



# Welcome to the UCaaS Era

Where best-in-class UC takes place in the collaborative cloud

Unifying communications seamlessly, safely and securely across the evolving mobile enterprise

By using a cloud model for unified communications and collaboration, now established as UCaaS (or Unified Communications as a Service) — organizations can lower costs significantly, reduce complexity and improve end-user productivity and customer experience. For savvy IT and business leaders, present-day communications and collaboration are already in the cloud. Yet, the outlook is moving toward an even more tightly integrated and ubiquitous cloud-based workplace.

## Executive takeaways

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**You will learn the following from this whitepaper:**

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| <b>1</b> Digital workplace requires new tools and technologies | <b>3</b> UCaaS enhances workflows, efficiency and productivity |
| <b>2</b> Numerous factors are driving the move to the cloud    | <b>4</b> Your choice of network provider matters               |
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## Emerging digital workplace

Another significant change in how we work is underway and it's affecting all aspects of how organizations view collaboration and communication. Using unified communications with more tightly integrated web/video-conferencing and collaborative work technologies, a new digital workplace is emerging. At the same time, the era of capital-intensive on-premises PBX and video-conferencing systems is fading, giving way to cloud-based models that are more cost-effective, accessible and worker-friendly. These new cloud-based models leverage network software and broadband connectivity to recast how enterprises work and conduct business today; a pattern that will continue to accelerate for the foreseeable future.

This move into the cloud explains why sales of traditional premises-based telephony and video-conferencing systems are on a steady decline. "Enterprises continue to implement and expand their UC footprint with 88% of companies implementing or expanding IP telephone and PBX features."<sup>2</sup>

This doesn't mean demand for or interest in a new generation of UCaaS solutions will fall off in like fashion. In fact, the opposite is true. Technologies and tools are moving off-premises and into the cloud, where customers take advantage of low installation and maintenance costs, as well as a subscription payment model.

**Figure 1:** What's driving UC adoption?

**"Which of the following items are driving your adoption of unified communications?"**



According to Gartner, "While most meeting solutions are consumed from cloud-based services, some of the vendors support on-premises and hybrid architectures to satisfy deployment options for market segments with higher degrees of sensitivity around control, security and performance."<sup>5</sup>

Base: 165 IT and network decision makers in North America  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Windstream Enterprise, May 2018

## What's driving the shift from on-premises into the cloud?

Numerous inter-related factors are driving this shift:

### 1 Changes in the workplace

Workers are not only more mobile than ever before, they're also more likely to work away from the office. This means access is needed from home, the road, a local coffee shop or wherever else they might use their smartphones, tablets or notebook PCs. Workers across every industry want to stay connected no matter which device they pick up at any given moment. Also, workplaces and their applications are now always-on 24x7 and increasingly global. Workers need tools that support easy, fast, secure and effective collaboration wherever they might be, on whatever device is closest to hand.

### 2 Changes in the workforce

It's not just where we work that's changing—it's who's at work, as well. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, more than one-in-three American labor force participants (35%) are millennials, making them the largest generation in the U.S. labor force.<sup>3</sup> They also occupy increasingly senior positions, with 83% of workers seeing millennials managing Gen Xers and baby boomers in their offices.<sup>4</sup> For these and other tech-savvy workers, technology expectations come from their consumer experiences, causing what many refer to as the consumerization of technology. They want technology that is agile and flexible, that adapts to changing needs and circumstances, just like the applications and services they use every day to connect and collaborate with their friends and families.

### 3 Advances in technology

Legacy PBX (private branch exchange) and video-conferencing systems are expensive to buy and maintain, and are still not that easy to operate. In stark contrast, innovative cloud-based solutions built around software-defined technology are transforming most every aspect of enterprise computing. The cloud enables great simplicity and accessibility and is more cost-efficient, to boot. As such, these technically sophisticated yet easy-to-use cloud-based solutions align much better with today's workplaces and workforces.

