

# Leading the charge

**New research shows bosses are the early adopters when it comes to unified communications technology, reports Marcus Hickman in the first of three round-ups from our specially-commissioned survey**

**D**irectors and general managers are leading the way in the take-up of unified communications, and usage levels have soared, according to a survey commissioned by BT Global Services.

The start of unified communications dates back to the 1980s but it's now easier to use than ever, and it's being seen as vital for business. Until recently take-up was slow, but finally the adoption rate has been transformed as executives around the world collaborate through IM, presence, cloud storage and video communications. In fact, more than 50 per cent now agree that "real-time collaboration with colleagues using IM/chat is very beneficial to me".

Our survey of 1,042 executives working in large enterprises across Australia, Brazil, China, India, Italy, Germany, Spain, the UK and the USA shows a wave of enthusiasm for unified communications: 62 per cent would like integrated IM and email, while 68 per cent would like cloud-based file storage, and 66 per cent are keen on 'Bring Your Own Device' – being able to access their corporate network from a personal smartphone or tablet. Almost as many executives (58 per cent) have two or more conference calls each week as have formal meetings (65 per cent), suggesting decision makers are increasingly comfortable with having big conversations outside the boardroom.

## Why bosses are biting

There are a number of factors driving this strong take-up of unified communications:

**The new economic order** – Brazilian, Chinese and Indian executives are enthusiastic adopters of unified communications, outshining their counterparts in the West, who tend to work in more traditional ways. For example, 73 per cent of Brazilian, Chinese and Indian executives would like phone to video calls – a system where you can switch a phone call to a video call when you want – compared with 40 per cent of American and 38 per cent of German executives. This suggests decision makers in the emerging economic superpowers are less weighed down by organisational baggage and established ways of working.



The survey suggests that decision makers are increasingly comfortable with having big conversations outside the boardroom.

**Slow decision-making** – Some 56 per cent of global business executives say slow decision-making is a major problem at work, with another 41 per cent citing a lack of consultation and poor team working. Working globally, across cultures and time zones, relies on open communications. If manufacturing executives dialling in to a conference in the UK can make a decision after hours, it could give colleagues in Asia a headstart, saving time and money.

**Gen Y** – After much anticipation, the tech-savvy generation of people born since 1980 are finally leading the workplace and actively adopting new ways of working. Some 23 per cent of under-35s use Facebook for work, compared with 10 per cent of over-55s. At the same time, older executives are trying to keep up with their younger competitors, and possibly even learning from the children.

**Outside-in collaboration** – A total of 81 per cent of the business leaders in our survey do their work wholly or mainly in teams and recognise the importance of collaboration. The growth of the network economy means executives are increas-

**“Brazilian, Chinese and Indian executives are enthusiastic adopters of unified communications”.**

ingly seeking to collaborate outside the organisation, with experts, customers and suppliers. Some 75 per cent of Chinese and Indian executives want to work in this way, compared with an overall average of 60 per cent.

**Invisible time cost** – Global business leaders say they waste more than two hours a day on a range of communication difficulties. Nearly a third are still working after 9pm, and 16 per cent are online before 7am. The average executive spends 38 minutes each day commuting and travelling for work. In India it's over an hour each day. All the more reason for them to welcome unified communications, which can get round poor infrastructure, saving time and effort and keeping productivity up.

Source: The Collaboration Paradox, 2012

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# Can IT departments overcome the ‘wild west’ dilemma?

IT bosses have to walk the line between helping unified communications happen and taking full control. **Marcus Hickman** reports on our survey findings



Employees will always want to use the latest technology, but that doesn't mean you have to compromise your security.

While growth in the take-up of unified communications is undeniable, there's much further to go, say executives. Increasingly, executives are 'going behind the back' of their IT department to bring their own devices and software into the workplace. Some 54 per cent of Leaders would like to use their own smartphone or tablet to access work files. A similar number want to

**“The danger is that collaboration communication in large enterprises becomes either chaotic or too controlled by IT departments.”**

use Facebook and Twitter to collaborate with people outside the organisation for work purposes, whether it's swapping ideas or flagging Economist articles.

