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UC RFP Template Solution Description Collaboration Acceleration

The Unified Communications (UC) RFP Template Toolkits focus on the new solutions that are enabled by new communications capabilities, not on the evolution of established communications tools such as calling, basic voice conferencing, voice mail, e-mail, calendar or web. For an overview of eight (8) UC Solution categories that are supported by the UC RFP Template Toolkits, please visit www.UCStrategies.com.

This is the UC Solution Description for Collaboration Acceleration.

Description: Collaboration Acceleration

UC Collaboration Acceleration provides support for acceleration and improvement of collaborative tasks, usually performed by coordinated teams of people over a period of time (rather than single-interaction ad hoc collaboration). These team-based collaborative tasks may occur entirely within the enterprise or may operate across enterprise boundaries.

The goal of this application is to enable teams to work more efficiently by reducing information management overhead (e.g. by file sharing and revision management rather than e-mailing attachments), by managing idea generation and review (e.g. by use of file sharing, blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, web sites, etc. rather than interacting only through meetings or messaging), by inclusion of only authorized personnel (internal and/or external) with security methods, by tracking project timelines, and by facilitating or automating live communications when needed (via calls, conferences, IMs).

The major business process improvement goals for this application area include:

- Faster time-to-market for new products and new marketing programs, often with improved quality and information richness.
- Faster time-to-completion and realization of benefits for new procedures, policies or similar business improvements.
- Faster time-to-realization with higher quality and lower risk for internal projects such as in IT, facilities, finance, logistics, sales, and services. time-to-completion resulting in increased competitiveness, since projects can be completed faster, and with better quality and information richness.

The benefits of Collaboration Acceleration can be significant, and include:

- Revenue increases based on more rapid delivery of new products, marketing campaigns, new processes, etc. to realize the resulting gains more quickly.
- Labor cost reduction, since collaborative project costs correlate directly to the elapsed time multiplied by the number of team members involved.
- Operational cost reductions by reducing travel costs, meeting costs and possibly by eliminating external conferencing services.

The primary business processes for application of Collaboration Acceleration include product development, R&D, and marketing. Significant benefits are also available in Enterprise support operations, such as IT, Human Resources, and Finance, as well as in management functions in general.

UC technologies needed for this application are:

- Basic UC Tools including:
 - Basic presence to show availability status of specific persons in the collaborative team; however, best if using “rich presence” as described below.
 - A mobility client, capable of receiving multiple modes of communication including voice and text (IM and e-mail) and also of controlling and, preferably, transmitting the appropriate set of media (voice, text, images, etc.). This could be provided by an IP PBX client, a mobile desktop client, or possibly a mobile carrier client with synchronization to the enterprise applications (e.g. Blackberry).
 - Instant Messaging to enable rapid exchanges or confirmations of questions, information, etc.
 - Conferencing solutions, primarily voice conferencing for group discussion and web conferencing for information sharing and review.
 - Unified Messaging to converge all the messaging queues related to the collaborative project. This includes message access and action from an appropriate set of devices, usually including a mobile data device such as a RIM BlackBerry, Windows Mobile device, or a mobile device equipped with a PBX-based communications client.
- Advanced UC Tools including:
 - Presence with “rich presence” features (location, current task, skills, etc.) that is integrated to the collaborative environment. For example, showing only the presence of the collaborative team when working on the specific project or when logged into a collaborative workspace. Possibly, this would include adjusting presence indication to the specific collaborative team members when working on that project. User presence should adjust automatically to the extent possible (e.g. based on current activity or location) and should be controllable by the user from both desktop and mobile devices.

- Enhanced conferencing to include both group and ad-hoc (i.e. adding parties to a call or moving from IM chat to a voice or web conference session) functionality across all media. Seamless availability of voice, web and video functionality in a single conference. Ability to record conferences and to index them for rapid review and reference by collaborative team members.
- Collaborative Workspaces that provide a persistent environment for conduct of a project. The workspace provides the tools for information filing, reference materials, document creation and revision management (office software tools such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint), activity recording (messages, blogs, recordings, etc.), idea generation (e.g. wikis, white-boarding, etc.), project tracking (calendar, project schedule maintenance), notifications of updates to the information (alerts, RSS feeds, etc.), and all forms of peer and team communication (via presence, IM, calls, conferences, messages). Users should be able to easily be active in more than one project team/collaborative workspace at any time.
 - Optionally, the ability to include collaborative team members from outside the enterprise with assurances of security and intellectual property management.
- Directory access to current records of skills, knowledge, and/or association with specific business information.
- Contact Management Rules to enable access to team members in the most efficient ways and to override other priorities if needed.
- Consulting and Professional Services to provide cross-client best practices knowledge and to assist in application design and implementation.

