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Is It Time to Change Your Communication Style? Three Reasons to Unite

Brought to you by the [Cisco Innovators Program](#)

Are your business communications wasting your employees' time? Your company's money? Are they impeding your customer service and sales?

If your company has any of these symptoms, its communications style is hurting your business:

- Callers are put on hold while they wait for a specific staff person to be found or information to be located
- Monthly phone bills are a large expense item, or seem excessive for the service you get
- Employees working from home do not have all the resources that they use in the office
- Whom you communicate with, and about what is unprotected; calls are not secured
- A receptionist answers the incoming calls, routes them, and takes phone messages
- Staff awareness and response times lag because employees must use multiple systems to retrieve and reply to their voicemails, emails, faxes, and instant messages
- Travel expenses and time are substantial for staff who visit your sites or meet with customers, prospects, and suppliers

All of these are problems that you can easily solve with smarter technology: [unified communications](#)

[LINK:

http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/resource_center/articles/be_more_productive/combining_voice_and_data/index.html?POSITION=email&COUNTRY_SITE=us&CAPAIGN=SAMBA&ChangeCommunicationStyle&REFERRING_SITE=PartnerInnovators]. Unified communications combines your computer network (wired or wireless) with your phone system, and uses the Internet so you can communicate in real time using a variety of devices, such as an IP phone, PC, laptop, or smartphone.

Many small businesses are converting their old phone system to an affordable [Cisco® Unified Communications](#) [LINK:

http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/voice_conferencing/index.html?POSITION=email&COUNTRY_SITE=us&CAPAIGN=SAMBA&ChangeCommunicationStyle&REFERRING_SITE=PartnerInnovators, solution, often using Cisco financing to do it.

Here are three reasons you may want to upgrade to unified communications:

1. Work from anywhere, anytime. Unified communications enables personal mobility and access from remote sites such as branch locations, suppliers' locations, and employees' homes. Your business's leaders, specialists, and other staff can:

- Work from anywhere
- Protect their communications, using multiple layers of security
- Have a virtual office at home, with all the network resources that they use in the office

A 20-person business that serves customers on a 24-hour basis worldwide chose unified communications to ensure availability for urgent calls. "Our Cisco solution lets me be in many places at one time," says the CEO. "It also lets me spend more time with my family because of its functionality from my house."

A 200-employee business does most project work remotely, uniting its people, phones, and data networking with one unified communications solution. Four-digit dialing directly connects the employees. They also instantly get voice and email messages, and securely exchange files.

2. Work faster and improve customer service. Unified communications makes employees more accessible, informed, and productive. With unified communications, your business can:

- Efficiently answer and route calls, using the integrated automated attendant (no holding)
- Quickly and easily see useful relationship data about your caller—such as his location, name, and phone number, as well as the communications you’ve had in the past
- Integrate a call center or customer relationship management solution, such as Salesforce.com, to track calls, use the click-to-dial feature, and access customer records
- Support collaboration in real time, using voice or web conferencing
- Reach a specific staff person fast: a single number contacts her wherever she is

Responsiveness builds brand preference. “If we can provide customers with the answers they need faster than the other guy, then customers will choose us over the competition. The Cisco solution gives us peace of mind in knowing that we provide the best customer service possible,” says the CEO of the 20-person business.

An advisory firm with 50 staff uses [Cisco WebEx™](#) [LINK:

http://www.webex.com/ft/index.php?TrackID=1019673&hbxref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cisco.com%2Fsurvey%2Fexit.html%3Fhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.webex.com%2Fgo%2FCiscoSMB_1019673&goid=CiscoSMB_1019673] to connect with its clients and to meet with prospects, gauge their interest, and decide whether it’s worthwhile to set up a physical meeting.

3. Save money on phone, labor, and travel expenses. A unified communications system costs less to own than an old-style phone system because it:

- Reduces labor costs for setting up and changing phones and managing the system
- Eliminates the costs of human intervention to route a call, and the efforts required to follow up on vague and error-prone written phone messages
- Stops phone tag with presence technology, which shows individuals’ availability
- Can eliminate toll call charges by sending phone calls to your locations over the Internet
- Reduces travel expenses and carbon emissions by letting you easily meet with anyone, anywhere, over the web—and work together as if you’re in the same room. Online meetings let you deliver presentations, share ideas and documents, and give demonstrations

A 17-employee company that uses online meetings to sell directly to customers in 22 countries saves hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on travel expenses.

The 200-employee business saves delays and about US\$2,000 at each remote job site by eliminating the labor costs of setting up traditional phones.

Is it time to change the communications style at your business too?

Next Steps

Learn the ways that [Cisco Unified Communications solutions](#) can help give your business a bigger voice [LINK:

http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/voice_conferencing/index.html?POSITION=email&COUNTRY_SITE=us&CAPAIGN=SAMBA&ChangeCommunicationStyle&REFERRING_SITE=PartnerInnovators] and see [Cisco financing options](#). [LINK: http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/services/index.html-tab-Financing]

See [how other companies like yours use unified communications](#). [LINK:

http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/resource_center/index.html-tab-CustomerStories]