

MAKE THE BEST OUT OF UNIFIED COMMUNICATION

What does Unified Communication mean?

“Unified Communication” (UC) is the process in which all means of communication, communication devices and media are integrated. UC is not necessarily a single product, but a set of products that allow users to be in touch with anyone, wherever they are and in real time.

These communication services can be instant messaging (chat), presence information, telephony, video conferencing, desktop sharing, voice mails, emails, SMS, fax, mobility and much more. UC has many different definitions, but its substance reflects an evolving set of technologies that automates and unifies human and device communication and optimize business processes.

Most of us use several different tools and devices to communicate. On the one hand there are people that only use the basic ways of communication, like cell phone, a land line or an email. But, on the other hand, there are people that rely on additional tools like instant messaging, texting and Web conferencing.

UC integrates all means of communication into one system.

UC solutions take advantage of new technologies to find, reach and communicate with other people quickly and easily. Unified Communication can integrate both non-real-time communication methods (email, fax, voice mail) and real-time communication methods (chat, video conferencing).

UC should thus not be considered an application but rather a solution that brings together all the means of communication that you already use, creating a reliable communication interface.

WHY IS UNIFIED COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

The benefits of moving to a UC tool depends on the nature of the organization of the business. The following are some general benefits:

- **Productivity and Efficiency:** Through UC users can communicate more efficiently because they can have access to all communications with a single interface.
- **Cost Benefit:** UC improves the communication reducing the need to invest in hardware.
- **Employee Flexibility:** The ability to communicate and access communication services is not limited by location. You can provide faster and more responsive service.
- **Improvement of Employee Engagement:** The more connected your employees feel, the easier it is for them to support the business objectives.

Different Communication Tools

Nowadays, the use of communication tools in a group work is necessary not only for the completion, but also for the enhancement of it. According to D. Mittleman, a communication tool is “an implementation of one or more collaboration technologies offered as an integrated package”. “A collaboration tool has to fulfill some basic requirements. These requirements are **Connectedness, Awareness, Sharing** and **Communication**” (W. Robbins and S. Dustdar, “Collaborative Computing” in Encyclopedia of Multipedia). There are many different kind of communication tools, but let’s focus on six of them:

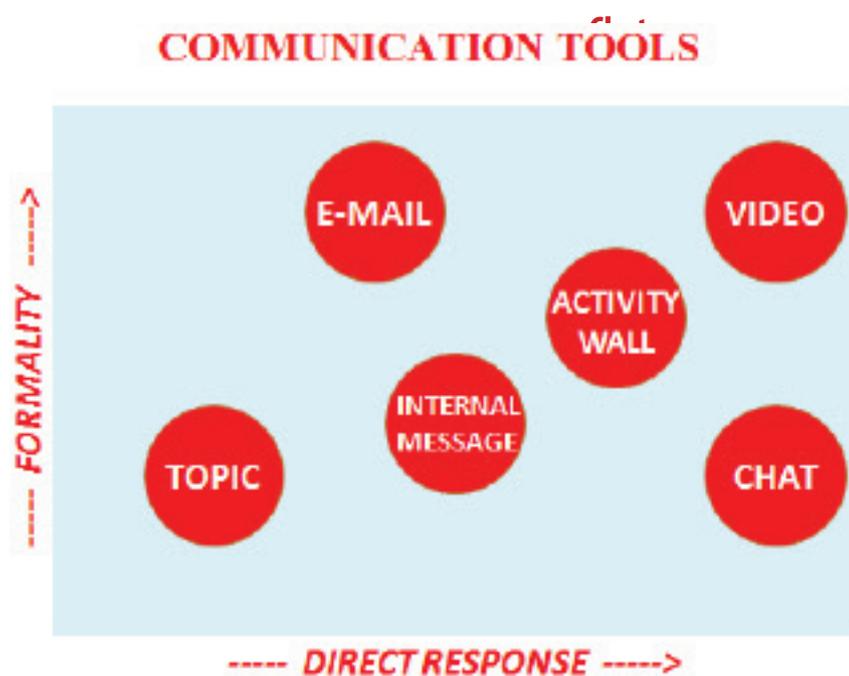


Table: How the Communication Tools are positioned according to their formality and directness.

Email

It is the most commonly used method of business communication. It is simple and yields itself easily to any kind of use. Email is a vital communication channel in most companies. It is less personal than either face-to-face or phone, but you can include files and documents.

Chat

It is an instant, direct and an informal way of communication, but it is an easy way to share information quickly. It is a real-time online text conversation via computer. Through chat you receive any typed text immediately.

Messages

It is a kind of internal mail. It carries the informality of chat, but it can provide you with the features of an email. It is a way to communicate with your colleagues in a fast and easy way.

Topic

It is a "forum" where you can discuss something with your colleagues. This kind of internal discussion allows employees and managers to present ideas, suggestions and leave their feedback.

Activity Wall

It is an easy way to share something publicly in your company and keep up with what is going on in your company.

Video Call

It is true that the face-to-face communication improves trust and visibility. The global online video community will increase by approximately 500 million users by 2015, up from more than 1 billion Internet video users in 2010 (newsroom.cisco.com). Video conferencing removes distance barriers and improves productivity between employees in different cities or countries. Through video conferencing you can improve team collaboration and annihilate every gap.

For the best accomplishment of team work, the use of unified communication is necessary. This will help you to reach your goals in an effective way. Just select the appropriate collaboration tool that meets your requirements and your needs.

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