



**UC End User Productivity:**  
How End Users are Finding Value from Unified  
Communications

by  
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## Executive Summary

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Unified Communications (UC) has been changing the way we communicate, collaborate, and get our work done; affecting the productivity and effectiveness of individual workers, workgroups, and companies, sometimes in surprising ways. UC has integrated disparate communication methodologies, such as voice messaging and video, and introduced new ways of working, such as using presence to determine if someone is available before calling them or sending an instant message (IM).

**“I would scream if you took UC away from me.....I’d be concerned about the impact on our business. We’d lose a competitive advantage, which we have now.”**

UCStrategies.com defines Unified Communications as “Communications integrated to optimize business processes.” UC integrates real-time communications (such as voice or telephony) and non-real time communications (such as messaging) with business processes and requirements based on presence capabilities, thus presenting a consistent unified user interface and experience across multiple devices and media types. Although a relatively new market, Unified Communications has been embraced by early adopters who understand the benefits it provides to individual workers and how it helps companies optimize their business processes.

How have these early adopters reacted to these new tools? Has UC simply embellished the way that they work, or fundamentally changed their work habits? How has UC impacted the organizations in which they work? This paper draws from recent research conducted on end-user productivity benefits of unified communications and shows what the effects of UC have been on end users, and ultimately their organizations.

## Identifying the Benefits of UC

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There are a variety of productivity benefits that UC provides; some of which impact individual workers and some that impact the enterprise or company as a whole. When tied in with particular business processes, UC can help companies enhance and improve customer service and satisfaction, reduce costs, and increase revenues.

Under the “UC Umbrella” are two types of UC solutions and benefits— those that focus on the end user and end user productivity (UC-U) and those that focus on the business or business processes (UC-B). UC-U provides benefits to individual users, while UC-B provides benefits to the enterprise or business as a whole. The goal of both types is to “optimize business processes.” UC-B processes are key business activities and, if accomplished successfully, produce changes that are significant and measurable, readily tracked for return on investment (ROI) cases. Focusing on the individual and workgroup, UC-U provides and integrates communication capabilities such as collaboration, messaging, call control, click-to-call, instant messaging (IM), and mobility, etc., and ties these capabilities in with presence and a unified user interface. Click-to-call or click-to-connect is the most common instance of UC-U, enabling users to simply click on a name or telephone number on their PC screen, or in some cases on their mobile device, to place the call. An individual can view a colleague’s name on their UC client, view their online and telephony presence status (available, in a meeting, in a call or conference, away, busy, etc.), and click on the colleague’s name to initiate a phone call, or even a video call or interactive conference session with application sharing. Alternatively, with certain UC products a user can click on a phone number that is embedded in a document, email and/or webpage to initiate a call.

Due to the individuality and granularity of end user processes, UC-U is usually hard to measure and aggregate into an ROI case. Although measuring hard ROI for the user productivity segment is much more difficult than for UC-B, it is still clear that there are significant benefits to workers and enterprises that have implemented UC-U solutions; many enterprises have begun a UC implementation by starting with user productivity elements, focusing on how UC impacts individual users and teams or workgroups, and reaping significant benefits from the personal or user productivity aspect of UC.

When looking at ROI - or how the use of a technology helps organizations and impacts the bottom line - the key areas to examine are: reduced costs (cost savings) and increased revenue (based on additional sales or faster sales). This study found that even when enabling certain business units with UC didn't have a direct or immediate revenue impact, UC had very clear impacts on other critical areas: such as business continuity and agility, customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty. These factors, while more difficult to measure, almost always have long-term impact on the bottom line.

## Real-World Findings - Becoming More Productive

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According to the May 2008 "UC End User Productivity Study" conducted by Blair Pleasant and Nancy Jamison of UCStrategies.com, ([www.ucstrategies.com](http://www.ucstrategies.com)), unified communications capabilities have had a tremendous impact on the way in which people get their work done, making communications and collaboration much simpler and easier, while enhancing business processes. The study focused on how end users in four different functional areas — executive/management, operations (including engineering and IT), marketing, and human relations - use UC and how UC impacts personal productivity.

The study results showed that the personal productivity benefits of UC help workers to be more efficient and effective at doing their jobs, and provide increased worker satisfaction by providing users with tools to help them do their jobs better. Using unified communications, individuals can more easily and quickly select the most effective and efficient means to initiate, receive, and respond to business communications. For example, by being able to simply click on a person's name on their PC screen and be connected via IM or a voice call, without having to leave the application they were working in, communications becomes significantly faster and easier. The use of presence makes it easier to determine if someone is available, and what the best method to communicate with them (IM, phone, mobile phone, etc.), helping workers save time and be more efficient.

