Beyond converged networks: driving user productivity through unified communications and collaboration.

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Executive summary

Unified communications and collaboration strategies can help organizations deliver a user experience that brings together communications and collaboration silos across and beyond traditional business boundaries. By providing users with a single, integrated experience across both business applications and communications and collaboration tools, organizations can cultivate more dynamic and flexible business systems. They can achieve these objectives without having to replace their existing telephony infrastructure, even if running solutions from multiple vendors. And, as a result, they can build more flexible, real-time business models that allow them to respond more quickly to emerging marketplace opportunities and competitive threats.

By adopting unified communications and collaboration solutions, organizations can address critical needs such as improving productivity and responsiveness, supporting an increasingly complex and global business network and meeting the communications needs of employees no matter where they are working. IBM provides the essential software, services, hardware and strategic alliances you need to connect people to applications, data and one another anytime, anywhere— allowing people to find, reach and collaborate with the right resources more easily than ever. Using modular, standards-based IBM solutions, you can simplify and unify business communications, from voice, e-mail and instant messaging (IM), to video and Web conferencing, while reducing overall costs.

This paper highlights key drivers, challenges and characteristics of a unified communications and collaboration strategy. It articulates the IBM vision for unified communications and collaboration, how IBM delivers on this vision and the advantages that organizations can realize by teaming with IBM to take converged communications to the next level.

Converged communications are helping drive adoption of more flexible, real-time business models that allow organizations to be more responsive to the global marketplace.

More responsive business models are fueling demand for real-time collaboration capabilities delivered in a consistent and meaningful context.

The new landscape of business communications and collaboration

The convergence of voice, video and data on Internet Protocol (IP) networks is fundamentally changing traditional real-time collaboration and telephony within organizations of all sizes and across most industries. Converged communications are helping accelerate adoption of more flexible, real-time business models that allow organizations to respond quickly to emerging marketplace opportunities and competitive threats—around the clock and around the globe.

New business models drive new business and end user needs. The flexible, responsive business models supported by converged communications are fueling demand for capabilities that allow people to communicate and collaborate in real time and within the context of the business problem, opportunity or discussion at hand. Therefore, IT departments must find new ways to deliver a user experience that brings together communications and collaboration silos across and beyond traditional business boundaries.

Improving agility and responsiveness

Companies are increasingly finding that the key to improving productivity and business responsiveness is delivering collaboration tools in a consistent and meaningful context. Consider a project manager who uses e-mail to submit a vendor order, calls a customer and sends IMs to obtain information from several team members—all in the course of one hour. Through unified communications, organizations are adopting collaboration approaches that can address the needs and preferences of this type of user—one whose context constantly changes during the course of a day or a project. Or they can accommodate the work-style preferences of people from different generations.

Organizations are seeking ways to support their distributed business networks, meet the needs of employees' traditional and mobile work environments, and derive more value from the multivendor telephony infrastructures they have today.

Taking a holistic approach to the extended business network

Beyond just their own employees, organizations are looking for ways to meet the evolving needs of an ever more distributed business network — employees, partners, suppliers and customers. Increasingly, companies are seeking ways extend key communications capabilities such as presence awareness and IM chat capabilities out to their business partners and customers.

Supporting the next-generation workforce

More than ever, organizations are looking to hire and retain talent anywhere around the globe. They must find ways to support workers wherever they are — whether they work in a traditional office, are part of a mobile workforce or move between the two on a daily basis. Increasingly, work is occurring in locations where workers depend on a wireless and remote-access infrastructure that is outside the enterprise's control.

Protecting the value of existing multivendor systems

Most companies have acquired their telephony infrastructures incrementally on a regional or branch office level. As a result, these companies run — and therefore must support and maintain — multiple infrastructures from multiple vendors. And they must find ways to leverage and better manage the various multivendor telephony infrastructures they have today.

Many organizations are looking for communications strategies that enable them to provide end users with unified communications and collaboration capabilities delivered via a single, familiar user experience.

Unified communications and collaboration solutions align converged communications and contextual collaboration capabilities with existing business processes.

