

**Viewpoint****Keith Dawson**VP &
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Why Unifying UCaaS and CCaaS Makes Sense

The drive to move communications tools into the cloud was not supposed to create more silos, but unfortunately the division between internally focused business communications tools like phone and chat (Unified Communications as a Service, or “UCaaS”) and contact center solutions (Contact Center as a Service, or “CCaaS”) did just that. Many organizations maintain two separate but co-existing cloud platforms with overlapping functionality and users.

Until recently, it was hard to see the downside to this because of the benefits of moving both stacks from on-premises to the cloud. But the pandemic raised the stakes by forcing contact center agents into remote work. Pulling those employees out of a physical location made them much more reliant on internal communications and collaboration with their managers/supervisors and peers. Those features were not generally part of CCaaS platforms, making CX and IT leaders aware of the disconnect between

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the two types of toolsets. Also, contact centers have increasingly turned to knowledge workers and back-office teams to help interact with customers, as customer expectations become more demanding and interactions become more complex. The lines have become blurred as every employee has a role to play in customer experiences, and the communications tools they use need to reflect that commonality, while offering a tailored product experience to each user based on their role.

Now there is interest in combining UCaaS and CCaaS tools into a single platform, and the logic is strong. They are both, at their core, routing tools for different types of communication channels. They are likely purchased and managed by the same IT teams, especially in small and

midsize businesses. For large organizations, a single platform/vendor approach also simplifies the purchasing, deployment and management of role-based applications. And there is currently a great deal of technical innovation going on in both areas focused on the same types of advancements—that is, using AI to improve customer self-service, automation and analysis, integrating with key business applications like CRM and boosting the use of digital channels to supplement voice.

Ventana Research asserts that by 2026, one-quarter of organizations will look to UCaaS and CCaaS technology to collaborate in the enterprise and with customers more effectively. Around the same time, it will become apparent that the two platforms are really different flavors of the same basic toolkit, and organizations will begin to push for simpler, combined products.



The rationale for an integrated UCaaS/CCaaS platform starts with what makes the cloud useful in the first place: ease of deployment and maintenance. When a single communication platform is used across the organization, administrators manage just a single directory, and can mix and match functions based on any given user's role, which can change. A single global directory and real-time presence makes it easy to create ad-hoc teams to solve specific problems or to find a particular person with needed expertise and hand it off with context. Unifying the platforms allows greater flexibility for the workforce and encourages collaboration across and within teams. This type of collaboration and rapid identification of experts enables faster issue resolution.

Integrated communications also supply a common platform for reporting, analysis and integrations to business applications. All interactions that occur can be reported and analyzed. The important quality control functions like recording, coaching and evaluation can be applied across departments and teams, providing a clearer picture of whether the entire organization is working collectively to provide good customer experiences.

Some of the most important technology advances are coming at the platform level of the tech stack, where artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) and workflow automation can be spread across multiple applications and use cases like intelligent self-service and agent assistance. This means that in a combined UCaaS/CCaaS system, those advances can be deployed to more users with different functions.

There are also benefits from synchronizing user interfaces, like reducing the amount of training users need and the disruption of having to switch among applications. We see that, for example, in the way UCaaS/CCaaS combinations are starting to leverage integrations into systems like Microsoft Teams, so that both contact center agents and business users have access to presence status, video calling, team chatting and other basic functions. The idea that the two sets of employees should have separate communications platforms is absurd when you consider the cost, time and IT resources required to bridge the gap. We also see the positive impact of a micro front-end approach to interface design, resulting in a configurable agent desktop.

There are other reasons to consider unification: having a single vendor for a security/privacy framework, for example, or being able to expand a platform globally (and beyond a basic PSTN platform). In years to come, we expect the boundaries between UCaaS and CCaaS platforms to blur and eventually make way for a common, prepackaged set of applications unified into a single underlying base layer. That combination will handle high volume voice and data alongside internal collaboration, video and digital communications.



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Keith Dawson is responsible for Customer Experience (CX) research, covering technology that facilitates engagement to optimize customer-facing processes. His focus areas include agent management, contact center and voice of the customer, along with technology in marketing, sales, field service and applications such as digital commerce and subscription management. Keith's specialization is in natural language speech tools and the wide array of customer analytics.