

Best Practices for Collaboration in the Enterprise: New Attitudes and New Technology Combine to Deliver New Business Value



A Frost & Sullivan White Paper

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
How Collaboration Delivers Value in Key Industries	4
Healthcare	4
Banking	5
Insurance	5
Government.....	5
Collaboration Delivers a Competitive Advantage.....	6
Shifting Ways of Work	7
Geographic, Cultural and Business Boundaries.....	7
Early Adopters See Significant Benefits.....	8
Understanding Business Processes is Critical to Success	8
The Right Technology Mix Enables ROI.....	9
Develop a Collaboration Vision with Key Stakeholders.....	11
Conclulsion.....	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For as long as companies have been doing business, they've been looking for ways to increase and improve collaboration. That's especially true in a knowledge economy, in which information, ideas and execution are what separate winners from losers. But getting employees to share expertise and ideas has always been a challenge, especially in knowledge-heavy organizations such as healthcare, banking, insurance and government.

These days, companies are also wrestling to find ways to enable collaboration not only among local employees, but between employees and their business partners and customers on a global scale. Executives are realizing that there is enormous benefit to be gained from working with partners and clients to solve problems, create new products and services, and generate deeper business relationships. Enterprise collaboration via social software, unified communications and other Web 2.0 technologies must be inclusive of the new relationships companies form with clients and business partners to improve customer service, improve brand loyalty, and boost the bottom line.

Embracing new collaboration strategies, and deploying next-generation collaboration tools, is clearly advantageous to businesses and organizations. Eighty-six percent of enterprises that have deployed unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) technologies say the tools have improved innovation within the organization, according to Frost & Sullivan research. And companies that deploy UC&C technology now will see a two-to-five year advantage from using the tools ahead of the competition. Furthermore, 86 percent of enterprises that have deployed UC&C technologies say the tools have improved innovation within the organization; two-thirds of C-level respondents in a recent Frost & Sullivan study say unified communications technologies allow for faster access to people and information, thanks to a single point of contact. That's critical to business success in the 21st century workplace.

The need for better collaboration is driving new forms of communication. Voice over IP, video and Web conferencing, presence information, instant messaging, unified messaging and unified communications are valuable enterprise technologies because they make it easier for people to know when someone's available, then interact with him in the most appropriate and effective way. Blogs, wikis and other interactive tools let employees collaborate better within and among organizations, and the resulting work product is more effectively distributed thanks to repositories designed for document sharing and editing. Presence information, team rooms and file-sharing capabilities deliver quick access to experts and expertise, giving users immediate access to the information they need to speed decision-making and improve business processes. A comprehensive tagging and search strategy will make all that expertise easy to locate.

But getting people talking (or chatting, or conferencing) doesn't mean they're going to collaborate in a meaningful way—one that helps the company achieve its goals and improve its bottom line. That requires a leadership model that is willing to recognize and reward those who are putting expertise sharing and teamwork ahead of individual success—a recognition that working together for the good of the group is better than hoarding information and using it to advance the career of the individual.

As companies become increasingly dispersed, with more and more people working apart from their colleagues, managers and direct reports, the very nature of collaboration is changing. The next generation of workers will also bring a different approach to sharing expertise in the workplace. Smart companies recognize that right now, they have a rare opportunity to leverage technology to take advantage of a cultural shift, one that is changing how people actually work. Social networking and other collaboration applications encourage and reward information sharing and collaboration in a way not seen before; they make people more inclined to collaborate in the first place.

Businesses can gain a competitive advantage if they take advantage of this shift by giving all employees access to technology that supports and encourages not just communication, but true collaboration, and by changing their policies and practices to encourage, support and reward teamwork over individual success.

This paper examines why companies must rethink how and why their employees, customers and business partners collaborate; offers use cases for key vertical industries; highlights the technology that can give companies a competitive advantage; and delivers actionable best practices for developing a collaboration vision to deliver maximum value across the organization.

HOW COLLABORATION DELIVERS VALUE IN KEY INDUSTRIES

There are several vertical markets that are ripe for improvement from better collaboration and will see immediate benefits to the bottom line. The following use cases are designed to show how new technology can help organizations in insurance, banking, healthcare and government improve business processes and performance in an increasingly global, virtual workplace.

