

The Undeniable Impact of Mobility

The Undeniable Impact of Mobility

About 8 years ago, I decided to cancel my home phone without telling anyone, just to see what would happen. After six months, my little experiment proved what I suspected – nobody noticed. All of my personal interactions with family and friends were done on my mobile phone. This is not an isolated incident; since 2004 the percentage of U.S. residents with a landline telephone has dropped from over 90% to just over 40% today.^[1]

Around the same time, I moved to a new company, and I was not provided with a desk phone. Instead, I was provided with a desktop client on my computer. The biggest impact to me, as an end user, was that I didn't have to look up or try to memorize co-workers' phone numbers anymore. All I needed to do was a simple "point and click" to make a phone call. And I could do this whether I was in the office, working from home, on site with a customer – anywhere that I had an Internet connection. I was no longer tied to a desk.

Fast forward to today, and there is a fascinating age group working its way into the work force. There are many names to define this group – Generation Z, Gen Tech, Net Gen – but I like the term Digital Natives. This generation has basically had a mobile device in their hands since they could hold one. For these Digital Natives, the concept of using a deskphone is as antiquated as connecting a call using a switchboard operator would be to us.

The point of this is simple – mobility has fundamentally changed the way we communicate.

Businesses are not immune to this; mobility has impacted business users as well. The days of going to the office and staying in one place all day are fading. Today 80% of the global workforce does not sit at a desk,^[2] and those that do sit at one during their workday are away 50-60% of the time.^[3]

Keeping this in mind, what are the options for a business to address employee mobility?

Do Nothing

Some businesses ignore the needs of the mobile worker and continue with a "same as it ever was" solution of key systems, PBXs, and desk phones. While these systems are relatively inexpensive and reliable, there are numerous shortcomings to this approach.

The first is limited or nonexistent mobility. All incoming calls are tied to the desk phone. Users *could* set the phone to forward to another device, but that is an error-prone user experience and requires the employee to remember to do so *every time* they will be away. This is not a viable solution for mobile or deskless workers, so businesses would need to deploy mobile phones and services on top of their deskphone service.

The other disadvantage is the user experience. We now expect a mobile paradigm. We don't want to have to remember extensions to call someone, and we certainly don't want to have to remember and use star codes to do things like transfer a call or add another user to a conversation. The mobile user experience of tapping and swiping has simplified the process in our personal lives; we expect the same in our business lives.

Corporate Mobile Phones

Many businesses have turned to offering mobile devices to their workers. Doing so can provide the mobility that the workers need, but it introduces new challenges for the business and their workers:

- Capital expenses - The business has to purchase phones.
- Operational expenses - The business has to pay for service plans each month.
- Resourcing - The business needs to have someone in charge of managing the phones for the employees and managing the accounts with the service provider.
- Business policy - The business needs to determine which employees get corporate phones and which do not.
- Inconvenience - The employee has to juggle multiple phones; if they forget or misplace their business phone, they are essentially cut off from co-workers and customers.
- Limited functionality – The employee can talk and text, but there are limited group and business features that are essential to communicating internally and externally.

Bring Your Own Device — BYOD

If their employer does not have a mobility policy in place, 50% of workers simply use their personal phones for business use; at the same time, 80% of them use text messaging for business purposes.^[1] A BYOD policy has numerous problems for both the business and employee:

- Work/life balance – With business communication tied to their personal phone, there is little that a worker can do to prevent being contacted while at home, at the gym, on vacation, etc.
- Customer relationship – With all communication to the customer stored on the employee's phone, the business has no knowledge or control of the relationship with the customer. If the employee leaves, they can very easily take the customer with them.
- Security and compliance – Employees can install any application they want on their personal phones, many of which may not comply to the security policies in place by the business. The business is virtually blind to what the employee does on their own device but may still be held accountable should issues arise.
- Complicated reimbursement – Businesses need a process that defines how employees are to be reimbursed when using their personal phones for work – roaming charges, international dialing, etc.

Unified Communications and Collaboration

That leaves one remaining option – a Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) or Unified Communications and Collaboration as-a-Service (UCaaS) solution. On the surface, UCC/UCaaS solves a number of business needs:

- It can provide all of the features that business users require.
- It can provide mobility through a mobile app, thus leveraging the advantages of BYOD or corporate mobile phones.
- It can provide one and sometimes several business identities that can be used to keep the company in control of the customer relationship, while also providing better work/life balance for the employee.

At Mavenir, we believe UCC/UCaaS is the right answer to the mobility needs of businesses of all sizes.

In the next blog, we will see how not every UCC/UCaaS solution is prepared for the challenge. If you would like to know more about it now, you can download the white paper.

[1] [U.S. Center for Disease Control](#), 2019

[2] [Emergence](#) 2018

[3] [dBrn Associates, A new Era for Mobile UC, 2018](#)

[4] [dBrn Associates, A new Era for Mobile UC, 2018](#)