### 4 Moving from CAPEX to OPEX

Cloud-based, XaaS (X as a Service) solutions may be purchased on-demand as is, anywhere or anytime they're needed. They involve no up-front purchase cycle or formal budget and provide predictable costs based on consumption. Buyers can trade complex below-the-line CAPEX (capital expenditure) outlays, with their ongoing amortization and depreciation schedules, against recurring and well-defined operating expenses instead. In particular, pay-as-you-go, as-a-service solutions make costs not just more transparent, but more affordable and attainable, as well.

## The future of communication and collaboration in a unified cloud

With the overall software market moving towards flexible, mobile solutions that boost efficiency and productivity, organizations are naturally looking to unify their communications systems by integrating voice, video, messaging and collaborative web functionality. The integration of these once disparate vital tools enhances organizational workflow, operational efficiency and productivity.

Just as video is becoming increasingly important, dynamics for digital collaboration are also changing rapidly. Use of voice, video, messaging and web-conferencing technologies are all individually booming, and going nowhere but up, owing to many of the trends outlined above. As most of us know first-hand, a large percentage of meetings we engage in every day involve remote participants through some kind of communications channel.

Business decision makers must face a new reality in which a robust and modern unified communications and collaboration system is ready and able to support a changing workplace and workforce. Solutions must connect with facilities across multiple platforms—including Windows and Mac on the desktop, and Android and iOS for mobile. Those same UC solutions must also facilitate and boost user participation, improve the quality of meetings, support constant mobility and ensure security, while also delivering improvements in total cost of ownership (TCO).

Of course, the big reason all of this new communications and collaboration are moving to the cloud is to support the emerging concept of the mobile-first office. The mobile-first office accommodates the many ways in which people like

to collaborate, now that we've all become accustomed to being much more agile and mobile. Users want to be able to launch collaboration sessions quickly and seamlessly while communicating with customers, co-workers or business partners. For example, they want to be able to start a chat with a colleague through instant messaging, then be able to elevate that chat session to a call, then even higher by adding a web meeting to share screens, make annotations to a document, add another colleague to the brainstorming mix, share related files in real time, transfer their desktop session to their mobile while dashing to the airport, and so on.

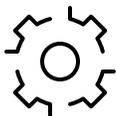
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Legacy systems simply weren't designed to support the concept of the mobile-first office. Integration, efficiency, flexibility and usability are precisely where legacy systems fall short, and where UCaaS excels.

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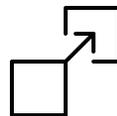
## The multiple benefits of cloud-based UCaaS

In contrast to the narrow uses and inflexible characteristics of legacy communications systems, cloud-based UCaaS solutions deliver multiple and tangible benefits:



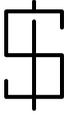
### Increased productivity

Cloud-based solutions quickly unite people with easy-to-use and inviting collaboration and communications tools for a seamless experience from any location or device. Seamless usage and more work accomplished is the cherished outcome that results.



### A platform for innovation and business agility

In a cloud-based environment, workers can collaborate and share knowledge and experience to support organizational innovation, faster decision-making and task completion rates. The result is improved and accelerated speed to market for new goods or services.



**Reduced costs**

A pay-as-you-go subscription model for UCaaS means organizations shed the initial cost and complexity involved in purchasing, maintaining and upgrading separate phone and collaboration systems. Instead they can bank on predictable costs directly related to consumption of UCaaS solutions that boost employee productivity and job satisfaction.

Other benefits that a cloud-based unified communication and collaboration environment offers include less need for travel. Because it's easier to integrate remote workers in the cloud, people don't need to travel to meet face-to-face as often. This cuts down on direct travel expenses, while improving productivity lost to extensive travel. Overall, employees spend more time working when they can collaborate easily and effectively from anywhere. The net result is improved profitability and enhanced competitiveness for the entire organization.

