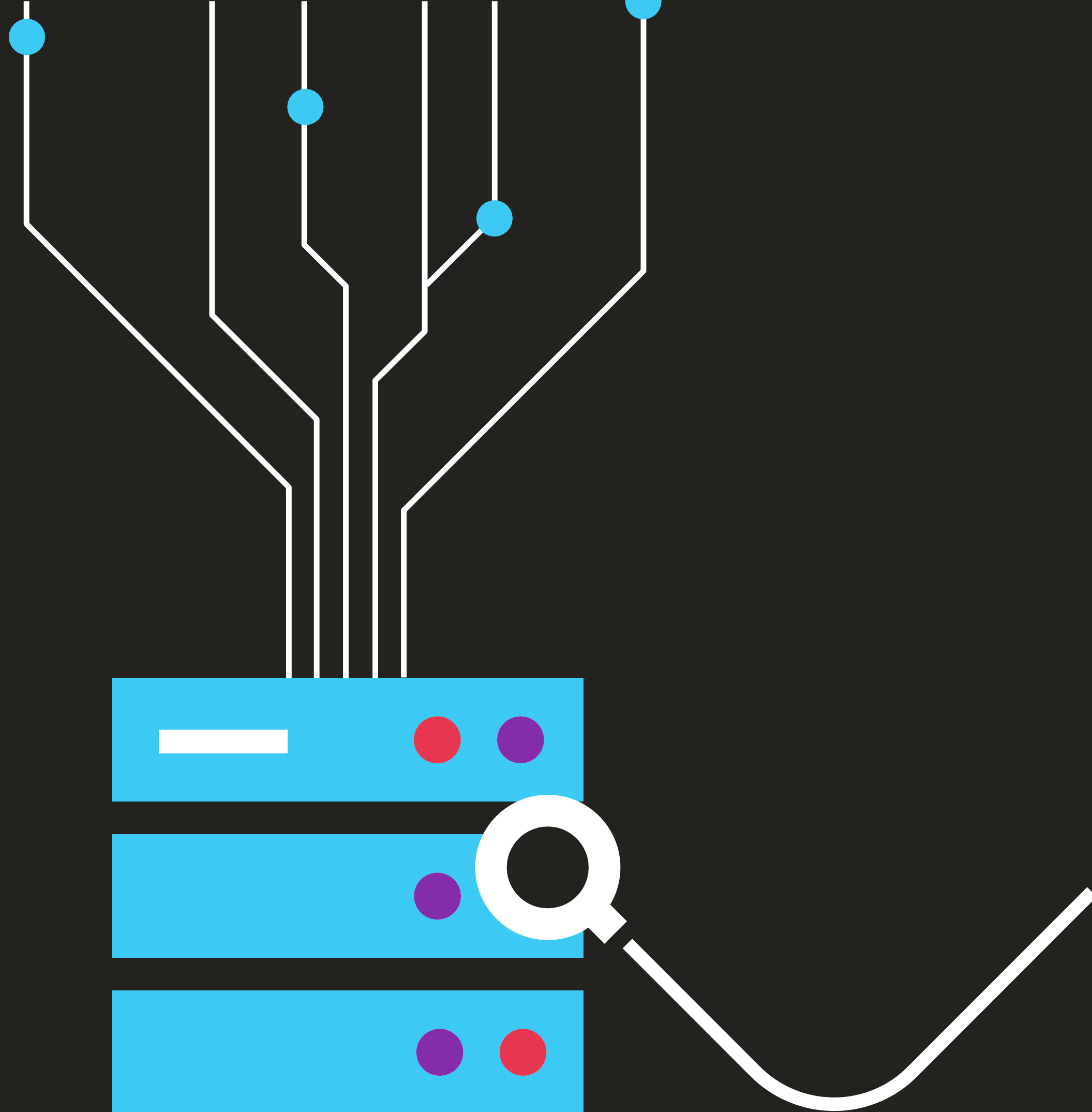


Optimizing your Cisco Unified Comms

A comprehensive guide on how to manage and optimize your Cisco unified communications environment.

Get started



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Cisco



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Introduction

With unified communications, you're not just enhancing your company's business communication, collaboration and productivity. You're helping each and every employee succeed in their work. You're making your customers happier. And you're contributing to your company's bottom line.

However, to fully realize these benefits and achieve maximum ROI on your Cisco UC investment, it's critical to optimize your UC environment. That's where UC best practices can help and why we've developed this guide.

