

Title

Work Smarter with UC² Solutions Powered by Sametime

Abstract

Voice and data networks tend to be underutilized in most cases. This doesn't mean they're not being used enough. What it means is that they're not being used to do everything they can do. A data network that's only used to handle data traffic is only doing a small portion of what it can really do. A voice network that does not participate in a multimodal communications paradigm becomes an expensive asset of limited value. This notion is not readily visible to most voice and data network managers. For this reason, when a request comes in to consider adopting unified communications and collaboration services, in some cases, the first thought that comes to mind is "I need to upgrade the network.." or, worse, "We need to build a new network for this!" Fortunately, what you have today is good enough to get you where you want to go. You just need to give them the right thing to do. How about UC²?

Content

Welcome to the IBM Podcast. My name is Marlon Machado, I'm the Product Manager for the Sametime Platform and Solutions. Today I'd like to talk to you about how IBM Lotus Sametime can help you get more out of your existing voice and data networks and the kinds of benefits the user population of those networks can realize to work smarter.

Voice and data networks tend to be underutilized in most cases. This doesn't mean they're not being used enough. What it means is that they're not being used to do everything they can do. A data network that's only used to handle data traffic is only doing a small portion of what it can really do. A voice network that does not participate in a multimodal communications paradigm becomes an expensive asset of limited value. This notion is not readily visible to most voice and data network managers. For this reason, when a request comes in to consider adopting unified communications and collaboration services, in some cases, the first thought that comes to mind is "I need to upgrade the network.." or, worse, "We need to build a new network for this!" Fortunately, what you have today is good enough to get you where you want to go. You just need to give them the right thing to do. How about UC²?

The world is at a critical inflection point. The crisis in financial markets jolted us awake to the realities and dangers of highly complex global systems – but it was just the latest of several such jolts: on global climate change, on the environmental and geopolitical issues surrounding energy, on global supply chains for food and medicine, and on security following 9/11. Each of these was a collective realization of the reality of global integration. We know we are all now connected – economically, technically and socially. But being connected is not sufficient. We also have to infuse intelligence into our systems and ways of working. The world has become flatter and smaller. Now it must become smarter.

Believe it or not, voice and data networks have played a major role in making the world flatter and smaller. It is thanks to voice and data networks that globalization has give us the ability to do business all over the world and any time of the day or night. But even by being the underlying infrastructure behind all that, voice and data networks remain underutilized. By delivering on their true potential, voice and data networks will, once again, help change the world; this time by helping making it smarter. The challenges are daunting: By 2010, there will be a billion transistors per human, each costing one ten-millionth of a cent. The technology is being embedded into billions of devices - cars, appliances, roadways, etc. By 2011, an estimated 2 billion people will be on the Web - connected to devices in an unprecedented way. Massively powerful computers and computing "clouds" can be affordably applied to processing, modeling, forecasting and analyzing the mountains of data all this will generate. Large numbers of diverse sensors will provide useful information about the state of the environment, among other things. This means that For the first time in history, almost anything can become digitally aware and interconnected. Guess where all that is going to run? Like most things today, it's all going to run on a loosely-coupled aggregation of voice and data networks that, most likely, will include yours.

So, how will the world become smarter? There are many ways. One of them is, as I said before, by working smarter. As a voice and data network manager, you may have asked yourself, "How can we work support those new dynamic processes modeled for the way people buy, live, and work?" Providing the tools to allow people to work in ways that suit them enables user populations to work smarter. Remember, the world becomes smaller and flatter by aggregation and it will become smarter the same way. So, if we all start working smarter, one company at a time, in the end the world will do so by aggregation. We all have a role to play and we all have something to contribute.

In order to help their people work smarter, businesses must develop dynamic business models and processes that can adapt to meet new business opportunities, and more importantly, new expectations of the customers. This means, on the one hand, that businesses must be prepared to deal with a new generation of customers; customers that are "connected" and expect their experience with your company to fall within what's expected from technology. In other words, your voice and data networks must be ready to provide that new breed of customer with the level of connectivity they expect to find everywhere they go. At the same time, as your workforce renews itself, the individuals coming to work at your company are part of that new generation of connected humans and they expect business processes to incorporate the connectivity features they are used to finding in other aspects of their lives.

