The Essential Guide:

To Understanding Business Communications

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COMMUNICATIONS
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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

FROM THE BEGINNING

Telephony has grown and expanded in ways that were initially never thought possible. Coincidently, in an ad from the 1916 Literary Digest on June 24th The Automatic Electric Company stated-

> *"Business executives are rapidly awakening to the imperative need for a better business telephone, to the necessity for a more efficient method of constant and perfect intercommunication between the individuals and departments of their own organization."*

Though decades before their time and the development of unified communications, The Automatic Electric Company recognized concepts that some executives still ignore today. There are overwhelming advantages for a company to adapt the technology of the day to empower a collaborative workforce.

Today, we know communications to be made up of more than just telephony. We also know that methods of communicating will only continue to evolve. With that said, it is still easy to view telephony as the best way to send information - after all, it has been around for so long.

Stand alone telephony is the all too common reality for most small-to-medium businesses and even still some large enterprises, putting those businesses a step behind their competition from the start. Customers have high expectations in service and the demands on businesses today need to be met. Communication tools that deliver a variety of options are the only way to bridge this gap. Business communication solutions enable employees to do more with less (specifically time). To add to the complexity, the workforce has never before seen four generations of employees within its ranks. Therefore, the tools must be scalable as well as functional across the board for all users.

Implementing the proper tools will unify staff from all locations using a single seamless platform and a user-friendly interface. Some of these evolving communication tools include but are not limited to video calling, instant messaging (IM), email, and presence indicators.

This guide is designed to provide basic insight into understanding fundamental concepts in business communication technology today.
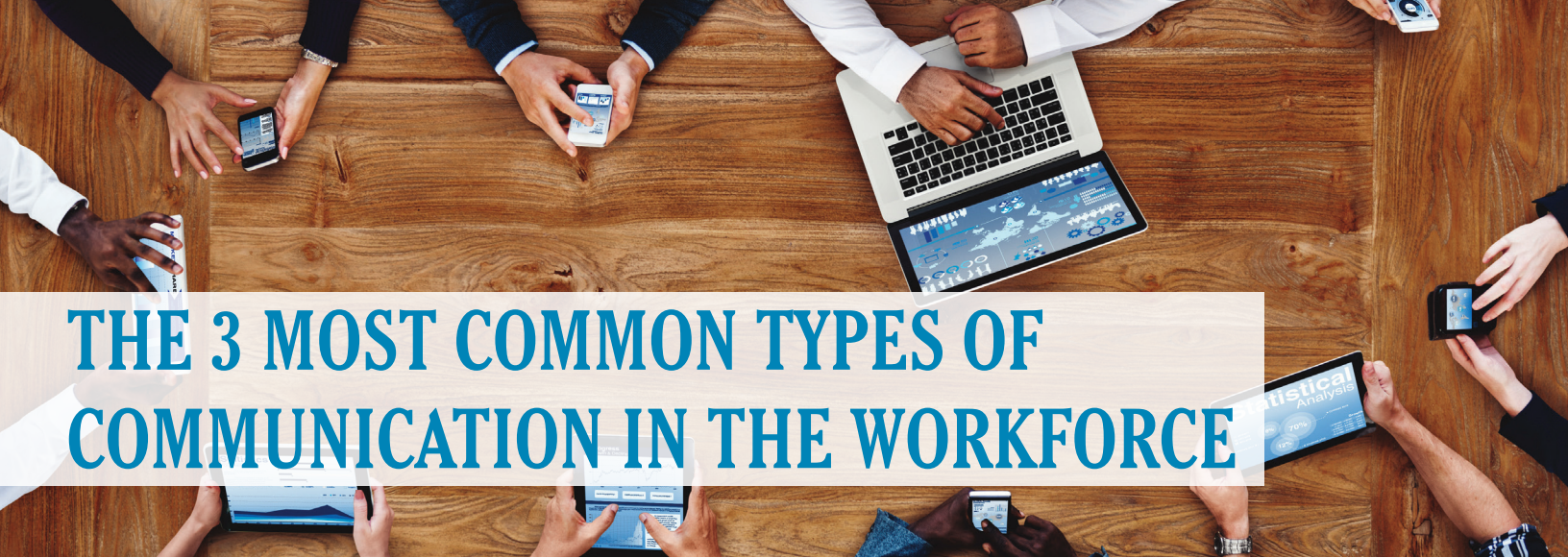
THE 3 MOST COMMON TYPES OF COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKFORCE

AS TIME EVOLVES

Trends in business are ever-changing as time goes on and as technology evolves. With change being the only constant, how we communicate with one another is also in flux. Staying in tune with what is possible is not only necessary, but expected when it comes to providing high quality customer service and attracting valuable employees. The first part of the series, covers the 3 most common types of communication in the workforce: Voice, Data, and Video

Voice

Telephony has been the prime source of communication for as long as most can remember. It is a convenient and necessary business tool that can be transferred in a variety of modes and devices.