A tightly related facet of user productivity is work group or team productivity. UC-enabled workgroups interact and collaborate more effectively, leading to faster development time, quicker time-to-market, and better and faster decisions— all impacting the bottom line. UC-enabled workgroups work more effectively together as distributed "virtual teams," efficiently communicating and sharing information.

## Unified Communications — Voice Remains Key

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The study also found that even with increasing use of non-voice UC tools, such as IM and text messaging, voice remains the medium for real-time communications most commonly used to settle and make progress on business issues, and the use of voice communications and telephony is actually increasing as new UC tools make it easier to initiate voice or telephony interactions. In the emerging era of unified communications, voice is the foundation, with new tools such as telephony presence and click-to-call making it easier for workers to view the availability of colleagues and initiate real-time voice interactions.

**Voice is still the de facto gold standard for real-time communications and will remain so for some time to come.**

## Unified Communications \_ Voice Remains Key (continued)

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At the same time, the number of instant messages being sent is skyrocketing, and what was once a consumer product is now being used in enterprises of all sizes and vertical markets. IM has become such an important tool in many organizations, that some people have prophesized the death of the telephone. While it is true that in certain circumstance it is more practical and convenient to send an IM rather than pick up the telephone, to paraphrase Mark Twain, rumors of the telephone's death have been greatly exaggerated. **Voice is still the de facto gold standard for real-time communications and will remain so for some time to come.**

Voice communications and telephony are a crucial element of a UC solution. In fact, the study found that 27.7% of the respondents' weekly communications is done via voice or telephony, while 20.7% is done through IM, with the remaining primarily taking place via email (47.2%). The study respondents unanimously agreed that IM is useful for a quick comment or question, but not for lengthy discussions or conversations, and that email while obviously useful, has its limits. They said that if more than three or four emails go back and forth about a particular topic, then a voice conversation is usually warranted.

Even though many UC users rely on IM as their primary means of interaction, UCStrategies.com found that it is generally used for a quick comment, question, or clarification, and not for in-depth discussions. For lengthy or in-depth interactions, end users generally escalate IM sessions to a voice call. **In fact, 84% of the survey respondents indicated that IM interactions turn into or are escalated to voice or telephone interactions at least once or twice a week, with 30% saying that this happens at least three-to-four times a day, and 13% saying that this happens even more frequently.**

End users are also discovering the best ways to use tools like IM. Most users agree that there are general "rules of thumb" for IM interactions, and that after a certain amount of time, an IM interaction needs to become a live phone interaction. For example, if an IM goes beyond five minutes, then the parties typically pick up the phone and have a live voice interaction. So, although IM is fine for quick questions or discussions, when the topic gets more complex, or if people need to discuss something in detail, then a phone call or conference call is necessary.

## The Impact of UC on Productivity

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The most valuable UC functions or capabilities for user productivity in terms of workers being more effective and productive are the use of presence, IM, and conferencing/collaboration. When the survey respondents were asked about which UC capabilities they use, the most widely-used capabilities are Instant Messaging and Presence, which are each used by 100% of the respondents, followed by click-to-call (88%).

Along those lines, when asked which particular functions have provided the most use or value to them and why, 23% of the respondents said that IM is the most useful, followed by 18% who said click-to-call and the ability to find someone in their buddy list or corporate directly and make calls by clicking on that name was the most useful (Note: respondents were able to list more than one feature/function as being the most useful. Also, this does not indicate the frequency of use, but the subjective value of the feature or function). 16% of the respondents felt that conferencing and collaboration provided the most value, while 14% said presence, followed by 11% for video, and 7% who feel that the call management capabilities of UC, such as seeing a "toast" pop up with the caller's name and the ability to see recent caller information, are the most useful.

**According to the study, 100% of the respondents said that they feel that UC features have changed the way that they work. Respondents noted that UC has enabled them to speed things up since they can get answers faster, and are less frustrated by communication delays.**

UC helps provide a continuous flow of communication, and workers don't have to stop what they're doing to get in touch with someone. One product manager noted, "I can cut the wait time substantially, meaning I can get more done in the same amount of time, which makes me more productive." Another user stated, "It's about resolving a strategy or technical issue or how to better strengthen our sales organization. It is simple to use the click-to-call capabilities to get in touch with someone right away and keep things moving."

