

# Telephony-Enabled Collaboration Success Factors

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# Presence/Telephony-Enabled Collaboration Success Factors

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What will it take to successfully implement a presence- and telephony-enabled collaboration solution? This research note identifies some of the key steps every company should take when considering these new products and technologies.

## **Step 1. Embrace collaboration and telephony.**

Presence-enabled and telephony-enabled collaboration is going to change the way in which we communicate and do our jobs, and will be an important competitive differentiator among companies of all sizes. While your competitors may not be using these solutions today, they will do so shortly, and you need to start thinking about your strategy NOW. While some new products are being introduced over the next year or so, many of the products and technologies needed to get started are here today, and you can begin evaluating how your enterprise can utilize them and benefit from them today. For example, Microsoft users should look for ways to take advantage of Microsoft's Live Communication Server (LCS), and products that can enhance LCS.

## **Step 2. Identify your objectives.**

It's important to understand what it is you're trying to achieve and what your corporate objectives are - whether it's increased team productivity or responsiveness, increased speed to market, enhanced customer service, etc. Without having a clear understanding of what it is you're trying to achieve, you're just throwing technology at a problem, rather than using technology to achieve a specific purpose.

## **Step 3. Figure out the individuals, groups, and departments that can benefit from telephony-enabled collaboration.**

This isn't the right solution for every job in your company and it's vital to identify which roles and job functions are the most appropriate and can benefit most from telephony/presence-enabled collaboration solutions. Look at the various roles of the individual workers and how these solutions can help them in their jobs. Telephony/presence-enabled collaboration will first be adopted by groups of people in specific jobs or business functions, whether engineering or product development workgroups, sales people, customer service reps, the marketing team



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working on a new promotion, or a development team working on a project, for example. Identify who these groups and teams are, and how they can best utilize these solutions.

**Step 4. Identify the business processes that will benefit most from being telephony-enabled and which yield the highest ROI for your business.**

Not all business processes will require integration with presence/telephony-enabled collaboration tools, so it is important to focus on the most important areas for ROI to your company. While many of the benefits are in soft dollars, it is important to identify the hard dollar savings and ROI in order to convince management of the need for these solutions. Improved personal productivity is certainly an important benefit, but it is hard to prove in terms of ROI. Therefore, identify those applications that can provide both hard and soft savings and start with those. And don't forget about back-office applications that can benefit, such as manufacturing operations, billing, human resources, accounting, etc. It's not just for the front office! While it may be challenging to quantify the ROI for these back office processes and operations, the key take-away is enabling your company with the right communication tools to move through the business processes quicker. This type of ROI should be measured in terms of reduced costs, increased savings, time saved, and other factors.

**Step 5. Make this part of an overall communications strategy.**

Integrating presence, telephony, and collaboration is but one part of an overall communications strategy. It should not be rolled out as an isolated silo, but rather as part of a comprehensive, enterprise-wide strategy. Integrating these new communication capabilities into business applications and processes enables you to transform how you get work done and can help shorten cycle times and time to market, which has a direct ROI impact. Think in terms of a holistic approach to communications.

**Step 6. Evaluate the many different collaboration solutions available in the market today.**

Not all solutions are alike – some will allow you to leverage existing switches, handsets, servers, and infrastructure, while others will require more upgrades and new technology purchases. You probably want to leverage as much as possible, so make sure that the system you select works in your existing environment, whether IP or TDM, and with your existing switches. Some products work only with a particular vendor's switches, which may not be optimal in a mixed or heterogeneous environment. Talk to existing customers about their implementations of the systems – what worked, what didn't, why they selected the particular vendor, etc.

**Step 7. Start planning trials.**

Telephony-enabled collaboration is still new and we're in the early adapter stage. It's important to conduct trials with a variety of end users. Also, consider including your executives, the CIO, and appropriate department heads in the trials in order for them to evaluate the system and to



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identify possible applications and uses of the technology. Begin with one process for one group, build on your experience, and go from there.

**Step 8. Careful, phased implementation and roll out.**

Gradual, incremental adoption, rather than an overnight conversion is key. Presence/telephony-enabled collaboration is not only a technological change for the enterprise, it's a cultural change for users. Prior to the roll out, it is critical to evaluate whether there is any impact on the network infrastructure and what additional hardware may be needed. Where possible, try to leverage existing infrastructure and products. You may discover that you have to make some changes to your infrastructure. This may require a budget for new servers, devices, telecom and IT staff, systems integrators, and especially user training and support, so it's important to know what you're getting into and be prepared in advance.

**Step 9. Let people experiment with it.**

Focus on the user experience. Let users experiment with presence to explore the added value it provides. Some people may already be using IM and presence and will see the added value that telephony integration provides. Others may not yet see the need in their jobs. This is a new paradigm for most people, and as mentioned, it creates a cultural change. Users need time to learn how to optimize the technology, and how it can enhance their job functions while making them more productive. And you'll be amazed at some of the innovative ways in which various workers use this technology!

**Step 10. Measure, evaluate, revise.**

While there are very few tools available today to measure ROI and other metrics, it is important to work with your vendor(s) to identify measurable ways in which to evaluate the productivity enhancements, cost savings, or increased revenues associated with the collaborative technologies. Productivity can be seen in terms of individuals, teams or groups, and the enterprise or organization as a whole. Once you've implemented the solutions, measure and evaluate as much as possible, determine what changes need to be done and revise how the technology is being used, how it can be improved, and what other groups can utilize these capabilities.

Lastly, be ready for the viral impact these technologies have. Once you begin providing groups of workers with these presence- and telephony-enabled collaboration capabilities, it won't be long before others are banging on your door.

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