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Which unified communications vendors are getting mobility right?

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Mostly due to the triumphs of Apple's iPad and iPhone, mobility has arrived in the enterprise in a big way. The following data points illustrate this eloquently:

- Research organisation IDC recently included iPads in its definition of PCs, positioning Apple to overtake HP as the leading notebook vendor in 2012.
- This year, sales of smart phones (handsets with computing capabilities) overtook 'dumb phone' shipments for the first time in the US, according to Nielsen, a consumer data company.
- Market research firm In-Stat foresees a time when enterprises will replace fixed-line voice over IP with mobile VOIP.

Mobile's advantages for UC

While these results and predictions speak for themselves, it makes sense to recap why mobile has been so successful – in short, it emphasises the importance of a UC solution that fully leverages mobility. Mobility offers the following benefits to enterprises:

- Up to 80% lower roaming charges – logging into Wi-Fi hotspots or foreign branch networks to make calls via the Internet or a virtual private network cuts international roaming charges.
- Fewer devices – with modern mobile handsets doing duty as extensions of the network, a degree of device rationalisation is possible.
- Greater productivity – mobility makes mobile workers more available (while the presence settings of UC allow them to manage incoming disturbances).
- Greater coverage – poor GSM penetration inside buildings presents a good usage case for Wi-Fi phones, which in turn makes it easier to extend enterprise apps to mobile warriors.

Shape up or ship out

With this in mind, it's clear that unified communications (UC) vendors should recognise mobile as a fully-fledged component and platform in the UC technology collective.

Either that or they must make room for those with the vision and execution capability to lead the pack.

Which vendor?

So what should you look for in a UC product suite, to get the full benefits of mobile UC? The vendors that 'get it' offer the following:

- Desk phone capabilities – one extension, voice mail and caller ID; call forwarding; enterprise conferencing; call recording; hold; native office directory access; and other call management features
- Separate personal and business calls – make and receive calls on both numbers
- Transfer to and retrieve from the desk phone; simultaneous ringing with desk phone
- Automatic selection of the best network (Wi-Fi, cellular, 3G/4G); seamless handover
- Location-aware presence to help select the best network in the sense of local corporate points of presence



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- Support for multiple smart phone models and native UI integration for ease of use
- Integrated security
- Centralised reporting and trending for expense management
- Scalability beyond 5000 users per appliance
- High availability

Embrace mobile UC

The right mobile UC solutions extend communications and collaboration to a wide range of handsets, providing a fully converged device for both business and personal communications while automatically selecting the best network.

It is simple, cost-effective, high-quality unified communications on the go, and neither customers nor vendors can afford not to embrace it completely.

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