In a legacy system, the typical desk phone is generally an endpoint of either a PBX (private branch exchange) or a KTS (key telephony system). In both forms, all lines and extensions are managed from a centralized system. These systems are designed to be highly functional and dependable, but operate independently from other communication mediums in the workplace.

The newest delivery option is a softphone, and is similar to the desk phone experience but instead of running on a separate device, it runs through a PC.

However, this is only available when the system is IP enabled. A VoIP softphone is the most beneficial option for a remote users or people who travel frequently.

31%

of all businesses use VoIP systems due to its productivity boosting and cost saving features.

Data

Data refers to text-based mediums that function over the data network. One of the most common and important forms of data communication is email. Not only is email conceptually universal and easy to use/manage, but is a low cost option for communications.

From the standpoint of a network administrator, email's great benefit is that it consumes comparatively little bandwidth. Functionally, however, it is not real-time, making it not an ideal mechanism for urgent communication. IP-based communication systems have brought businesses more data-centric delivery offering services such as instant messaging (IM). Although these forms of communication are convenient and involve real-time contact, this medium is intended for short conversation that tends to have an informal style.

This short and to-the-point style of communication makes IM ideal for mobile situations, often requiring a timely response in order to effectively expedite a solution. Presence indicator capabilities are also very valuable in utilizing an accelerated form of communication. User availability at any given point, is shared with others on the network and ensures a greater likelihood for direct contact in real time.

69%

of email recipients report email as spam based solely on the subject line.

75%

of total mobile messaging is done through instant messaging apps, whereas only 25% is done through SMS or MMS.

Video

Live Video is the most engaging medium, and when collaboration is necessary video becomes the most effective. Communicating through video not only displays a visual stimulus to increase engagement, but also allows attendees the ability to observe body language- which can ultimately reduce the risk of possible misinterpretation.

Today, collaboration isn't happening in boardrooms with donuts and whiteboards, it is happening on documents being edited by numerous people all over the world simultanesously. Screen sharing, video chatting, and mobile conference rooms are connecting employees that can't make it into the office. Collaboration tools are making it increasingly easier for employees to work with each other without physically having to meet at the same location.
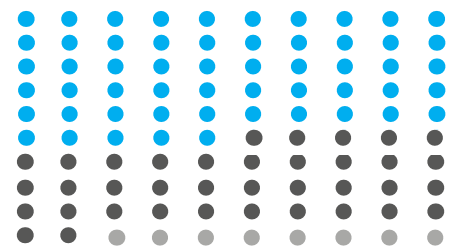
Video conferencing saves money in the long run and time between decreasing the need for traveling and increasing the time to close a project. It is also ideal for high impact situations such as sales presentations, product demonstrations, new launches, shareholder meetings, etc.

93%
of communication is non-verbal:

- Facial expression & body language (55%)
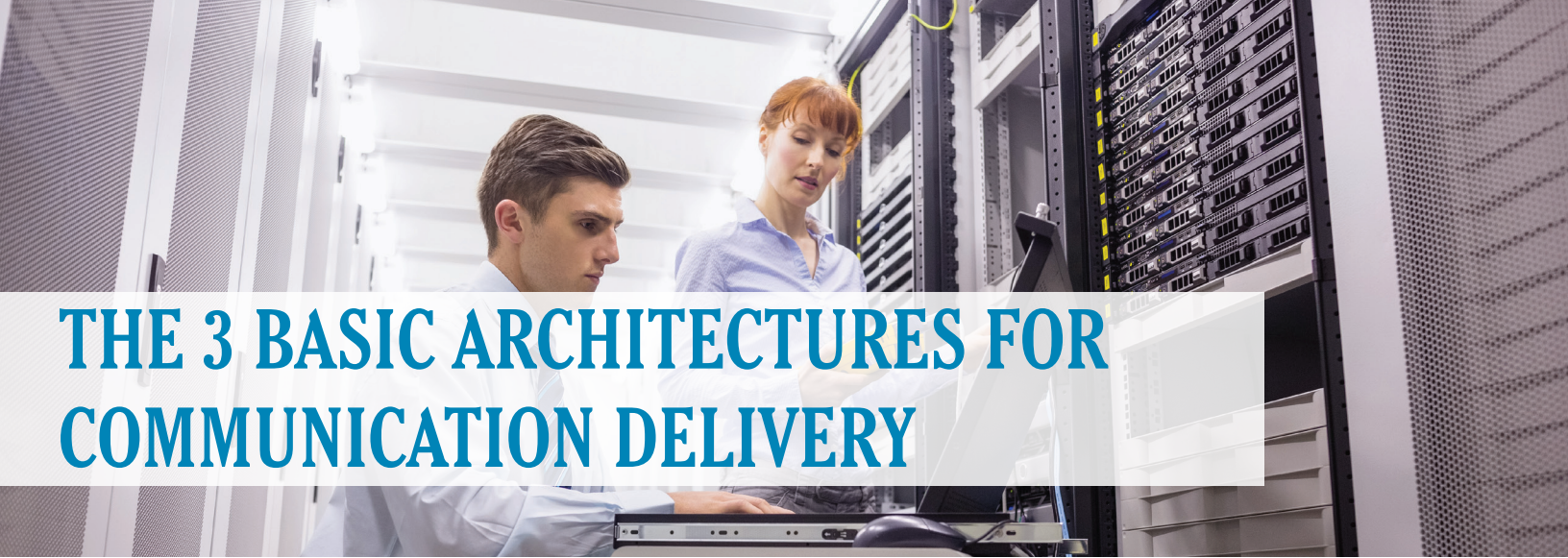- Tone of voice (37%)
- Words actually said (8%)

Utilizing a fully integrated communications toolset propels a company to the next level. Enabling users to work seamlessly and increase productivity, an integrated system makes the job as a whole more desirable. When pinpointing what applications will show the greatest return on investment (ROI), management must consider the needs that must be met and how much the current operations are costing them.

THE 3 BASIC ARCHITECTURES FOR COMMUNICATION DELIVERY

VEHICLES OF DELIVERY

After completing the first step to understanding business communications, The Types of Communication - Voice, Video, and Data; next is the functional methods available for delivery. It is essential to recognize that every organization has unique requirements that may or may not require a customized solution. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages for each delivery architecture is a way to begin the analysis of which solution to choose.

Premise-Based

A Premise-based architecture is the traditional delivery vehicle for both conventional and today's IP-based systems. In this model, servers are acquired, operating systems are installed, additional hardware may be involved, but all components of the system live within the walls of the organization - the personal data center. This model does require the largest upfront investment, but with leasing options a monthly payment is an option. This delivery is the most cost effective for the large organization. No matter the size of the implementation, a premise based system derives its value over time.
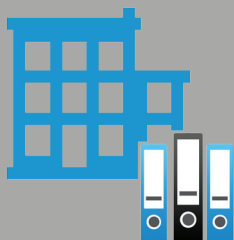
Advantages
Environmental Control
Physical Security
Capital Expenditure
Highly Customizable

Disadvantages
Fixed Resources
Installation Complexities
Maintenance Costs

Hosted/Cloud

The Hosted/ Cloud delivery model is often referred to as managed services or a cloud-based system. In hosted/ cloud models, IT takes a smaller role in both managing the system as well as maintaining equipment. Rather than purchasing, installing and maintaining business phone systems, users of cloud-based phone systems and various UC solutions subscribe to a monthly service from a cloud VoIP provider.

Advantages
Monthly Operational Expenditure
Low Power Consumption
Greater Scalability
Managed Updates

Disadvantages
Limited Customization
Less Control
Security Risks

Hybrid

A Hybrid solution in a cloud computing environment is an architecture which uses a mix of on-premise and cloud delivery models with a balance between the two platforms. In this system design, both the public and private cloud framework are employed. These systems can engage independently from each other, with the ability to communicate through an encrypted connection. This is made possible by using technology that allows for the portability of data and applications.

Advantages
Greater Flexibility
Redundancy
Enhanced Security
Scalability

Disadvantages
Dependent Upon

Choosing the solution that best fits the organization is imperative. The delivery method of voice, video, and data is the backbone of business communications which directly impacts the success after implementation. When done properly, the customized solution will meet budgetary demands and the needs of the IT staff and management.

ADOPTION STYLES: FLAVOR OF SOLUTIONS

THE INSTALLATION METHODS

The implementation styles chosen directly impacts user adoption, and therefore the overall success of the communications solution. In the past, the phone system came with a list of features that it was capable of performing. Today, applications can represent various features singularly or all in one. The singular apps can be added to the system through ad-hoc implementation. What this means is that if a new issue or specific need is discovered, an application can be brought in to solve that particular issue. This style makes sense for a smaller organization, but as it grows, ad-hoc delivery could cost more than anticipated. Employee training, fractured business processes, and recurring monthly charges, all strain the bottom line. The style options are integrated services or isolated services, which benefits will vary based on the need and business flexibility.