## Which UC Capabilities Do You Use?

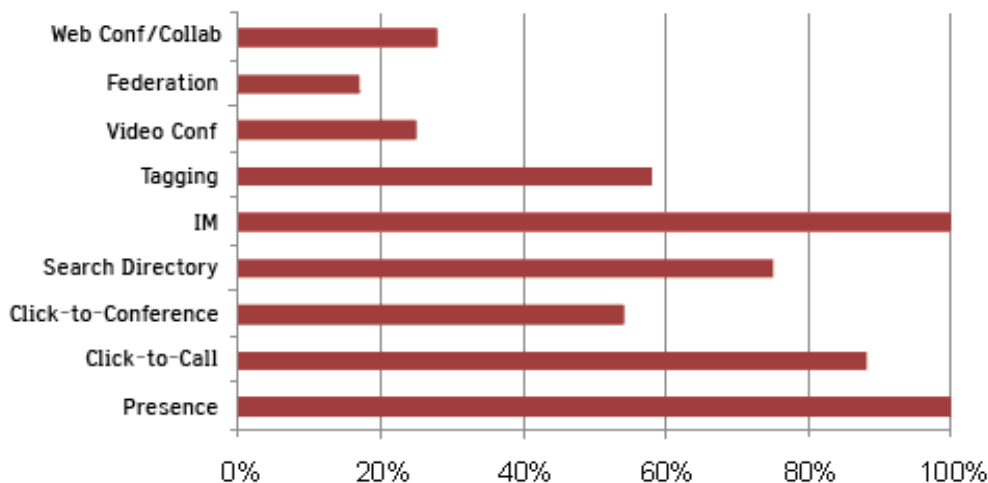


Figure 1 — Use of UC Features *Source: UCStrategies.com (May 2008)*

Along these lines, 100% of the survey respondents check a contact's presence status before calling them instead of wasting time leaving a voice message if the person is not available. 72.2% of the respondents always check presence status before making a call, and 27.8% check presence status often.

## How Often Do You Check Presence Before Making a Call?

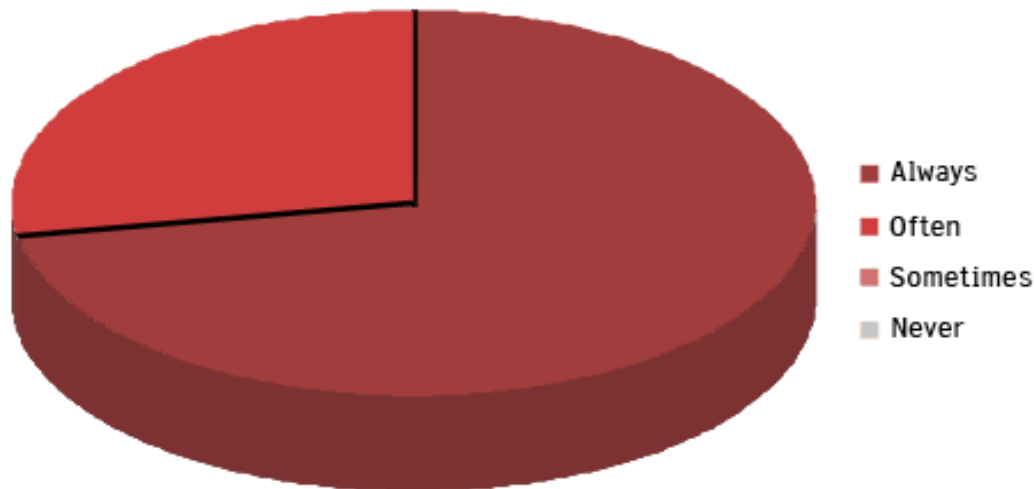


Figure 2 — Frequency of Checking Presence Status Before Making Call *Source: UCStrategies.com (May 2008)*

## The Impact of UC on Productivity (continued)

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Using presence capabilities, workers can see if someone is available and can address issues and handle operational issues right then. Rather than calling someone blindly and leaving a message that may or may not be responded to in a couple hours or a couple days, workers use presence capabilities to see if someone is in the office or available to talk. UC users can determine someone's availability and adjust their communications accordingly.

For example, if John isn't available to answer your question, you can call Joan (who is available) and get an immediate response. You could also "tag" John, continue to make progress on other tasks, and contact John the moment the tagging feature tells you he is available. This allows the work to continue flowing smoothly, saving time and money. Clearly, these capabilities allow UC-enabled workers to be more effective in dealing with business issues in a real-time manner as opposed to having to do more scheduling and planning of calls.