Healthcare

The healthcare industry is in flux, as physicians struggle with an ever-growing patient and paperwork load, rural and inner-city areas deal with caretaker shortages, and everyone is wondering what medicine will look like in 2013 and beyond. But one thing is certain: Collaboration among caregivers, patients and payment providers is critical to delivering effective healthcare services.

For instance, nurses can use an embedded business card with presence information to determine which on-call doctor has the right expertise and is actually available for a consult, then use chat to update the physician on the case and get immediate feedback on care, medication and follow-up procedures. That allows patients to get the best possible care, quickly and cost-effectively. Physicians can use Web conferencing to bring in experts to help with diagnostics or videoconferencing to help treat patients remotely; and caregivers at every level can use team spaces to work together to treat complex cases (ones that involve ongoing care from specialists, pharmacists, primary care physicians, therapists, nurses and so on).

External patient portals with expert blogs, shared bookmarks, and communities for medically-related affinity groups can improve customer experience, self-service, and satisfaction by making vital information and expertise easily available.

Of those companies that have deployed collaboration tools, 72 percent say they have experienced better performance, according to Frost & Sullivan research.

Banking

The banking industry is taking advantage of unified communications and collaboration technology to boost customer satisfaction and generate new business quickly. Being able to leverage collaboration tools to quickly get information into customers' hands, assess their needs, and offer new products and services can help drive revenues, while improving information-sharing among bank employees can increase profit margins and positively impact deals. Security controls ensure the new technology meets all compliance and regulatory needs.

For instance, bank tellers are using presence and chat capabilities to answer customer questions as soon as they step up to the window by locating experts anywhere in the organization and getting the answers they need in an instant. Online, customers and investment advisors can chat while looking at the same account and market data, then make fast decisions based on that real-time data. Marketing managers are offering Web conferences to customers to keep them up to date on economic trends and bank products and services. And investors are leveraging blogs, wikis and team spaces to share ideas and identify new opportunities, then reach out to key contacts inside and outside the organization to close the deals.

Insurance

Most insurance companies offer a variety of products and services, but their customers may not be aware of all the business has to offer. Collaboration applications can help get the word out and up-sell customers, as well as speed the process of approvals and authorization.

For instance, insurance agents can use team spaces to work on a particular client's approval process with banks, brokers, physicians and other involved parties, and wikis and blogs to share information with one another and trusted partners about news, policies and best practices. Embedded business cards linked to dynamic personal profiles can make it easy to locate the person with the right expertise; presence and chat let employees answer customer questions quickly and effectively, whether they use a traditional call center or an online site. And conferencing capabilities let insurance companies cost-effectively share information and recommendations with customers and prospects.

Government

All levels of government have a mandate to do a better job of sharing information across agencies and organizations, as well as with citizens and other constituents. Security is of paramount concern in this arena, but so is relationship building and trust.

Government organizations can use conferencing applications to educate the public on new initiatives and policies, as well as blogs for sharing and commenting on information. External communities serve as a gathering point for citizen and government groups to congregate and share questions, concerns, and important announcements. Real-time presence information and dynamic personal profiles help municipal workers locate the right resources for any given job, even if those people work outside their immediate agency or division. Chat allows

government employees and emergency services personnel to reach out to experts and supervisors and get immediate feedback and information, which can be especially valuable in crisis situations. And secure team spaces and communities allow global collaboration within and across organizations, regardless of where employees are physically located.

COLLABORATION DELIVERS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Frost & Sullivan research shows that companies that use advanced unified communications and collaboration technologies gain a clear competitive advantage. Of those companies that have deployed collaboration tools, 72 percent say they have experienced better performance. More benefits accrue as companies deploy more advanced collaboration applications. Companies that deploy mobile and integrated communications have significantly higher overall performance than those that use only conferencing and IM, for example.

This good news comes at an opportune time. Companies have always looked for ways to increase and improve collaboration in order to improve their business. Ten years ago, the need for better collaboration drove changes in how organizations approached supply chains and business-partner relationships. Today, the challenge of simply talking to people has grown as the workplace has become more virtual, and it's driving new ways of communication. But simply enabling people to *communicate* doesn't mean they will *collaborate* in a meaningful way—one that helps the company achieve its goals and improve the bottom line.