The next step: finding the right communications and collaboration strategy

Faced with these challenges, many organizations are seeking new ways to make it easier for workers to find, reach and collaborate with each other and with resources across and beyond the organization. Specifically, they are turning to communications strategies that enable them to:

- *Provide end users with the unified communications and collaboration capabilities required to create more dynamic and flexible business systems, while managing multiple back-end telephony and audio video infrastructures.*
- *Deliver a single user experience across business applications and across communications and collaboration tools. In other words, allow a user to use the same interface to place a call through a softphone, to send an IM or to look up customer information in a business application.*

To get started, some companies are simply reducing costs by updating an aging telephony infrastructure with Voice over IP (VoIP) solutions. Others are focused on improving productivity by adding advanced capabilities such as unified messaging, IM, Web conferencing and video conferencing to improve collaboration and productivity. And others want to further enrich their existing real-time collaboration and application environments with new communications services—while leveraging existing investments in IT and telephony infrastructure and the core business applications they support.

Taking convergence to the next level: unified communications and collaboration

Unified communications and collaboration solutions bring together converged communications and collaboration services with business processes. In other words, these solutions allow you to provide capabilities, such as real-time presence awareness, Web conferencing, voice, video, unified messaging, telephony and voicemail capabilities, and make them accessible to your users through a consistent, familiar experience. These solutions must span multiple convergence points, including bringing together multivendor networks, leveraging IP telephony to deliver VoIP capabilities and supporting unified communications.

A unified communications and collaboration strategy can help reduce IT costs, while driving increased business flexibility and employee productivity.

Through unified communications and collaboration, IBM has reduced costs associated with telephony by up to 40 percent.

For end users, a unified communications and collaboration strategy delivers flexibility. It can help create an integrated business communications infrastructure that allows employees to respond more quickly and efficiently by connecting, communicating and collaborating:

- *With whomever — any individual or group.*
- *Knowing of their contact's availability and preferred communications mode.*
- *Using whatever means they prefer — voice, video, text, graphics or any combination.*
- *Using any platform — computer, phone, mobile or wireless device, or network appliance.*
- *Whenever they want — in real time or asynchronously (for example, with e-mail).*

Beyond increased flexibility and productivity, a unified communications and collaboration strategy can help reduce IT operating and support costs. IBM research estimates that advanced audio conferencing in a converged network environment can save as much as 35 percent over the cost of traditional approaches. In fact, through its own unified communications and collaboration strategy, IBM has already achieved a 25 to 40 percent reduction in the cost of individual telephone calling, and a 40 percent reduction in the cost of conference calling.

What's more, IT practitioners who embrace unified communications and collaboration are positioned to reap the greatest benefits — for their organizations and for themselves. They are putting themselves in place to change the way employees interact with one another. At the same time, they are consolidating and standardizing business and communications processes, which can lead to significant improvements in employee productivity. Above all, they are building

the infrastructure required to fundamentally change the way their organizations interact with customers, partners and suppliers—equipping their organizations to differentiate themselves from the competition with unique business processes and superior customer service.

Effective unified communications and collaboration solutions should be comprehensive, yet adaptable to user needs, existing technologies and core business processes.

An effective unified communications and collaboration framework must be comprehensive, yet flexible enough to adjust to your users, existing computing and telephony investments, and core business processes. Beyond offering a wide selection of capabilities, ideal unified communications and collaboration solutions:

- *Adapt to user preferences by integrating into the environment within which users are most comfortable operating, or into the environment that's best suited for a given task.*
- *Span a continuum including document-centric, e-mail-centric, real-time-centric, application-centric and Web-centric environments.*
- *Integrate into all your existing business processes and business applications.*
- *Accommodate multivendor telephony environments deployed in the enterprise.*
- *Focus on innovation to deliver a more effective meeting experience, transforming it beyond simple collaboration to a virtual work environment.*

Unified communications and collaboration solutions from IBM

IBM offers the essential software, services, strategic alliances and hardware elements companies need to help people stay connected to applications, data and one another anytime, anywhere. So users can find an expert, reach out within and beyond business boundaries and collaborate more easily than ever. And, as a result, you can help your organization improve productivity, speed responsiveness and lower operational costs, while creating a better, more attractive work environment that's easier to manage, extend and enrich.