Finally, UC tools such as audio, web, videoconferencing and web collaboration help reduce travel and subsequently, travel costs. One user noted that the use of web collaboration helped to reduce his travel time by 40%. Another user found that she was able to reduce her travel time by a similar amount, which greatly reduced costs as most of her travel is international.

## Job-Specific Productivity Benefits

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UC productivity benefits can be best identified when tied with specific job functions. The way in which UC helps workers do their jobs better will be different for everyone based on their role in the company. For example, a sales rep has a very different role than a human resources manager, and the way they use UC and the way that it helps them will be very different as well. **Rather than looking at how much time UC can save them in doing their job, it's more important to look at how UC helps them do their jobs better and more effectively.** In some cases, such as for the sales rep or insurance claims processor, the ROI can be calculated. For others, such as marketing managers, it's less about ROI and more about job performance effectiveness.

Specific jobs or job functions, such as sales reps, technical support, claims processors, stock brokers, and others, have a more direct impact on their companies' bottom line, because their productivity is directly tied to revenue generation. If a sales rep can get access to subject matter experts or people with the information needed to answer a customer's question, or customers and co-workers can contact the sales rep when he/she is mobile, then that sales rep can be more productive, make more sales, and increase revenue. Other jobs don't have such a direct impact on revenue, but UC can help them be more effective at their jobs, which has a beneficial impact on the company, but may not be readily quantifiable.

### Sales

Sales is probably the area that is most directly impacted by the use of UC. Time wasted trying to get in touch with someone is time not spent selling, and the easier it is for sales reps to be able to contact people to get the information needed, or to be accessible to customers, the better.

One sales engineer who is responsible for worldwide sales stated, "During the sales cycle there are questions about functions, features, pricing, etc. With the use of IM and presence and seeing colleagues' availability, I don't have to wait until the next business day for a quote or information about a feature or function." Another sales professional said, "We had a competitor in an account telling a customer that we don't have a certain feature, and the customer contacted me to ask about it and using UC I was able to get in touch with the right resource and tell the customer that we actually do have the feature, which helped us make the sale."

Using UC, sales can be made more quickly and without delays. One respondent commented, “If you’re trying to negotiate a contract, you can IM back and forth and can have confidential conversations amongst your employees via IM without having to tell the client that you have to get back to them.” Another sales manager stated, “Because I can collaborate with people in real time, I can get a resolution faster— whether for a sales strategy or a technical issue or how to better strengthen our sales organization. I can cut the wait time substantially, meaning I can get more done in the same amount of time.” **For sales managers, this translates to more sales.**

## Marketing

UC helps marketing managers and other marketing professionals be more responsive to market changes, ensure that the time-to-market schedule is met, and that product collateral and information is developed with input from the appropriate parties, all of which impact sales and revenue. As one marketing professional noted, “If I’m on the spot giving a marketing pitch to a potential customer but need more detailed product information, I can IM someone right then and get the information, which makes us all look better.”

Another one said, “We have quicker project turnaround dates based on having more real-time research and results based on the research.” Using UC, the result is faster time-to-market, increasing revenues.

## Executive/Management

Executives and top management are very frequently on the road and away from the office, and need to be in constant communication with their employees, customers, suppliers, and partners. UC helps executives communicate with internal and external parties, from simple communication to crisis management. As one CEO pointed out, “When you’re the CEO you try to nullify issues from becoming crises. I can now be proactive and be responsive to clients and partners before things escalate to crisis mode where you could lose a valuable client because they think you’re ignoring them.”

Another executive stated that, “Problems tend to grow if you can’t deal with them right away. UC let’s me deal with a problem when it happens and saves me from headaches. I can have a chat client open on my PDA when I’m away from the office and can do my work more easily.”

By making communications more efficient, executives can get the information they need at critical times, as noted by one executive who stated, “When I’m meeting with a customer, I can check presence via my mobile device and know who back in the office or elsewhere might be able to answer a question. I bug fewer people and get my answer faster!”

## Technical Support

Technical support, like customer service, is based on assisting as many people as possible as quickly and efficiently as possible. A variety of UC tools, especially web collaboration, help tech support people assist their customers. One user reported, “If there’s a trouble issue over the weekend, I can see who’s available and set up a conference call from my home and pull people together and solve the issue without having to go into the office to do this.”