## What to look for in a cloud-based UCaaS provider

Organizations need to understand that selecting a UCaaS provider is about more than simply selecting support for one mobility platform or another, or some collection of communications and collaboration services. It's also about a business relationship and the ability to help organizations produce the kinds of successful outcomes they always strive to achieve. Prospective purchasers should weigh the following considerations carefully:



**Adopt mobile-first**

The solution must support a changing and flexible workplace and should enable employees to use and access real-time communications like video and instant messaging quickly and easily from any device, at any location.



**Comprehensive collaboration tools and features**

Users working on the device of their choice, wherever they happen to be working, should have ready access to the same set of feature-rich voice and collaboration tools at all times. At a minimum, that set should include instant messaging, screen sharing, multi-party video, and complex call handling capabilities.



**Superior communications quality, reliability and security**

Communications of all kinds, especially those that depend on real-time interaction, need to deliver the highest levels of quality, reliability and security. You don't want users exposing the organization to risk by turning to consumer-facing products because they're convenient and easy to use. Your cloud solution should be just as convenient and easy, and should deliver security and a user experience of the highest quality possible.



**TCO**

A UCaaS solution that offers cost savings vs. on-premises solutions or using disparate cloud providers is essential to realizing the transformational promise of the cloud. A user- and usage-based subscription model helps you scale quickly to meet both employee and organization needs. It also provides a predictable cost structure over time, as deployments grow and organizations prosper.



**Unified functionality**

While some providers offer standalone web-conferencing or video solutions, optimizing the user experience and easing support burdens means finding a provider that can integrate UC functionality across applications with telephony, instant messaging, video, screen sharing and more. And make all of it easy to install and use.

## The importance of the right UCaaS network

For optimal performance and reliability of your unified communications solution, it's critical to have the right network connecting your locations and end-users to your UCaaS provider. The best providers will not deliver the best performance if the underlying network and Internet access connections are undersized or congested.

Look for a network solution that will provide the flexibility, visibility, control and priority capabilities to optimize application performance and provide superior reliability. And of course, there is always the great advantage offered by UCaaS providers who own and operate their own networks along with the solution. This provides for enhanced performance, reliability, and value, and dramatically simplifies management and customer support.

A software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) is ideal for delivering a superior UCaaS solution and customer experience because it provides the infrastructure that an application such as UC (unified communications) requires. This starts with the ability for the organization to optimize performance of core, latency-sensitive UC functionalities such as voice and video, ensuring the delivery of a superior customer experience for all parties involved.

## Conclusion

A younger, mobile workforce, technological advances and a demand for more cost-effective communications solutions with predictable expenses and greater control are driving the move to the cloud. UCaaS can improve your organization's productivity, drive innovation and help you stay ahead of the competition. But choosing a network partner that can meet your needs, today and tomorrow, is critical to ongoing success.

Windstream Enterprise is a trusted name to add to your short list. We offer a comprehensive UCaaS solution by combining OfficeSuite UC® with SD-WAN that delivers against the criteria outlined above. This includes a proven network infrastructure and service delivery capabilities for deploying voice and collaboration applications across locations, as well as connectivity for hard to reach locations, and mobile and remote workers.

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2. Deliver A Better Unified Communications Employee Experience With UCaaS And SD-WAN. Forrester, September 2018.
3. PEW Research - Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force - Author: Richard Fry - <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>.
4. Forbes - How Millennial Bosses are Shaping Corporate Culture – Larry Alton - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/larryalton/2017/11/30/how-millennial-bosses-are-shaping-management-culture/#7ff707636f41>.
5. Gartner, How to Pick the Right Meeting Solution and Save Money - Mike Fasciani - Sr Director, Analyst & Adam Preset - Sr Director, Analyst - 10 Apr 2018

### About Windstream Enterprise

Windstream Enterprise collaborates with businesses across the U.S. to drive digital transformation by delivering solutions that solve today's most complex networking and communication challenges.

To learn more about Windstream Enterprise, visit [windstreamenterprise.com](http://windstreamenterprise.com)

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