



OPINION PIECE

Tellumat Telecoms

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The two legs of unified communications – collaboration and presence management

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Will the real UC please stand up?

Unified communications (UC) is increasingly being adopted in companies across the spectrum – from small to large businesses. However, varying ideas are in circulation as to what this rich collective of technologies entails.

So what is UC really?

A tale of two components

Two components define UC – communication and collaboration applications on the one hand, and presence management on the other.

Applications

- *Communication apps*

From the application point of view, UC is, firstly a collection of communication applications that share a common medium, the Internet Protocol. While communication can start off on one application or channel, it can seamlessly terminate on another. These are:

- Voice calls
- Video calls
- Conferencing and
- Unified messaging (e-mail-to-voice mail, voice mail-to-instant messaging and so forth)

- *Non-Communication apps*

UC applications also include non-communication apps that further enrich the experience, including:

- Collaboration (desktop sharing, etc.)
- Office productivity, and
- Back-office apps, for business process integration

From this angle, UC offers communication not just for its own sake, but also as a means to originate action.

Presence and call handling – where things get clever

But there is another element to UC that lifts it above being just a rich collection of apps, and that is its intelligence. UC's presence management allows people to make an intelligent decision about which channel to originate communication on, rather than using a "spray-and-pray" approach.

Consider how many calls you make a day. How long does it take you to get the right number? How long to dial? Can you always reach your contact? How many calls do your staff field every day? How many are unsolicited or have to be transferred? How many did they miss? How many staff do you have?

Now imagine how much simpler, more cost-effective and efficient your business can be with intelligent presence and call management.



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- UC's "one number" functionality means you don't have to give out or know more than one number.
- "Find me, follow me" functionality means your message or call will always at least be apparent to someone, wherever they are.
- Privacy settings and intelligent call handling mean you can filter unwelcome or untimely calls, handling them in different ways according to your wish.

Active ingredients

UC's active ingredients are its applications, which offer productivity and collaboration; and presence, which offers accessibility and control. Without it, we would be much worse off.

* *Tellumat is the South African distributor of ShoreTel systems.*