Others noted, “I was able to help a customer using desktop sharing and it saved me from traveling to the customer’s site to fix the problem,” and “I can have web meetings and see what’s going on in the customer’s system instead of driving to their site. I can do everything remotely. There’s been a 40% reduction in my travel time.” Clearly, reducing travel not only reduces expenses, but increases the amount of time workers are available and able to do their jobs.

## Job-Specific Productivity Benefits (continued)

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### Human Resources

Back office workers are also made more productive by using UC, although the impact on the bottom line is not always as obvious. For example, Human Resources (HR) professionals, while dealing with outside suppliers and outside job candidates, primarily deal with internal customers. Yet, even human resources representatives get very tangible benefits from UC. The ability to click-to-call applicants directly from the number written in their resume, to check on the availability of hiring managers using presence and calendaring, to click-to-call and/or conference in the hiring parties in real-time all translate into the ability to fill open positions quickly and efficiently. Of course, the ability to fill open positions faster has a direct impact on business agility, continuity, and time to market, thereby having the potential to influence the bottom line significantly.

One HR manager stated, “I have to use spreadsheets with compensation information and if I have to talk to someone about it, I can drag and drop it (*the spreadsheet*) into the window and we can talk through it while working on it and sharing it. I don’t have to email it to that person and wait for them to get it.” Another user stated, “I can use web conferences more to communicate information about benefits to make sure people are using their benefits appropriately, and to promote health and wellness programs.” UC increases responsiveness, and as one user stated, “UC has helped me communicate better with the HR manager and with the benefits administrator. If candidates have a question and it’s urgent because an offer is hanging on the reply, then it really can be critical.”

## “So, What if we Took UC Away?”

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The true value of UC can be demonstrated by the responses to the question: “What would you do if we took UC away?”

All of the users in the survey, regardless of job type or function, essentially had the same response – I can’t go back to the old way of doing things. UC users find that it helps them in their day-to-day jobs, and their productivity would be negatively impacted if they couldn’t use UC. The following represents some of the responses:

- “I would experience a serious feeling of returning to the decade of the ‘80’s. You can not un-ring a bell, and UC is a bell that needs to keep sounding off.”
- “I’d demand it back! Seriously, it’s one of the big changes that I’ve seen since being in business.”
- “I would scream. I personally have found that it is getting more and more embedded into the way I do things on a daily basis. Presence helps me decide really fast how I’m going to communicate with someone. I’d be concerned about the impact on business. We’d lose a competitive advantage, which we have now.”
- “I would go through withdrawal and throw a fit. We create our work lives around what we have. It boils down to would you be willing to pay the extra \$15 or 20 to have it, but if I didn’t have it, I would throw a fit or pretty close to it.”

## Genesys Telecommunications Labs Helps Bring UC to End Users ([www.genesyslab.com/gets](http://www.genesyslab.com/gets))

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There are a variety of UC solutions providing benefits to individual users, workgroups, and organizations— some solutions include an IM/presence server and capabilities, and some integrate and build upon leading UC platforms such as Microsoft’s Office Communications Server (OCS). One of the solutions that adds value to OCS is Genesys Enterprise Telephony Software (GETS). GETS telephony-enables Microsoft OCS, Live Communication Server (LCS), and the Microsoft Office Communicator client, merging presence-aware collaboration applications with enterprise telephony.

As middleware that sits between OCS or LCS and the user’s IP, TDM, and/or Hybrid PBX, GETS makes it possible for them to work together and display telephony presence through Microsoft Communicator, providing “in a call” or “in a conference” status relative to the PBX-connected phone. This helps people understand not only when colleagues are on-line, but when they are available for a telephone call or audio conference. GETS accomplishes this by monitoring all events occurring on the PBX (Incoming/Outgoing call, on-hook/off-hook, conference) and integrating this information with the native presence states provided by OCS. In addition to telephony presence, GETS also enables the click-to-call and call control capabilities of OCS/Communicator, but using the PBX-connected desk sets or softphones.

What really sets GETS apart from most other OCS/LCS integrations is its ability to work across multiple PBXs, providing users the same capabilities and experience no matter what PBX they are connected to. GETS supports over 100 different switches from more than 25 vendors, and in all generations: TDM, hybrid, and IP. This lets enterprises take advantage of their existing architecture and equipment. Not only does this save the enterprise money, but it allows them to extend the benefits of telephony-enabled UC to every user more quickly than solutions that require a network/PBX upgrade.