IBM offers the right software, services, strategic alliances and hardware elements to create effective unified communications and collaboration solutions.

With IBM, you can create a unified communications and collaboration environment that is elegant, convenient and cost-effective — and right for your business. Specifically, IBM offers a unified client for communications and collaboration, along with multivendor support, open standards and extensions. What's more, IBM combines modular, standards-based software and services with robust, enterprise-strength security features. This approach allows you to simplify and unify all modes of business communications, including voice, e-mail, IM, video and Web conferencing, so users can select their preferred access method, while also improving collaboration and reducing costs. Plus, you can access a suite of industry-leading services, strategic alliances and expertise attained through successful creation of collaboration solutions for clients worldwide.

A unified client for all your communications and collaboration needs

IBM provides a single client that brings together voice, data and video technologies onto a flexible communications and collaboration platform.

IBM delivers a complete, unified client experience that converges voice, data and video technologies onto flexible communications and collaboration platform. IBM Lotus® Sametime® software is an award-winning and marketplace-leading platform for unified communications and collaboration that offers integrated IM and Web conferencing capabilities. It serves as the single communications and collaboration client on the desktop, providing the proven security features, reliability and scalability businesses require. In fact, over 17 million people worldwide — including users working for three of the four most profitable companies in the world — use Lotus Sametime capabilities every day to gain instant access to people and information. By relying on this IBM software, they are bringing together geographically dispersed teams and improving individual and team productivity.

In addition to IM, Web conferencing, public IM federation and mobile clients, Lotus Sametime software provides advanced capabilities such as multiway VoIP and integrated point-to-point video — right out of the box.* Because Lotus Sametime software is designed using a modular, open-standards-based approach,

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*A leading platform for unified com-
munications and collaboration, IBM
Lotus Sametime software offers IM,
Web conferencing and a wide range
of integrated capabilities right out
of the box.*

it integrates easily with existing IT environments, allowing you to save money
and establish a simpler, more consistent technology approach across your enter-
prise. In addition, IBM is working with leading providers of telephony, audio
and video capabilities to offer Lotus Sametime users integrated features such as:

- **Click-to-call and click-to-conference capabilities.** *Select one or multiple
  names from the contact list and initiate a call.*
- **Aggregated telephony presence.** *See whether a contact is currently on the
  phone or available.*
- **Call management.** *Receive alerts for incoming calls, take action (for
  example, redirect to a mobile phone) and view incoming, outgoing and
  missed calls—all from your desktop.*
- **Multipoint video integration.** *Launch a video session with one or
  more participants.*
- **Softphone integration.** *Equip your PC to act as a telephone—with all the
  controls available in an office phone system.*
- **Web conferencing audio integration.** *Allow participants to click a button
  to have the audio feature call them to join a conference and identify the
  active speaker; and provide moderators with sophisticated controls (for
  example, call, mute or eject participants, adjust volume and lock meeting).*
- **Web conferencing audio/meeting scheduling.** *Automatically reserve an
  audio conference number and Web conference when scheduling a meeting.*
- **Unified messaging.** *Receive voicemails and then replay, delete or forward
  them from within your IBM Lotus Notes® or Lotus Sametime client.*

Flexibility to integrate multivendor environments

*IBM unified communications and
collaboration solutions meet the
needs of telephony environments
that include technologies from a
single vendor or a variety of vendors.*

IBM solutions are designed to meet the needs of virtually any IT environment—
whether it includes a telephony infrastructure from a single vendor or multiple
communications technologies from a variety of vendors. Regardless of the
makeup of your existing environment, you can consolidate on the IBM client
without having to migrate or completely replace back-end systems. As a result,
you can begin realizing benefits immediately, instead of having to wait until
after you have consolidated your back-end infrastructure.

IBM fosters strategic alliances with leading equipment suppliers and network service providers worldwide to facilitate integration of multivendor environments.

To deliver choice and flexibility, IBM unified communications and collaboration solutions are based on an open programming model that leverages industry standards.