And executives say their IT departments are cautious and cash-strapped. Some 55 per cent say their IT department seems unable to get enough budget to invest in the best technology, and 59 per cent say they put too much emphasis on security over ease of use.

The danger is that collaboration communication in large enterprises becomes either chaotic or too controlled by IT departments. It's a 'wild west' dilemma CIOs need to manage.

What are the lessons for IT departments looking to manage this situation? An answer lies in implementing secure unified communications successfully, and here the research

shows what executives think the barriers are. These figures show how many say they strongly agree with each statement about unified communications:

1. Training – 26 per cent say they haven't had enough training.
2. Ubiquity – 18 per cent say too few colleagues are using it.
3. Availability – 10 per cent say it's often unavailable at the right time.
4. Effort – 8 per cent say it's too much effort.
5. Ease of use – 6 per cent say the technology isn't easy to use.

So, some interesting trends, and some remaining barriers to unified communications. But most of all this is a picture of a technology whose time has come and that business leaders are keen to use.

Source: The Collaboration Paradox, 2012

# Are you a leader in unified communications?

The keener executives are on unified communications, the more sophisticated the technology they use. **Marcus Hickman** explains our Collaboration Index

Our research shows that general managers and directors of large enterprises are the fastest adopters of unified communications. One reason is that one-third of this group travels overseas at least once a month and they need to stay in touch. As well as that, some 74 per cent of them say working collaboratively with people and teams in other parts of the business means a great deal of effort, so they appreciate anything that makes it easier, whether it's live meetings or video conferences. These people make up the 'Leader' group in our 'Collaboration Index' of unified communications take-up, using a classic S-curve for adoption. This is based on a scale dividing unified communications according to how difficult they are to adopt, with level 3 being the toughest.

Next comes the 'Follower' group, who make up some 38 per cent of the total. They use tools ranging from online presence to

cloud services for accessing and storing data. Behind them is the 'Adopter' group, which uses level 1 tools like desktop sharing and instant messaging. And bringing up the rear are the 'Inactive' who have the tools but don't use them, and the 'Uninvolved', who together form just over a quarter of the sample.

Each group has different characteristics and uses unified communications technology in different ways.

Our survey found that leaders are more likely to use video communication, with 58 per cent of general managers and directors making more than one video call per week on average. Although they have a heavier communication and collaboration load, leaders and followers waste less time, which could save the average large enterprise millions of dollars.

Source: The Collaboration Paradox, 2012



It's the company's responsibility to let employees use the technology they're most comfortable with so they can be at their most productive.

## UNINVOLVED 8%

UC technology not available at work

### Profile of Executives

- Older, 55% over 45 years old
- More in Australia and Italy
- More in smaller enterprises, operations and support services
- More likely to work by themselves

## INACTIVE 12%

UC available at work, but not personally used

### Profile of Executives

- Older, 47% over 45
- More in the US and working in support services
- 16% use a tablet computer at work

## ADOPTER 12%

Personally use at least one of the easiest to adopt UC technologies

### Profile of Executives

- Average age, only 35% over 45
- More in Brazil and Germany
- 25% use Instant Messaging and 2% use Presence
- 25% use a tablet computer at work

## FOLLOWER 38%

Personally use at least one of the easiest and one of the second most difficult to adopt UC technologies

### Profile of Executives

- Younger, 63% under 44
- More work in sales and IT
- 43% use Instant Messaging and 31% use Presence
- 39% use a tablet computer for work
- 17% use web conferencing
- 17% use Facebook for work, 11% Twitter

## LEADERS 24%

Use all three levels of UC technologies, including one of the most difficult to adopt

### Profile of Executives

- 76% under 44
- More in China and India
- More are GMs/Directors and IT
- More working collaboratively or in teams
- 63% use Instant Messaging and 51% use Presence
- 94% use a tablet computer at work
- 39% use web conferencing
- 41% use Facebook for work, 31% Twitter