

BREAKING DOWN TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS FOR THE BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL:

“TRUE” UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS



Scott Welch

By Scott H.E. Welch

More and more business professionals find themselves being overloaded by the volume of information they are being sent on a daily basis. In fact, many are becoming a “prisoner of their own device”, or is that devices? Just how many devices do business professionals turn to in a day to retrieve all of their important voice and text messages? The average count is usually four – PC, phone, fax and handheld devices.

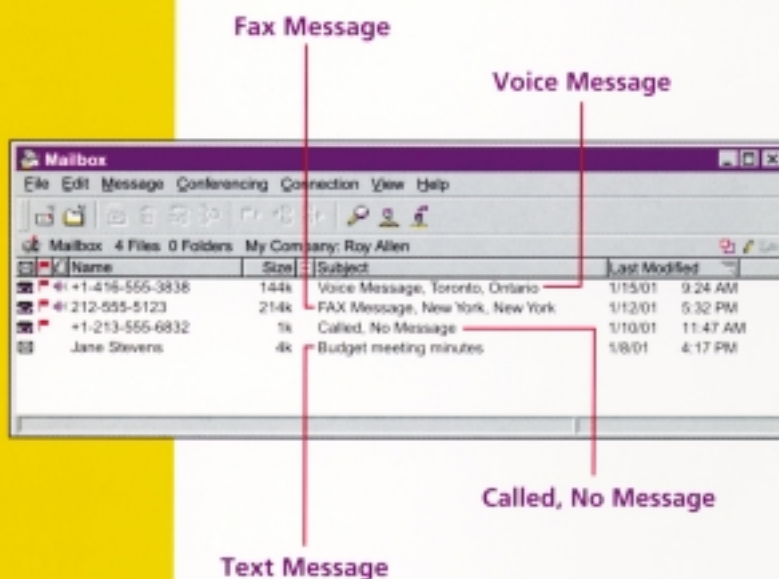
Imagine being able to integrate the power of all of these devices into one communications platform that enables business professionals to work on their own terms and break free of traditional communication barriers. True Unified Communications enable business professionals to do exactly that by providing them with one centralized mailbox to retrieve all of their voice and text messages via the device of their choice anytime, anywhere.

According to a report titled, *Unified Communications – the Catalyst for Enhanced Business Productivity*, by

the Robert Francis Group, the implementation of a unified communications solution can lower operating costs within an enterprise, and can dramatically improve user productivity, customer responsiveness, and overall corporate competitiveness. The results are especially noteworthy within select employee groups in organizations, including traveling executives, remote workers, and individuals charged with customer care and support responsibilities.

Business professionals need to gain a better understanding of the benefits of unified communications to assess the value of such an implementation within their enterprises. For example, the study sites unified communications as a powerful tool that can increase a professional’s overall productivity by about 30-to-60 minutes a day. That timesaving can provide professionals with an advantage over their competitors in customer responsiveness and retention. Key in today’s highly competitive marketplace.

In addition, mobile professionals are no longer tied to one computer or hard drive, for access to all of their important data. With true unified communications they have the power to choose what device they want to retrieve the data with and how.



False verses True Unified Communications

But buyer beware – there are a number of “false” unified communications products on the market that simulate the unification of voice mail and email on a client desktop only. Both voice mail and email messages continue to be housed on their respective servers but appear to be unified to the users as they access their messages at their desktop.

This method’s single appeal is in providing a graphical user interface in managing voicemail, an improvement over the often-tedious task of managing voice mail using the limited capabilities of a telephone keypad.

False unified communications begins and ends at the desktop. Users cannot retrieve and respond to messages

using any other device or from any other location. And, they are unable to reply to voicemail using email and vice versa.

In addition, there are the underlying problems of maintaining and servicing two separate servers.

Whereas, true unified communications provide a single-network-based access point from which professionals can manage all of their information and messages, using any number and a variety of access devices (PC, Web browser, phone, etc.) from anywhere – regardless of connection path (LAN, Internet, telephone) or operating system (Macintosh, Windows, UNIX). Simply put, “True” unified communications seamlessly integrates voice mail, e-mail and fax, through one mailbox on a single server.

From a central collaborative digital store, all of these message types are accessible via multiple devices and interfaces with a consistent set of features and capabilities. Unlike “False”, True unified communications offers unprecedented flexibility through a centralized mailbox, since all features and capabilities are shared across all media types.

For example, users can track the status of any message – voice or email – from any device, solving the common problem of accountability as to whether a recipient received a message. All functions performed for one device can be applied to all devices over the same interface. In addition, messages that are read on the road using a cell phone will maintain their “read” status once the user is back at their office desktop.

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Are Business Professionals Ready for Unified Communications?

According to the Boston-based research firm, Gartner, the North American market is primed for mass adoption of unified communications. Gartner recently forecast that the unified communications market in North America will total \$5.225 (U.S.) billion per year in 2006.

And, that the market's leading segment services offered by telecommunication carriers, service bureaus and wireless providers will produce the most accelerated growth among the market segments due to its massive pool of potential users and the strong business case for wireless Internet subscribers. True unified communications empowers business professionals by enabling them to take control of their data and work on their own terms. [TEG](#)



About the author:

Scott H.E. Welch is Centrinity, Inc.'s Chief Evangelist. As co-creator of Meridan Mail, Mr. Welch holds a wealth of industry knowledge and experience in the telecommunications

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