Isolated Services

For **50 or fewer users,** companies can add applications as they go- only paying for what is needed as its needed.

Integrated Services

For **50 or more users,** companies can determine what bundle meets their needs and maintain full ownership of the applications.

Integrated Services

Finding a solution that integrates all of these applications together is another path that one can take. The answer to this is to stop thinking about voice, video, and data as being separate entities and look at them as one. Having an integrated approach allows IT more control over costs and network resources with business needs in mind across all models.

The long-term objective is to define the communications value proposition regarding the overall benefit to the company. To do this effectively, it is necessary to look at user requirements in three groups - end users, management, and IT.

Having communication resources in one platform solidifies training efforts, expedites employee communication, and simplifies IT management. All of which results in high user adaptation, bundled savings, and gives back the most valuable resource of all - time.

Isolated Services

There are multiple application features available to effectively and efficiently communicate within an organization. Some of these apps include but are not limited to IP telephony, mobile app, video conferencing, audio conferencing, instant messaging, and calendar synchronization.

Adding these apps on ad-hoc works for a company that doesn't have a large upfront budget or a start-up that has yet to uncover the intricacies to their business process. However, keep in mind that these applications can add up when using them independently from each other.

- Periodically perform a cost inventory to see how much the individual apps are costing as well as how much it is to maintain and manage them adequately.

THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT STEPS FOR DEPLOYMENT SUCCESS

IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

• •

A commonly overlooked factor for achieving the greatest ROI on a solution is found within system implementation. It is critical that that the system functions correctly from the start and that adoption is obtained by all users. To make this possible here is The 5 MOST Important Steps for Deployment Success. Begin these steps through a deep and critical business analysis, paying close attention to external perspectives from the view of the customer and the competition.

#1: Determine Where Current Communication Capabilities Are

If the business plans to move its resources beyond the value of just conventional telephony, then understanding of the present state of all the tools being utilized today is required.

A true and accurate "state of the union" can help when assessing the network's capabilities. At the end of the day, this will ensure that the plan has the capabilities to be successful. Example- IP communications require a great deal of infrastructure support and a physical network assessment will be essential in defining this.

#2: Network Assessment

Some may have already made the transition from a digital voice network to a voice over Local Area Network (LAN). If this is the case, then it may be time to do a little bit of network assessing. Through this process, the current strength of the network is tested against the newly presented demands. There may be several new requirements for the network to support, such as conferencing, video calling, mobility, multiple locations or remote workers. It will be beneficial in the long run to perform this assessment before, during, and after deployment.

#3: Evaluate the Advantages to the Business

As the system expands beyond the basic telephony, the greater impact it will have on the business on all levels. Before making the switch into a more complex system, review management's current business plans including objectives for the near future. Think of how new communication capabilities augment the goals of the organization. And don't forget IT plays a crucial role in this process. By design, the IT department provides tools that optimize the workforce. When IT and management work together with all users to think outside the box of operating a system at the lowest possible cost, there will be a revelation of untapped potential on all fronts.

#4: Proper Needs Assessment

When thinking about the communications system within the company, it is also essential to think about the average stakeholder, the employees. Employees are the people using the system on an everyday basis. Taking the time to get input from every level in each department will serve valuable insight and ultimately increase user adoption. Users with an investment in the success of the project are more engaged and can become the greatest advocates, therefore creating more success for the system and mainly the company.

#5: Reassess the Ongoing Changing Trends of Communications

Although voice will always remain constant in the world of communication, it is so much more than that today. Looking at all the ways voice is incorporated within other types of communication is helpful when choosing what's best for the company. Communications and technology within that sector change on a daily basis. Just as fashion trends evolve over time, technology and communication methods do as well. The future of this will only get more and more interesting and complex, but also more beneficial to businesses as time goes on. These conventional solutions can transform the business rather than just simply making it run more efficiently than before.

All in all, IP communication involves various applications and concepts. If standard telephony is your primary way of communication in the workplace, it may be valuable to reevaluate the business process and come to the realization that standard telephony is not necessarily setting neither employees nor customers up for success. Implementing a full suite of UC tools and incorporating new ways of connecting adds value to the work environment and sets you apart from the competition.