That's changing, however, as people are increasingly using next-generation technology—including blogs, wikis, chat, conferencing, team spaces and social media—to collaborate and leverage information in an entirely new way. Using these technologies requires that people share, rather than hoard, information and expertise, and that they help others when needed. Through this, one can build a reputation and attract followers and friends.

Companies that leverage new technology to harness this new energy will see a marked improvement in collaboration—and that will help them stay competitive in a changing global marketplace. Enhanced collaboration tools improve access across the enterprise and its broader ecosystem, including customers, suppliers, partners, and remote and office-based employees. This ensures personal interactions can occur between the people who need them the most, anytime and from anywhere.

But to fully leverage the benefits of collaboration tools, executives must set a collaboration strategy for the entire organization—one that considers key business processes and line of business functions, and involves all necessary stakeholders and employees. They also need to put in place incentive systems that drive adoption by encouraging and rewarding collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and expertise. Finally, companies must consider and plan for the security and compliance risks involved in the use of enterprise 2.0 collaboration tools. Given the complexity and range of needs involved, most companies will benefit from working with a partner with deep industry expertise and business process understanding.

Two-thirds of C-level respondents in a recent Frost & Sullivan study say unified communications technologies allow for faster access to people and information, thanks to a single point of contact.

Shifting Ways of Work

The workplace is becoming increasingly virtual, with more employees working more often from locations that are different from those of their managers, colleagues and direct reports, as well as customers and business partners. Companies can see significant benefits from letting their employees work from anywhere, including savings from corporate facilities and operations; improved employee satisfaction and retention rates; and the ability to hire and promote the best people for the right jobs, regardless of where they or the jobs are located. Research backs this up: A 2009 study from the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp) reports that 78 percent of polled companies say flexible work options bolster retention rates, up from 64 percent the previous year. Unified communication and collaboration applications are critical to supporting virtual and mobile employees: Frost & Sullivan research shows that 77 percent of C-level executives believe UC&C technologies enhance employee mobility.

That's because far-flung teams must collaborate regularly and cost-effectively to stay as competitive as they were when they all worked in the same place. Now more than ever, companies must lower operational costs while increasing worker productivity; shrink decision cycles and times to market; and seize new business opportunities by interacting with customers and partners quickly and effectively. At the same time, travel is more onerous and more expensive than ever, and employees are struggling to balance busy work and home lives in an always-on world—one in which they rarely see their colleagues in person, if at all. "Always on" virtual team rooms are essential for teams distributed across geographies and time zones to track shared tasks and share team calendars, to manage and co-author team documents, and discuss project issues.

Real-time collaboration can also help companies improve customer service and support by allowing employees and stakeholders to get the information they need, from both the data stores and the human experts within their organization, even as they're on the phone or in a chat session with a customer. For instance, using IM to locate product or support information; presence to route calls to the best available expert; and conferencing to instantly connect customers to the team members who can help collaboratively solve a problem leads to improved customer satisfaction rates.

Clearly, companies must find new ways to let employees collaborate with customers, partners, suppliers, and one another. They must also give senior executives a way to better communicate with their employees. Together, social software and unified communications and collaboration tools such as dynamic personal profiles, wikis, blogs, virtual team rooms and communities can help businesses meet these goals, helping employees connect with the right people in the right way and at just the right time—regardless of where they're located, or what endpoints, devices and networks they are on; and allowing senior management to share information and collect feedback in an open, easily digestible way.

Geographic, Cultural and Business Boundaries

Business managers face several critical challenges brought on by the need to collaborate across locations, time zones and cultural borders, as well as with business partners and customers:

Frost & Sullivan research shows that 77 percent of C-level executives believe unified communications technologies enhance employee mobility.

