

**Today's businesses are having to continually adapt to remain competitive and meet changing customer demands.**

As markets emerge, move and shift, business needs to be effectively responsive and to react to new opportunity as well as be adaptive to change.

The key to continuous success it seems is being different, proactive and flexible.



**In days gone by a business telephony system was tied to a location. Employees had to be present in one place to use the telephone and connect with customers.**

Organisations would invest thousands of pounds in what was to all intent, a wall hung computer (called the Private Branch eXchange/PBX), that connected the office telephones with the outside world and enabled calls to be routed in and out of the building.

Telephony was a business utility more than a unique ability, technologically unexciting and did not provide much in the way of opportunity for differentiation.

**The way telephone systems were designed and connected with the outside world, meant the organisation's communications infrastructure i.e. their telephone system and external connectivity, created potential liability in the event of an unforeseen event occurring.**

For example, consider a two hundred user organisation connected by 200 desk based telephones, where most employees are either on the phone taking an inbound call or making an outbound call, with a receptionist answering calls to the main number and routing them internally, as well as individuals taking calls to their direct telephone numbers. All connected to outside world by 200 channels of ISDN.

Then the unthinkable happens, there is an unforeseen event and everyone is forced out of the office to remote locations (sound familiar?)

### **The solution?**

#### **Not much...**

The main number could be forwarded in up to 24 hours time to another number or the individual user's deskphones can be diverted to their mobiles and that's about it. Of course, employees can call out on their mobiles and send emails to their main contacts asking them to call on their mobiles. But not effective as a longer term business continuity solution and potentially seriously business damaging if new customers cannot reach you.

**The first wave of IP telephony meant connecting SIP trunks to the now digital PBX (remember that wall hung computer) and routing calls across the organisation's Internet connection via their SIP trunk provider to the local, national and international telephone network. Finally, from a connectivity and disaster recovery perspective, telephony had some level of resilience.**

As business became more comfortable with using IP technology for their connectivity and assured that the quality of calls across both private and public Internet circuits was suitable, the technology community started to experiment with placing the PBX in an external data centre and using multi tenanted arrangements so that businesses could take a slice of a PBX capable of hosting infinite numbers of customers and the first cloud telephony service providers were created.

**Today cloud telephony has matured into a multi-faceted unified cloud based communications platform, providing voice connectivity for one to one and one to many conversations, video conferencing, instant messaging, whiteboarding, plus file and screen sharing. Hence the term 'Unified Communications' (UC) and being that the service is used by business on an outsourced, in the cloud, often on demand basis, i.e. 'as a Service', hence the phrase Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) The future is finally here!**

As businesses consider the move from their relationship with analogue or IP connected telephone systems, there are many questions that a business will be considering. For example:

- **What technology/services should the business evaluate for moving to**
- **Which supplier(s) should be evaluated**
- **How should the business build a requirement and business case for the new solution**
- **What level of integration into the business workflow processes is needed**
- **What will the ideal solution comprise**
- **And how should the organisation move safely from the current service to the new supplier without disruption to the business**

At a minimum, we have established that cloud telephony should provide the business with a more resilient and flexible service arrangement and at the top end of the spectrum if required, can also provide multi person conferencing, video conferencing, instant messaging, whiteboarding plus file and screen sharing.

Business leaders should consider how their organisation will want to use the technology for example:

- **Where will people be based, i.e. in an office, remotely, or in transit**
- **Will their device of choice be a handset, a softphone and/or their mobile?**
- **What features at the minimum does their current system provide today and what features once understood, will they will require from the new service**
- **What aspects of any unified communications service would they want to use and need to evaluate**
- **What if known is the businesses growth strategy, will this be local, national and international and what will the service requirement be for this expansion**

Subsequently, what suppliers will be able to support the businesses unified communications adoption plan and should be engaged?

**As the organisation moves through the process of preparing the business plan for moving to a unified communications environment, then current technology assessment, gap analysis, integration requirements, replacement technology evaluation, cost, supplier evaluation and migration planning are all key phases of a logical plan.**

**The challenge for any organisation looking at moving to a new cloud telephony/unified communications provider are the external/unknown aspects of these areas i.e. researching, engaging and evaluating the potential technology suppliers, establishing current situation and once the new supplier has been selected the actual adoption and migration process.**

At Alba Telecommunications we have been involved in the communications industry as far back when that wall hung telephone line connected computer (Private Branch eXchange or PBX) was the communications arterial system of every business and have since that time developed extensive experience working with customers taking them into today's unified communications technology environment, we can support your business from end to end through the entire process and remain your relationship partner for the future.

**Call us today to ask how we can help you find your perfect cloud telephony or unified communications supplier.**