

New Business Communication Tools Can Help Firms Survive Downturn

By Charlie Briggs

TAMPA - Companies, regardless of size or industry affiliation are facing fierce competition, a tough economic environment, and intense demands from customers. Many are rethinking how they conduct business - any advantage can mean the difference between here today and gone tomorrow. Today, adaptability, flexibility, and agility are the names of the game and companies able to do this are going to win business.

"One of the greatest drivers of accomplishing this result is Unified Communications - an innovative technology that's reshaping the way we communicate and stay connected.", said Donna Arsenault, president of Republic Telecom, headquartered here. "This single platform consisting of multiple communication tools is helping organizations to achieve their goals faster than ever before, and we're proud to be among the few providers bringing this technology to the area."

The convergence of voice and data has been a long time coming and for the most part has come and gone. Convergence now has morphed into a new IT buzzword - Unified Communications (UC). UC reflects the emergence of voice, video, legacy applications and Web-centric applications on the data network. UC is a logical evolution beyond Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Functions such as presence and collaboration are blending with VoIP, enabling geographically dispersed personnel to function as if they were in the same room. Companies are experiencing phenomenal benefits from a UC platform that consists of a combination of unique technologies, devices and services including telephony, unified messaging, collaboration, presence, video and conferencing.

"UC gives us incredible freedom", said Ms. Arsenault. "It gives employees and customers the freedom to choose how, when, and where to communicate. It gives companies the freedom to conduct business in

a manner that's most efficient for them creating a flexible environment that accelerates the accomplishment of business objectives. For instance, unified messaging one of many UC components focuses on giving users access to voice, e-mail, and fax from a single mailbox independent of the access device. Multimedia services include messages of mixed media types such as video, sound clips, and pictures, and include communication via short message services (SMS). Collaboration and interaction systems focus on applications such as calendaring, scheduling, workflow, integrated voice response (IVR), conferencing and other business communications applications that help individuals and workgroups communicate efficiently."

"UC impacts three strategic business drivers enabling organizations to achieve their business objectives at an accelerated rate:, explained Arsenault. "These drivers include enhancing business processes, improving employee productivity, and enabling mobility. UC is having a tremendous impact on the development and execution of business processes. For example, through UC retailers regardless of industry type utilize valuable customer information to improve interaction. Retailers use UC to access information during the sales process and acknowledge specific customers accessing their likes and dislikes when they shop. The UC system even queries the company's customer relationship management program and utilizes the information to route calls to specific representatives that can customize the overall experience for the customer. As a result, UC enhances service, improves support, and develops marketing programs. People are moving so fast that without a UC platform in place connections with customers may not even occur."

Furthermore, UC is playing an important role in boosting employee productivity through increased mobility. For instance, in financial services and real estate, sales teams

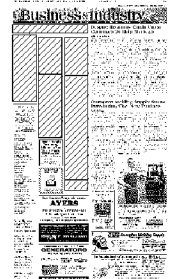
utilize the find-me, follow-me feature functionality. Customers call a single number and the call is routed to a sales executive independent of their location. This makes certain the sales professional receives calls whether they're on the road, at home, or in the office. Additionally, equipping these same sales people with unified messaging enables them to access e-mail, voicemail, and faxes from a single inbox - anytime, anywhere. Productivity skyrockets by arming employees with UC tools that ultimately have a major impact to a company's bottom line.

Developing and implementing the right UC strategy is forcing companies to realize their business goals at a rapid pace. By combining what historically were disparate functions, UC gives companies the power to transform their business into a flexible, agile, and adaptable model that proactively addresses customer needs, changing economic conditions, and industry trends. "All companies owe it to themselves to take a hard look at this innovative technology", Arsenault concluded..

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Republic Telecom was founded in 1988 when a group of telecommunications professionals teamed up to fix what they saw as a glaring deficiency in the marketplace for leading-edge technology, top quality service, top-notch customer support, and application solutions to the ever-changing marketplace. Since 1988, Republic Telecom has built a team of highly professional telecommunications personnel who support its customer base in the Central Florida area.

"At Republic Telecom, we are serious about our responsibility as your telecommunications partner and understand that we play a major role in your successful communications with your customer. Republic Telecom's written guarantee means that it guarantees 100 percent satisfaction or your money back - no questions asked - within 30 days of



installation. At Republic Telecom, we stand behind our products, training and service", said Arsenault.

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