FOUR QUESTIONS

YOU SHOULD BE ASKING ABOUT

BUSINESS

COMMUNICATIONS

media 9
connected cloud solutions

Inclarity Premium Partner

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress." Kofi Annan

For business, knowledge and experience is key. It enables us to understand our customers better, to learn from our mistakes, adapt to changing markets and to get better and more productive at what we do. When this knowledge and experience is shared across the business, its value grows exponentially.

If information is king, then surely the most valuable tool that an organisation can put in place is one that enables and encourages highly effective collaboration.

According to research conducted by Microsoft in 2012, most small to mid-sized businesses waste 10 to 20 percent of their work hours through the use of ineffective business communication tools.

Business leaders have to stop thinking of communications as a telephone on the desk and start to view it as an essential, multi-faceted tool to make the business and workforce more productive and more effective.

Communication technology has advanced tremendously enabling a seamless, collaborative environment to be created that not only embraces, but integrates instant messaging, email, voice and video as well as enabling workers to communicate from any device in any location.

On the following pages we outline the four key questions you should be asking about your communication infrastructure to determine if it is truly adding value to your business.

|01

CAPABILITY

Are your business communications delivering everything they should?

In general, the technology our employees use at home is more advanced than the resources they use in the workplace. The home phone is almost redundant, having been replaced by the smartphone. According to O2 research (2013) UK adults spend on average 119 minutes per day using their smartphone to text, make calls, browse the internet and access social networks.

A lesson can be learned from this – employees communicate more effectively when they have more than just a phone on a desk. You should be asking the following:

Employee to Employee Communication – Can you establish if a colleague is available before you reach out to them? Do you have to call them or can you send them a quick 'text-like' message? These are standard capabilities of Presence & Instant Messaging and are proven to significantly improve collaboration and increase productivity.

Smart Communication – Does your communication platform provide those features that make that extra bit of difference to your employees? Does it provide a corporate directory? Can they 'click-to- call'? Is it easy to set up diverts? Does it provide voicemail and can this be forwarded to your email inbox?

Mobile Integration – What happens when employees are away from their desk? Can they use their device of choice -their smartphone - to access your corporate telephony environment enabling them to be truly mobile?

Video Conferencing – Does your environment make it easy for employees to work together through conference calls? Are you embracing video to make meetings more effective without wasting time obliging everyone to travel to a single location with all its negative financial implications?

FLEXIBILITY

Do your business communications work the way you want them to work?

When was the last time you reviewed how your business telephony works and adapted it to the changed environment? The answer is probably so long ago that you cannot remember.

In most organisations, the business communication solution does exactly the same thing as it did on the day it was installed, despite the needs of the business and the end-users having significantly evolved.

Remote Workers & Home Workers – Do your business communications expand beyond your office? Are remote workers or remote offices on separate communication platforms? If yes, this must surely limit their effectiveness. When employees work at home, are they still contactable in the same way as they are in the office; if not, is this detrimental to productivity?

User Dependent Functionality – Can you define what communication tools you provide to which users? Can you provide sales with mobility, customer services with contact centre capability and the exec team with full unified communications and video conferencing?

Desktop Integration – Does your communications platform integrate with your desktop environment? Can you look-up a customer in CRM and click-to-call? Can you schedule a voice or video conference from MS Outlook? Can you click on an email and escalate to an instant messaging conversation and then a voice call? Communications is a key part of our work environment and as such, should be an integral part of the desktop.

Extend (or Reach) Beyond Your Company – Does your communication platform enable you to be more accessible and collaborative with your customers, partners and suppliers? Is it easy for customers to connect to the right person in your company without having to wait or to be transferred? Could the use of video transform the way you communicate with your customers?

|03

SCALABILITY

How easy is it to scale your environment up or down?

We are seeing a fundamental shift in the way that businesses consume technology. Traditionally, both hardware and software have been a capital investment, buying what you think will support your business over the next three to five years. The 'cloud' has changed this with software now consumed as a service from this platform on a pay-as-you-use basis.

This changes the way you can – and should - define your requirements in terms of scalability:

Users – Can I easily add new users as they join the organisation without purchasing new equipment or upgrading? Equally, what happens if we reduce the number of employees; can I turn off user accounts and reduce my monthly expenditure?

Capacity – Can I vary the number of telephone lines and phone numbers? Can I scale up and scale down as the business grows and as we respond to seasonal changes or we introduce new products or services?

Locations – Is it possible to create one virtual communication environment that supports any user in any location? If so, can I add new locations when I need to e.g. if we open a new office or branch?

Functionality – Are we able to scale the functionality of our communications solution? Can we build on base telephony by adding mobile integration, unified communications and hosted video as additional layers (or channels)?

|04

RELIABILITY

Is your communications infrastructure business-critical?

What would happen if your phone stopped ringing today? Either your phone system suddenly stopped working or your phone lines developed a fault.

The likelihood is that if the downtime was only for a few minutes it would be inconvenient, but any longer it would be highly frustrating for you and your customers and could have a detrimental impact on the business.

Not only does the cloud change the way you consume technology, it also transforms the level of reliability you can expect.

Solution Reliability – Do I have any guarantee of service from my current communications platform? What should I expect in terms of an SLA from a cloud-based solution?

Network Reliability – Am I dependent on a single phone line into the public network or a single telephone exchange? What risk does this pose to the business? How do I mitigate this risk with a cloud-based platform?

Location Dependency – What happens if we are unable to access our main office? Can I access my phone system remotely, set up diverts and continue business-as-usual from a different location?

ABOUT MEDIA 9 & INCLARITY

Media 9 are Telecommunications and Connectivity specialists, who since 1992 have been delivering a highly reliable service and providing real value to our customers; small businesses, mid-sized enterprises and branch networks.

Media 9 are proud to partner with Inclarity to bring you one of the most comprehensive cloud-based telephony services available in the UK.

Inclarity are the UK's leading provider of Hosted Telephony, Hosted UC and Hosted Video solutions. We help our customers communicate more effectively while reducing costs by migrating to our cloud-based platforms.

Formed in 1991 as a telecommunications provider, Inclarity saw the potential of VoIP and foresaw that hosted telephony could transform the way businesses communicate. In 2003 Inclarity launched their first cloud-based telephony service and since then, have continued to evolve and enhance their platform to deliver one of the most comprehensive range of services available in the UK.

Today we deliver a highly secure, resilient and feature-rich, cloud-based telephony, unified communications and video service on a pay-as-you-use basis.

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