Technologies that are included in the RFP request and the potential suppliers are:

Technology Element	Typical Examples	Potential Suppliers
Presence Servers with “rich presence” capability	Microsoft Office Communication Server (OCS) 2007 IBM SameTime Jabber IP PBX Presence Servers All of the above to provide tools, toolkits or APIs, with VAR or ISV channels, to integrate for “rich presence”	Desktop Application providers, such as Microsoft, IBM, Jabber, et al. IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al. Note that the IP PBX presence servers may have limited functionality, which would show in the RFP response.

Technology Element	Typical Examples	Potential Suppliers
Mobile Communications Client	Microsoft Mobile Communicator. IBM SameTime Everywhere IP PBX mobile clients, though most only support voice and voice mail. RIM Blackberry Some application providers	Microsoft IBM IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al. RIM (Blackberry) BEA Systems, Oracle, SAP
Instant Messaging	Microsoft Office Communications Server IBM SameTime Jabber Public IM Services PBX-branded IM servers	Microsoft IBM Jabber IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al.
Unified Messaging, preferably with message store in e-mail.	Avaya Unified Messenger AVST CallXpress Adomo Cisco Unity Microsoft UM in Exchange	IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al. Independents such as AVST, Adomo, et al. Microsoft
Basic Conferencing	Cisco Meeting Place Express Avaya Meeting Exchange Express Nortel MCS 5100	IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al. Independents such as Polycom, Tandberg, et al.
Advanced Conferencing	Microsoft Office Communications Server Cisco Meeting Place Avaya Meeting Exchange Nortel MCS 5100 Tandberg Centric Series Polycom PVX, HDX, VSX	Microsoft IP PBX providers such as Avaya, Cisco, Notel, Siemens, et al. Independents such as Polycom, Tandberg, et al. Radvision
Collaborative Workspaces	IBM Quickr Microsoft SharePoint Near-Time WebEx Office	IBM Microsoft Near-Time WebEx (Cisco)
Integrations To Business Apps, Information Portals, Tracking Systems, etc.	Pro Services or VARs for the selected technologies and the applications in your enterprise.	Pro Services or VARs for: Microsoft IBM IP PBX Providers RIM (Blackberry) BEA Systems, Oracle, SAP

Technology Element	Typical Examples	Potential Suppliers
Directory Access and Contact Management Rules	Pro Services or VARs for the selected technologies and the software services in your enterprise.	Pro Services or VARs for: Microsoft IBM IP PBX Providers RIM (Blackberry) BEA Systems, Oracle, SAP

Potential Bidders for Collaboration Acceleration UC Solutions

As indicated in the table above, there are two main types of bidders for the UC RFP for Collaboration Acceleration: Desktop (fixed, mobile, virtual) application providers and IP PBX providers, with associated independents for various components.

Since the Desktop application providers have more richer products and more experience in the information-rich collaboration acceleration application space and also can manage across more media types (by adding voice to e-mail, IM, calendar, web, etc.), the UniComm Consulting recommendation is to include at least your enterprise's preferred Desktop Application provider in the selection of potential RFP respondents.

Please note that there is no requirement to purchase a new IP PBX or new E-mail or Desktop application suite in order to achieve the benefits of the UC Collaboration Acceleration applications, though many of the potential bidders will offer more functionality in conjunction with their latest software platforms.

To proceed with the UC Collaboration Acceleration RFP process, please download and review the RFP sample and, if appropriate to your enterprise, please purchase a licensed copy for modification and publication to your potential bidders. Economical consulting services are also available to support your UC RFP process.

For questions, please visit www.UCStrategies.com or write to mparker@UniCommConsulting.com.