So, how do we keep this new generation of customers happy? First, we could foster co-creation with customers to unlock the power of participation among industry ecosystems to seize market opportunities. This is important because the new connected customer is increasingly globalized, mobile, and informed with a perception of value that includes not only high-quality products but unique personalized experiences. The best way to do this is by using the tools the new connected customer is more familiar with: Web 2.0, collaboration, social networking SOA, and Information On Demand. Secondly, Those same tools can be used to create dynamic connections with customers in the form of applications to deliver the experience the connected customer expects to find, which may include new front ends to legacy applications.

When it comes to helping your own colleagues work smarter, what we need to is empower business users to make process changes, directly deploy new capabilities, and rapidly implement improved business models to capitalize on opportunities and outmaneuver competitors. In order to do that, your voice and data networks must be capable of delivering business processes that are flexible, responsive, streamlined, and continuously optimized to access trusted information and leverage re-usable service-based components.

Among the many ways to accomplish these goals, adoption of unified communications and collaboration tools is probably the closest to the human players. We at IBM call this class of software UC² and we like to say that, for us UC² is all about people. Our actual slogan goes like this: "... making it easy for people to find, reach, and collaborate with others through a unified user experience." Our definition of UC² is more formal, though. We define UC² as the deep integration of rich presence, instant messaging, email, unified messaging, telephony, web, audio and video conferencing delivered through a unified user experience or available as a set of contextual services which can be accessed from and integrated with applications and business processes. In other words, just what you need to enable your customers, partners, suppliers, and colleagues to work smarter.

UC² solutions—which include software, services, and hardware—simplify the process of finding the person you need to speak to and knowing the best method through which to reach them, regardless of where you or the recipient of the communication may be located. This allows minimizing, or in some cases, eliminating the human latency associated to most business processes. We call this Communications-Enabled Business Processes and, of course, it has an acronym: CEBP.

If you ask us here at IBM, we will tell you that the best way to deliver CEBP to your user community and your customers is by giving them UC² services powered by Sametime, our flagship platform for unified communications and collaboration services.

We defined the real-time collaboration space back in 1998 when we introduced Lotus Sametime as a secure, integrated solution for instant messaging and Web Conferencing. We have redefined this space again to UC² with a significant shift in our product strategy to go beyond just the out-of-the-box applications to a platform.

In 2006, we re-architected and extended Sametime in a dramatic way. We built the Sametime 7.5 client on open Eclipse and OSGi-based technology which makes it easy for developers and partners to integrate applications into Sametime, add capabilities like soft phones, calendar look-up, text-to-speech converters, etc., all by writing Eclipse plug-ins, which has over 2.3 million developers. We also provided extensions for integrating other vendors unified messaging, telephony, audio and video conferencing capabilities into Sametime for a unified user experience.

We make it easy to also embed your critical applications and data within the Sametime client so you can move seamlessly from a text chat to a voice over IP call, start a video session or see real-time information stored in a back-end ERP application (that's CEBP for you!) You can join a conference call from within a Web conference and start a chat session or Web conference from your enterprise or customer Portal. You can take your instant messaging and applications on the road on your mobile device, and chat with customers or suppliers using public instant-messaging networks. You can tap into the collective knowledge base of your user community, getting immediate answers to questions, conducting instant polls, and discussing topics in open real-time forums. You can even embed presence into your applications and business processes, and also turn things completely around to the point where you're embedding your applications into your real-time collaboration solution, truly turning it into a real-time platform. Now, that's working smarter, isn't it?

Real-time collaboration is a key enabler of CEBP. Companies using Sametime today are seeing the business value right now. They can: enable remote workers thereby expanding their business coverage; they can conduct design sessions for new products between offices without flying; they can conduct meetings with dispersed teams over Web conferencing; improve customer service by cutting time to answers, reducing phone time and increasing customer satisfaction and, finally, they can reduce telephone and travel costs, which is a critical business imperative in today's economic climate.

So, think about it. If you want to put your voice and data networks to work, even if you don't think they're underutilized, consider doing it by helping your company work smarter. UC² solutions powered by Sametime can give you the tools to do just that. Think of the new ways of working people have developed in recent years and how you can harness that creativity and energy to make your company more profitable. Think of the new ways your customers would like to interact with your company and you'll realize that it's all about UC² because UC² is all about humans. Don't hesitate to contact your friendly IBM sales representative or visit www.ibm.com/lotus/uc2 to learn more.