

# Cloud communications

Unified Communications in the Cloud offers cost effective, secure options to reduce your overheads and upgrade your business, says **Scott Stonham** of CommuniGate Systems



From mobile telecom providers to digital printers, everyone is focusing their efforts on capturing the custom of small businesses. For small companies this relentless targeting is becoming frustrating and distracting, especially when one of the key requirements for small businesses – funding – is still proving difficult to secure.

Searching for small business loans on the internet brings up organic and paid-for results from most of the high-street banks. However, after recent discussions with bank managers and businesses, it appears there is a disconnect between what the banks are offering and the needs of small businesses. This disparity is impacting the cash flow of businesses, impeding their growth and eroding their productivity.

As the driving force behind economic recovery, small businesses need to expand

and upgrade tired systems to reduce costs, increase business efficiency and remain competitive. They are looking for innovative

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ways to invest in the systems they need without upfront cash investments, and this is where technologies such as Unified Communications and Cloud Computing business models are playing a pivotal role in modern business.

In terms of cost reduction and increasing productivity, Unified Communications

has a lot to offer growing companies and when combined with Cloud Computing, the upside to small companies is difficult to ignore.

Much has been said about Cloud Computing, and whilst there was initially a great deal of confusion around it, its acceptance has rocketed in the past 12 months. This has been driven mostly by small businesses, like yours, looking for ways to invest in upgrades at low risk, with predictable monthly payments.

Essentially, Cloud Computing is an alternative way of sourcing the software products and IT capabilities your company needs. The differences between Cloud Computing and the more traditional purchase-install-maintain software and infrastructure model are analogous to the difference in buying or leasing cars.

When it comes to purchasing a new car there are a myriad of financing options available, but it ultimately comes down to whether you want to own the car or just use the car.

Car ownership has many benefits, but these are often not financial. If you have the cash to pay for the car outright then this has benefits, but if capital is a precious resource you would rather save for more important investments, it is not the best option. It will entail expensive loans and other ownership obligations, which include value depreciation and the difficulties associated with upgrading the car for a newer model.

Conversely, leasing a car still gives you access to the important features and capabilities of that car – you can drive it where you want, with whoever you wish to take as a passenger – but you are less worried about depreciation and when it is past its best or a newer model is available, the upgrade and replacement process is straightforward and cost-effective. Cloud Computing offers the same advantages for software ownership but goes further.

With Cloud Computing, when new features are available these can be made immediately available to you, often at no additional cost. That would be like getting in your car one day to find your worn out, coffee stained upholstery had been replaced with hand-stitched Italian leather. Additionally, and unlike leasing a car, Cloud Computing can actually reduce your total cost of ownership, freeing up your valuable cash reserves for other, more critical investments.

The concepts behind Cloud Computing are well established, as are the economics. Cloud Computing is essentially an evolution of the well-accepted outsourcing models on which many companies already rely and place their trust. Businesses are already comfortable with, and benefit from outsourcing key elements of their business, such as payroll and pensions. Of course, these things could be managed in-house but it would require specific skill sets and people whose costs and overheads come at

a hefty price. Outsourcing of these highly sensitive and critical business functions has been accepted practice for decades.

Cloud Computing is simply real-time, on-demand outsourcing of a particular business need or application, specifically business software applications. Many companies were using Cloud Computing services for customer-relationship-management (CRM) before the terminology was invented, so the concept is not really new. What is new is what you can now do with it to improve your business.

Consider CommuniGate Systems' Unified Communication solutions. These enable your business to expand and upgrade with the very latest communication capabilities, helping you maximise your cash-flow, productivity and business efficiency.

### **“Companies that have embraced Unified Communications in the Cloud have seen notable increases in productivity”**

CommuniGate Systems' products integrate every type of communication capability your business needs, with core office requirements such as shared and private file storage, group calendars and address books, conference call facilities, high-definition telephony, backup and regulatory compliance, and much more.

All of this is offered to your business in the Cloud at more affordable prices, with greater reliability and increased security than you would get with traditional office based IT deployments.

This not only helps reduce the financial burden of your software services, but can help cut your overall IT overheads to one tenth of what it would be with office based systems. With Cloud Computing, you can reduce the amount of computer hardware required in the office, thereby reducing space requirements, power requirements and the number of man-hours required to manage,


upgrade and patch the various platforms.

And it doesn't stop there. The benefits of Unified Communications in the Cloud go beyond cost and cashflow.

Looking to save costs and armed with cheap, reliable high-speed broadband, this year thousands of companies across the UK have already switched from traditional office based systems to Cloud Computing options. In doing so they have realised benefits beyond the immediate cost savings. Companies that have embraced Unified Communications in the Cloud have seen notable increases in productivity, with workers now able to connect and contribute anywhere they can access the network.

Security has often been a concern for companies considering Cloud Computing, but in comparison, the security of these systems often dwarfs those that are office based. Professional Cloud Computing companies host their services in highly secure, fire and theft-protected environments, with dedicated and highly skilled experts making sure the systems are constantly policed and protected from malicious or accidentally harm.

This level of physical and data protection is simply not justifiable for the smaller business to manage themselves. Combined with geographical redundancy, automated backups and high-speed backbones, small businesses are realising that Cloud based solutions offer substantially greater security and data protection than their office based implementations can offer.

Unified Communications and Cloud Computing are terms that are thrown around by many companies to mean different things, which can cause confusion. For a small company, the only thing that matters is that these technologies can save you money, improve your business operations and enable you to grow without the need for expensive loans. Together, they are the upgrade your business has been waiting for. 

To find out more about how to upgrade your business systems with Unified Communications in the Cloud, visit [www.communiGate.com/upgrademybusiness](http://www.communiGate.com/upgrademybusiness)