While Microsoft OCS offers a great deal of functionality, most companies still need and want to integrate OCS with their enterprise switches and the PSTN without having to rip and replace their current systems or make a wholesale switch to Microsoft Enterprise Voice. As companies implement OCS, they will require a full-featured telephony-enablement solution that lets them migrate to IP at their own pace. With GETS, IP phones are not required to provide presence and other feature sets. GETS customers can have mixed TDM and IP infrastructures, retain their existing analog or digital telephones, and enhance the functionality of these legacy devices while being able to take advantage of the benefits UC provides.

Because GETS connects OCS directly to the PBX-based infrastructure, all call control commands the user performs in Communicator are executed on the PBX, and relative to the PBX-connected phone. Additionally, GETS adds a host of enhanced capabilities to OCS. For example, because GETS monitors the PBX environment instead of just the Microsoft environment, it can see whenever calls are missed, even if the user is not logged on to the network. This results in 24/7 missed call email notifications, which is an enhancement to OCS’s native ability to send missed call emails only when a user is active on the network. With today’s abundant use of PDAs, this enhancement provides significant value. Other enhancements include the ability for a single user to control multiple lines through the same Communicator interface and to toggle back and forth between soft and hard phones, which is useful for remote and travelling users as the separate lines can be on different PBXs, or in different locations around the world. GETS also enables users to highlight any number written in web pages, Microsoft Office files, and emails— right-click and click-to-dial that number, extending the benefits of UC to other applications a user might work in through the course of the day.

With GETS, companies can phase in UC and IP, and gradually replace their existing switches with new IP switches, while using GETS to telephony-enable OCS on their existing infrastructure.

## Conclusion

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While we used to rely on voice calls, voicemail and email as our primary communication methods, new applications such as IM and collaboration are enhancing voice communications. Capabilities such as presence (including both IM and telephony presence) are making it possible to choose the best way to communicate directly with colleagues and remote team members, and even with customers, suppliers, and partners in cases where their environments are federated.

Voice is still critical in today's enterprise environment, and UC technologies such as GETS make it possible to telephony-enable applications, like Microsoft's OCS and/or Alcatel-Lucent's My Instant Communicator, while taking advantage of the many functions and capabilities of these UC platforms. By tying in telephony or voice capabilities with other communication capabilities, desktop and mobile workers can use the communication tools that best suit their needs, helping them to be more productive and effective.

UC users are not only reaping many benefits from the various features and functions of UC solutions, but as the UCStrategies.com end-user survey indicated, these users could not conceive of going back to their old ways of doing things. By integrating the real-time elements of voice and telephony capabilities with IM and other capabilities such as conferencing and collaboration, UC is helping workers across industries, and in a variety of job types, streamline the way in which they communicate and get their work done. While it is difficult to measure and quantify the "soft" benefits of unified communications, particularly as it impacts user productivity, it is clear that UC is a tool that is helping companies better serve their customers and employees. The result is increased revenues, reduced costs, and improved customer service—which is the end goal of almost every organization. And the best part is, users have embraced the UC tools and can't imagine working without them.

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### **Nancy Jamison, President and Principal Analyst— Jamison Consulting**

Nancy Jamison is an independent market analyst with expertise in the areas of unified communications, speech technologies, and multi-channel contact centers. Ms. Jamison regularly authors content for vendors and industry press, and has spoken at many customer and industry events, both domestically and internationally. She is also columnist for Speech Technology Magazine.

Her twenty-eight years of industry experience include five years as a Director and Principal Analyst at Gartner Group/Dataquest, in the Voice Systems North America program of Dataquest's Telecommunications group. While at Dataquest, in addition to creating US and Worldwide market share and forecasts for the voice messaging and interactive voice response markets, she created industry-leading research in these, and several other markets as well, including speech technologies, multi-channel contact centers, and unified messaging.



### **Blair Pleasant, President and Principal Analyst— COMMfusion LLC**

Blair Pleasant is President & Principal Analyst of COMMfusion LLC and a co-founder of UCStrategies.com, an industry resource on the growing UC arena. She provides consulting and market research analysis on voice/data convergence markets, applications, and technologies, aimed at helping end-user and vendor clients both strategically and tactically.

With 20 years experience, Blair has authored many highly acclaimed multi-client market studies and white papers, as well as custom research reports, and provides market research analysis and consulting services to both end user and vendor clients. She is a frequent speaker at industry conferences and events.