To facilitate the integration and management of complex, multivendor environments, IBM also fosters strategic relationships with major equipment suppliers and network service providers worldwide. These alliances include both telephony providers such as 3Com, Alcatel-Lucent, Avaya, Cisco, InterCall, Nortel and Siemens, and audio and video providers such as Avistar, Polycom, RADVISION and TANDBERG. Plus, you can integrate custom solutions developed by leading independent software vendors (ISVs) that are taking advantage of the open and extensible client and standard application programming interfaces (APIs) available from IBM.

An open programming model that leverages industry standards

With an open, standards-based platform, you can integrate complex environments, while ensuring that you won't be locked into proprietary solutions. IBM is delivering an open programming model for unified communications and collaboration solutions — and cultivates a large ecosystem of solutions and providers that leverage this model to ensure that you will have an ever-increasing selection of capabilities to choose from down the road. And you will be able to develop or acquire solutions that integrate easily into your unified communications and collaboration environment.

Planning and implementation services for rapid deployment

To help you deploy unified communications and collaboration solutions more quickly, IBM provides a suite of implementation services that have already been integrated and proven to speed deployment of the IBM Lotus

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IBM provides a suite of proven, customizable implementation ser-vices to help speed deployment of unified communications and collaboration projects.

To help organizations realize a quick return on investment from their unified communications and collaboration solution, IBM applies industry expertise and hands-on experience.

Sametime platform. So you can accelerate your unified communications and collaboration project — from installation and integration to culture-change requirements. For example, IBM can provide services to help you:

- *Plan, design and build a complete unified messaging solution to help you to bring together e-mail, voice and fax messaging applications into a single in-box, which users can access with their phones, Web browsers or e-mail clients.*
- *Access trained network consultants that bring extensive experience in designing and deploying converged communications networks and solu-tions — including those on a global scale — to help you proactively manage challenges and opportunities as you consolidate to a single IP network.*
- *Assess, plan and design the best converged network and IP telephony appli-cations to meet your needs, from determining business requirements and vendor-neutral planning, to assessing your internal processes and policies, to making network recommendations.*

Unmatched expertise in business communications
Initially, companies that implement unified communications and collaboration solutions will derive value from integrating business applications and business processes. The breadth and depth of IBM industry expertise and communica-tions solution practices make IBM uniquely qualified to help businesses find the right opportunities to realize these quick results.

What's more, IBM's leadership comes from extensive hands-on experience. IBM has helped transform business communications for more than 100 clients worldwide — including its own enterprise communications system with 110,000 users and a half-million communications devices running on VoIP. Beyond its own telephony environment, IBM has created, maintained and supported end-to-end enterprise telephony environments for Cisco, Dow Chemical, Lloyds, Visteon and more than 100 other organizations. Through these experiences, IBM has learned firsthand how to leverage converged communications to simplify IT environments, while enhancing communications and collabora-tion across a dispersed and mobile workforce. Moreover, IBM understands the critical link between enhancing employee productivity and customer service, as well as how to reduce the overall cost of doing business.

Access to a complete solution from a single provider

To gain peace of mind, you must trust your communications and collaboration provider to support your business anytime, anywhere around the world. With operations in more than 160 countries worldwide, IBM offers the unmatched global reach and economies of scale you require. It has proven competency in managing large-scale, geographically dispersed organizations with mission-critical networks that require responsive onsite support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. And IBM's award-winning research and development teams are extending its technology to new devices—from IBM, other IT vendors and IBM clients—to enable new capabilities and new ways for users to collaborate through applications and functions never possible before. What's more, through a wide range of cost-effective, creative financing solutions, IBM can help you integrate complex IT solutions—including hardware, software and services from IBM and third parties—into a single financing contract with a single periodic invoice.

For more information

IBM offers a uniquely flexible and broad portfolio of software, services and financing capabilities that can be easily customized to address specific needs required to support communications for a diverse and global workforce. What's more, these capabilities are backed by the experience and technical know-how required to provide smooth, successful unified communications and collaboration deployments.

To find out more about how IBM can help your organization adopt a unified communications and collaboration strategy, visit:

ibm.com/lotus/uc2

* Point-to-point video feature will be included in the IBM Lotus Sametime 7.5.1 release scheduled to be available in the second quarter of 2007.