10 Considerations
When Replacing Your Telephone System

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
Needs Assessment: Take the time to identify both business and technical requirements, a proper needs assessment will create a clear path to improvement in business productivity. The process should uncover ways that a new system can bring tangible efficiencies in workflow and productivity.

2. Do all VoIP systems do the same thing?
System Features: Even for the well informed, comparing features between different manufacturers can be a challenge. It is true that all systems will provide key features such as hold and transfer, and have basic calling capabilities. However, there are significant variations in user experience between different manufacturers. Special consideration should be given to the features highlighted in the needs analysis, and those that are currently critical to end users.

3. Did we involve key strategic users?
Stakeholders: Selecting a few key users to be a part of the decision making process from the beginning of the project is essential. By aligning the process with your users, you will create an environment that will help you differentiate between products. Users with an investment in the success of the project are more engaged and can become your best promoters.

4. Why not an out of the box solution?
Customization: More than likely, a significant investment has already been made into your network infrastructure. So, consider a solution that has the flexibility to utilize existing elements rather than "rip and replace." There can be a great deal of savings that need to be considered and your vendor should be able to recognize and utilize these possibilities.

5. How are we going to train our users?
Emphasis on End User Training: Often overlooked or assumed, user training is a critical component to the successful outcome of your project. Training is the only way to recognize real productivity gains from your technology investment. It needs to be more than a document or a video, and should provide an opportunity for the users to ask questions and learn about how the technology delivers efficiency to their workflow.

6. Is the network infrastructure ready?
Network Capabilities: Can the current network architecture support the new demands of real-time voice? Any data switch supporting IP or SIP endpoints must have the ability to perform layer 3 switching including VLAN and QoS. Additionally, the network needs to be correctly configured to utilize these features. Proper network management and planning are the key to a successful voice deployment over an existing network.

7. Do we still need plain old telephone service (POTS Lines)?
Existing technology: Legacy analog can be an unplanned expenditure when considering the additional budgetary costs required to maintain those devices. Devices such as fax machines, security alarm monitoring, or credit card processors cannot always be transferred to a pure IP network.

8. Do I need more bandwidth?
Network Assessment: A Network Readiness Assessment (NRA) determines if voice traffic will be impacted by jitter, delay or latency issues. These QoS events will not impact data traffic. But they will definitely affect call quality. Having this assessment done proactively removes the risk from the post implementation follow-up. The value of these assessments is in the consistently excellent sound quality of the calls even during peak traffic events.

9. Are we protected in an emergency situation?
Emergency response: It may be a legal requirement to provide the 911 call center with the location of a caller within a facility. It is critical in an emergency situation that users can get the help they need. Knowing what your e911 obligations are a head of time can save time and frustration down the road.

10. Considerations for tomorrow and beyond...
Support Contracts: Choosing the system or solution that is the best fit is only half the battle. The other half is choosing a reliable company for installation, training, and support. A company that integrates, installs, as well as provides ongoing supports saves time and resources. Long term support is what matters most. Downtime can be exponentially more expensive in more ways than you realize.

WHO IS RONCO?

Since 1965, Ronco has been a privately held and operated integrator of innovative products and services in the communication industry. Headquartered in Buffalo, New York - Ronco has 15 offices spanning the Eastern US. Each location provides roughly a 75 mile support radius that ensures timeliness and effectiveness.

Our commitment to providing superior service and sales support is our core mission. We are a fully staffed technical and sales organization with an extensive inventory of in-stock service equipment to support our customers. Our certified staff is backed by our Network Operations Center that operates 24x7x365, making your service our priority.

> *"Ronco is an end-to-end communications service provider focused on delivering powerful solutions that enable us to extend the human connection through technology."*

We pride ourselves on our commitment to our customers. We do not outsource our responsibilities for the purpose of maintaining the highest quality of service. Our technical support line is offered 24x7x365 with on-site availability; allowing us to respond to critical outages as they occur. For service requests, we offer online ticket submission options.

We support some of the most mission critical facilities in society today; hospitals, defense facilities, school districts, 911 and other emergency services. With over half a century of award winning service under our belts, we understand the value of communication technology and how imperative it is to business continuity.

Brief Overview

• 50+ Years in Business
• 3rd Generation Ownership
• Privately Held Company
• 250+ Employees
• 15 East Coast Locations

What sets us apart

• Extensive Experience in Communications
• Local Commitment
• Proven Track Record
• 99.4 avg. CSAT Score

Certifications

• Avaya Diamond Partner
• Cisco Premium Partner
• Ciena Diamond Partner
• Microsoft Gold Partner
• AVST Certified

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