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Top 10 Business Communications
TRENDS OF 2016

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1. More networks lean on Fabric

The increasing volume of data and bandwidth utilization from the burgeoning number of Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and “smart” connected devices such as healthcare devices, home security systems and appliances, vending machines, check-out stands, etc. will drive traditional networks to the breaking point. Mesh topologies and Fabric-based technologies will become increasingly attractive as the answer for cost-effective solutions that can accommodate the capacity needed and flexibility required for the constant changes in network traffic. Decades of client server architectures are coming to an end.



2. Customer contact centers become more flexible and connected

- Omni-channel access/pre-routing will gather momentum as smartphones become the interface of choice for customers. This means much more efficient handling of customer inquiries, leading to greater satisfaction, lower costs for balancing and distributing incoming customer communications over multiple locations, and easing IT operations for the business.
- The percentage of people connecting to an enterprise will continue to be increasingly digitally dominated from browsers and mobile applications, which will drive specialized ways of serving those customers from the customer experience (CX) perspective. This dynamic will also drive customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing-oriented projects for the more innovative companies.
- As customer satisfaction scores for video within the contact center outrank other channels, we will continue to see more video deployed as an option to increase customer engagement. Video capabilities enhance the ability to develop the personal relationship with a customer, establish trust more quickly and allow agents to better understand the customer's need, which can lead to improved time to resolution.



3. Enterprise-grade WebRTC gains momentum

Enterprise-grade WebRTC conferencing from desktop and mobile browsers will speed the ability for participants to join common virtual areas without launching separate applications.



4. Automotive telecommunications will become a fast-growing customer contact center channel

With sensors and telematics systems becoming more common in automobiles today, information on vehicle usage and driver behavior is more readily-available, providing an opportunity for manufacturers, dealers and OEMs to forge closer relationships with customers, increase loyalty to their brand and increase margins. Specifically, sensor-based reporting on car maintenance and usage enables more convenient, proactive services for car owners, alerting them to upcoming maintenance, repairs or safety issues. Sensors and telematics also provide opportunities for tie-ins with insurers, such as safe driver discounts, not to mention access to a myriad of other services.



5. Further proliferation of wearable technology will drive customer satisfaction

Over the next four years, sales of wearables worldwide are predicted to increase almost eight-fold from last year. The explosion will make the most important device we carry - our smartphone - even more significant by expanding its role as our personal hub by serving as a proxy for our wearable tech.

But a less talked about, must-watch dynamic is the evolution of wearables in the workplace, beyond the contact center. As headset and communications technologies continue to evolve, new wearable technologies hone in on special applications for workers who need hands-free access to information and communications capabilities. For example, a remote healthcare worker could use communications-enabled wearables to video call with city-based surgical teams when operating on a patient.



6. The “guest” experience in sports and hospitality gets connected and smart

Analytics for sports and entertainment will no longer be just about the athletic performance. Fan analytics - or the analysis of data collected from fans across several touchpoints - will help venues measure, optimize and monetize the fan experience.

And with Facebook’s release of Oculus, we can expect to watch the virtual reality scene play out for sports fans. The technology will provide the red button experience both in the stadium and at home. For example, using just a smartphone, fans could choose 50+ camera angles to watch the game from while still in their seat. This could include views from the goal, corner flag or the umpire’s hat, even the players’ shirts. The hotel room will be an extension of your home as - with your permission - it will know your context and provide all your usual connectivity.



7. Connected Government will become the new normal

Connected Government will emerge, embracing social media through multimedia communications. Text-to-911 will ramp up quickly, but fade just as fast, as citizens embrace total immersion in Face2Face911 through video and pictures from their broadband-enabled smart devices.



8. They try really hard, but messaging apps will not replace email

Email is a communication tool that by now is simply part of doing business worldwide. Unlike messaging apps, email has structure. There are subject lines, the ability to reply to one or many, the ability to categorize, create folders, and the list goes on. The basic structure is, for the most part, consistent between email providers. Furthermore, a Gmail user can email an Exchange user and so on. While messaging apps are trendy and fun to use socially, they are the newborns of the written communications world who have no organization skills and a lot of growing up to do.



9. Hybrid/private clouds remain the business critical application workhorse for next 5 years

Going to the cloud has many benefits, but it can lead to some new challenges that businesses need to consider. As solutions move from homogenous, monolithic technology to heterogeneous technology running on layers upon layers of cloud infrastructure, customers get increasingly concerned about cloud security and accountability for service delivery/support of the full solution. Customers will demand accountability and value from their “point” vendors, requiring strong relationships and mastery of the infrastructure implications, which includes the cloud applications, as well as the network and desktop/mobile devices that serve them.



10. Customer relationships rule for vendor differentiation, as support increasingly relies on self-service and self-healing systems

The value-add of contracted support is becoming less visible as leading-edge vendors put more remediation and proactivity into tools and systems. As a result, vendors need to develop strategies and underlying system intelligence to improve customer experience with offers that help increase adoption and full value realization. Vendors will need to intentionally work to maintain the human factors of the service event to overcome the depersonalization that may result from increasingly technical solutions by implementing things such as relationship-based routing and service deliverables combined with high-satisfaction channels, most notably, video.

As you look forward to 2016, check your status against our guide: **8 Features Your Communications Solution Needs to Have.**

See how high-performance end-to-end communications can help you speed business growth. The right solution delivers scalability, mobility, customer service channels, security, management, virtualization, and networking.

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