to keep this in mind, take a consultative approach to selling, and ensure that their offerings can be integrated with other collaboration services.

2. It Must Be Intuitive and Easy To Use

The first time you run an app on your smartphone, you are usually given a step-by-step guide on its features and functions, and how to change the settings. Then you are left to get on with it. If the app has been designed well, then there is usually no need for the end user to revisit the tutorial.

This is the level that enterprise UC&C needs to be at. The days of mass-emailing lengthy manuals to every member of staff are over. They don't have the time nor inclination to read them. This is particularly the case for new hires, who are bombarded with information during their first week.

Employees will simply gravitate to the application that they and their colleagues find easiest to use. After all, most of them don't usually know – or care – how much cash the company has spent on implementing a bespoke UC&C solution, they just want to get on with their jobs.

3. Quality Counts

As well as being intuitive and easy to use, UC&C services must actually be of sufficient quality. In the competitive world of enterprise communications, your customers will desert you and never look back unless your video and audio quality are of the highest calibre, meaning HD, and one day in the not too-distant-future, ultra-HD.

Unproductive meetings waste time and money. Crackly audio, and grainy, jittery video are two sure-fire ways to ensure an unproductive meeting.

4. Clear and Simple Price Plans

IT departments do not have a bottomless well of money to draw from to throw at UC&C. For them, it isn't just about the cost of buying the service, but also the cost of implementing it. As such they need a clear picture of how much each service costs per user per month so they can produce an accurate budget requirement. Avoid the temptation to give your various tariff plans 'imaginative' names – it only adds to the confusion. Instead, be clear about what the customer gets in return for their money.

Customers, particularly SMEs, also demand the flexibility to add and remove individual UC&C services as needed. Offering that kind of flexibility will forge a stronger relationship with the customer.

5. Security, Security, Security

It's worth repeating: Security. In an age of ransomware and phishing attacks, you as the UC&C provider need to stay alert to the possibility that criminals will try to impersonate you in front of your customers in a bid to compromise their

security systems and extort money out of them.

What's more, if you want to encourage enterprises to collaborate and share information electronically using your UC&C suite, you need to ensure that information is being shared securely.

Being alive alert to these threats, warning customers as they emerge, and ensuring the secure transmission of information is of fundamental importance to any aspiring UC&C provider.

6. BYOD

In some organisations, bring your own device (BYOD) can hold the key to employee uptake of enterprise collaboration and unified communications. The rise of working from home, and even hot-desking, means that now more than ever, staff need to be able to access UC&C services from any device, otherwise true collaboration becomes harder to achieve.

This presents a challenge though. Not only must employee-owned devices be secure and remain virus-free, but they must also meet the minimum system requirements for certain UC&C services, particularly video-conferencing, for example. Keeping customers and their staff up-to-date with the latest system requirements and ensuring your products will work on a broad range of hardware, adds complexity and cost. You need to be able to meet that challenge head on.

7. Get Ahead in the Cloud

Hosting your solutions in the cloud is the key to being a modern, agile UC&C provider. Migrating to the cloud not only reduces the costs for the CSP, but also for the customer, since they don't have to go to the time and expense of deploying on-premises solutions.

It also reduces the length of time it takes to develop and deploy new services, and it enables over-the-air updates, allowing you as the CSP to constantly improve your UC&C offering.

8. Give the People What They Want

You might have developed what you consider to be the best UC offering money can buy, but sometimes you need to swallow your pride and accept that your customers may use an alternative solution for some of their communication needs.

Being able to support and integrate third-party solutions is an important part of a healthy, happy relationship with your corporate clients. Besides, if you can't play nicely with other communication services, your customers will simply ditch you for a provider that can.

9. Helping Hand

Not every company can afford to employ a chief collaboration officer, and this responsibility still frequently falls on the shoulders of the over-worked head of IT. Providing 24/7 support is one thing, but offering the right kind of support matters just as much, if not more.

Don't assume your primary point of contact can clear their schedule at the drop of a hat and dedicate a whole morning to deploying a critical update. Keeping them informed of your own product development cycle and impending patches and updates will help you stay on the right side of your customers.

10. What's in a Name?

Finally, make sure you give your UC&C services a catchy name! Preferably one that doesn't induce chronic eye -rolling in your intended audience...

About PGi

PGi is the world's largest dedicated provider of collaboration software and services. For more than 25 years, our broad portfolio of products has served the end-to-end collaboration needs of enterprises. Accessible anywhere, anytime and on any device, PGi's award-winning collaboration solutions drive productivity and teamwork for approximately 50,000 customers around the world. To learn more, visit us at pgi.com.