- **Geographic Boundaries** pose challenges as people need to work across time zones and networks, without regard to location. If an employee in California needs to work closely with someone in India, it's helpful to use technology that shows when each is in the office, as well as tools that enable real-time and offline collaboration. Wikis, shared files and team spaces can be invaluable in these situations, allowing people to work on documents during their own business hours, then leave them for others to mark up and edit when they come into work.
- **Cultural Boundaries** create confusion as people from different cultures, speaking different languages, try to work together toward a common goal. Real-time conferencing applications can also help bridge the gaps. Web conferencing allows teams to share presentations and documents, as well as applications, making it easier for everyone to contribute to a project or piece of collateral, and to visualize graphics and content. Videoconferencing allows participants to see speakers' lips move, which is especially important when language barriers are in play. Conferencing and social media let people make deeper, persistent connections, which help them bridge cultural gaps and learn to work together more effectively.
- **Business Boundaries** create technical and social issues, as employees need to collaborate with people on different networks, with their own firewalls and security controls; and with people whose corporate cultures and interests may differ from their own. Companies can eliminate the technical issues by using software built on open standards, which is Web-based and designed to allow outside or guest users, or offered as a service and is therefore easily extended to users outside the firewall. But training and a shared sense of trust are needed to address the cultural issues that come with sharing business information with partners and customers. Collaborating inside and outside the organization's firewall also requires carefully planned security and governance models and applications designed for these newer forms of collaboration.

According to Frost & Sullivan, companies that deploy unified communications technology now will see a two-to-five year advantage from using the tools ahead of the competition.

Early Adopters See Significant Benefits

Those organizations that move now toward next-generation communications will get several years of competitive advantage over companies in their industry that don't choose to deploy the new technology right away.

Consider that only 50 percent of all enterprise telephony lines are IP-enabled. Even fewer are running complete UC application suites; Frost & Sullivan's latest UC research estimates that fewer than two million people are on completely integrated UC applications today, which yields significant first-mover advantage.

UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS PROCESSES IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Smart managers know that even during a recession, saving money gets you only so far. It's just as important to drive productivity, boost the bottom line and take advantage of new opportunities as soon as they arise; that's the only way to stay competitive in a tough marketplace and to take advantage of the turnaround when it comes. One of the best ways to do that is to improve business processes and encourage innovation, allowing you to shorten decision cycles, improve product development, bring more products to market, close more sales, and quickly and routinely satisfy customers.

Embedding expertise location and communications within business processes encourages collaboration, thereby reducing human latency and speeding cycle times. Communications-embedded business processes, or CEBP, lets people react to events and exceptions in real time, alone or as part of a team. When key decision-makers have access to communications and collaboration during a critical point in a business process, they can get things done faster and more effectively.

For example, marketing teams are often tasked with creating sales leads. But if there's no connection between their internal sales system and marketers' efforts to build brand and attract prospects, the resulting opportunity is often lost. When communications and collaboration applications are integrated with the company's CRM software, leads can be effectively qualified according to corporate policies and standards, and attendees can be tracked according to well-established timelines and processes.

Because CEBP is done on a "custom" basis—with companies identifying the processes specific to their business that will most benefit from advanced collaboration applications—doing it today will deliver significant competitive advantage. Early movers will benefit not just from the new technology, but from the fact that they took the time to assess their business processes and identified those points that are ripe for improvement. But to get the most benefit from CEBP, many companies will want to work with a vendor that has deep experience in industry best practices and business processes to help them analyze the critical gaps in interpersonal interactions.

The Right Technology Mix Enables ROI

Finding those points in a process that require decision-making and/or action on the part of one or more people, then making it easy for them to get the information they need to move forward, can shave hours, days or even weeks off the process itself. That can turn "soft-dollar" savings into hard-dollar revenue generation.

But companies must identify the best mix of applications and services to enable their particular business needs and processes. Integrated business cards, presence, chat and conferencing applications might be best for organizations with lots of remote workers who need instant access to experts and information to aid decision-making; wikis and team spaces may be better for those whose business involves a lot of collaborative work on projects and deliverables; and blogs and social media might be the tools of choice for people who need to build and develop brand and customer relations.

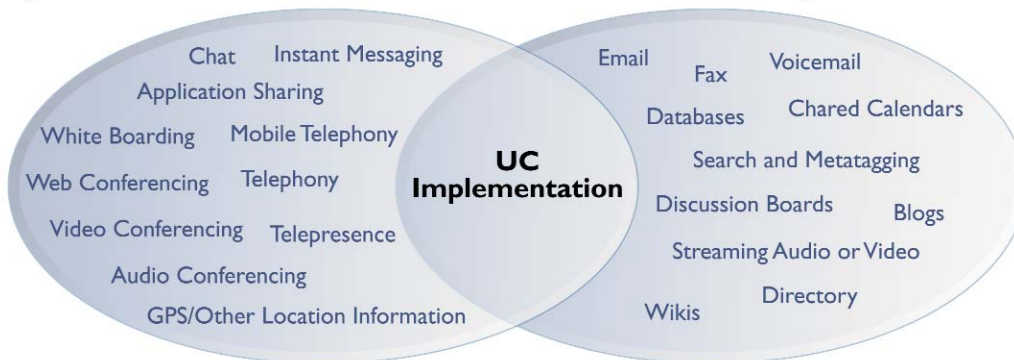
- **Presence** information lets users see who is available for contact online or on the phone. It's invaluable to organizations with a lot of virtual workers, since knowing whether someone is free to chat or speak is critical when you can't actually see them.
- **Conferencing** technology lets users meet in real time without the need to travel. Web conferencing enables document and application sharing, while videoconferencing supports face-to-face communications, which bolsters understanding and deepens connections among participants.

Eighty-six percent of enterprises that have deployed UC&C technologies say the tools have improved innovation within the organization.

- **Blogs** let users share ideas with readers; comments ensure discussion and new idea generation, but blogs generally enable information sharing and branding more than project collaboration, and can be ideal for executive communication to broad sets of employees.
- **Wikis** let users share and respond to ideas and strategies, in real time. Markup and editing capabilities allow for persistent collaboration.
- **Team spaces** employ advanced document management and search capabilities to enable ongoing collaboration among team members, whether they're focused on a specific project or a long-term goal.
- **Personal profiles** that combine vital organizational information, tagging and networking tools, embedded presence information, and links to recent contributions such as blog and wiki entries or shared files and bookmarks provide a quick overview of each employee's developing expertise.
- **Communities** use a set of tools (blog, file-sharing, discussion forums, wikis and activities) to support affinity groups, letting them share information and insights in an ongoing manner and build stronger relationships internally and externally.
- **Tagging** tools and federated **search** are critical to allow for easy and comprehensive searching and discovery of knowledge and expertise.
- **Social media tools** help people deepen their personal and professional connections, making their business relationships better. They also let users find the right people with the right knowledge, skills and experience, inside and outside the organization.
- **Portals** make it easy for employees, customers and sales support personnel to locate information, FAQs and other details as soon as they need them.
- **Unified clients** make it easy for end-users to access all next-generation collaboration tools with a single mouse click, leveraging presence and other contextual information to collaborate with the right people at the right time, and on the right application and device.

Synchronous Tools

Asynchronous Tools



DEVELOP A COLLABORATION VISION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

As they consider deploying new tools for communications and collaboration, executives must develop a clear collaboration vision. This should include an assessment of the key collaborators inside and outside the organization, as well as a clear understanding about what those collaboration sessions are for (idea generation, decision-making, product development and manufacturing, marketing and branding, collateral creation, customer service or customer interaction, etc.).

When developing a collaboration vision, it's important to include the key stakeholders in the initiative—those people inside and outside the company who will be using the new technology the most. Only then will you identify the business processes that are ripe for improvement, as well as the best ways in which to do so, and get buy-in from the employees who will be using the applications and following the mandate to collaborate more often and more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Frost & Sullivan research shows that organizations that deploy advanced collaboration technologies, embedded in business processes, see a clear improvement in business overall, especially in the areas of sales and marketing, project management and development, and customer service. But executives and managers must choose the right tools carefully—selecting among personal profiles, presence, chat, conferencing, wikis, blogs, team spaces, portals and communities—to best deliver the capabilities employees need to collaborate with one another, as well as partners and customers, on a global scale. They must also get recommendations and buy-in from all stakeholders, regardless of what part of the business they operate in, and lead the way toward use through policies and incentives. Only then will they be able to successfully leverage the value of employees' new willingness to collaborate inside and outside the organization.

Among enterprises that have deployed UC&C, 70 percent of respondents to a recent Frost & Sullivan study say they like to collaborate with project teams; that number drops to 53 percent for respondents whose companies have not deployed the technology.

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