In the pages that follow, we'll take you from understanding your UC needs and setting your goals, to reducing your environment's risk and migrating to the cloud or hybrid path. We'll look specifically at the big vendors – things to watch out for and putting your plan B in place.

We choose the best ways to keep your finger on the pulse of all things UC and guide you on deciding which platforms are right for you. We'll even teach you how to troubleshoot your UC like a ninja.

We'll help you benchmark your performance today so you can easily see the gaps, fill them in, and measure the impact. We discuss empowering your network team and even ponder the notion of whether they can wear the digital transformation cape. Lastly, we take a look at market trends, share expert insights, and look to the future of UC.

Why read this guide?

Ever wanted to reach higher? Do more than business as usual in the network tower? Cut out the time-consuming, mind-numbing tasks that fail to propel the organization forward? Then keep reading.

This guide is for every frustrated Network Administrator, under-appreciated UC Ops Manager, and overworked CTO. It's geared toward large enterprises, but there are plenty of takeaways for smaller players too. If you want to get the most out of your unified communications and collaboration systems, this read (or skim read) is for you. It's jam-packed with high-level and detailed UC best practices. We encourage you to share this guide with your team.



Moving the dial with Cisco

Q1



01 Moving the dial with Cisco



Most large enterprises have Cisco products in one form or another. The UC giant is considered stable and reliable, and has an extensive product reach. Like Avaya, Cisco is on the road to transitioning from a traditional hardware outfit to a software, cloud and services provider. Cisco has continued to innovate and combined with the company's acquisition of dominant UC disrupters, most recently BroadSoft, they have a robust offering.

Optimizing your Cisco environment

Cisco deployments scale from SMB environments right up to enterprise, multisite global ecosystems. Regardless of the size of the organization or the number of users, optimizing the ecosystem to provide a great user experience is an important goal for IT/UC teams, yet still presents challenges.

Through our experience in working with the largest Cisco deployments across the globe, optimizing your Cisco deployment requires critical considerations.

Managing network bandwidth and performance

As organizations scale and introduce new collaboration tools such as whiteboarding and video calling, network requirements change. A good user experience is key to driving adoption, which in turn increases the ROI of any investments. However, these tools can dramatically impact network performance. Setting network bandwidth alerts can advise teams when systems are reaching their limits, triggering increased resources to avoid any issues. In addition, tracking bandwidth growth over time, by location, can help plan for network expansions where needed most.

Maximizing license usage

Unused software licenses are more common than you think. We have seen organizations with up to 30% of their licenses unused because an office moved or closed and they failed to reassign licenses. Managing end points that will never be used and paying for the licensing that could be deployed elsewhere wastes valuable resources.

Migrating from on-premises to hybrid to cloud

As organizations seek to move their UC workload to the cloud, it is critical to have visibility across both the on-premises and cloud-based solutions. Knowing what on-premises equipment is located where – and being used by whom – is important when managing a cloud migration. Switching off a certain desk phone that looks unused may look great on paper, but if this is the handset servicing the CEO's remote office, the UC team will hear about it. Visibility also allows organizations to extract maximum return from existing on-premises assets as the migration takes place.

Reducing routing costs

Looking at an organization's global gateways and their usage allows teams to deliver the best route patterns to take advantage of call cost savings. This may not sound like a big deal, but these insights can save tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the size of the organization.



01

Moving the dial with Cisco

Troubleshooting Cisco

While Cisco provides a stable and robust environment, issues can arise. Problems often result when changes are made to the UC environment, for example, software updates or the introduction of new hardware such as video endpoints. Change can break things, so the ability to see who made the change, and where and when, is critical to resolution.

Teams managing a Cisco deployment must be able to quickly identify where issues are occurring, with the capability to drill down to the root cause. Contextual data on any issues, provided by a performance management tool, empowers teams to quickly troubleshoot any issues. Knowing an issue exists is the first step, but the contextual data explaining why a certain router is down, or why a particular SBC dropped a call, is the power that allows L0 and L1 engineers to troubleshoot more complex issues. This frees up L2, L3 and L4 engineers to focus on more complex issues and business transformation initiatives.

Webex Teams: Cisco's answer to Collaboration

[Cisco Spark is now Webex Teams](#) and is Cisco's app for continuous teamwork with video meetings, group messaging, file sharing and white boarding i.e. all collaboration needs in one place. Webex Teams meeting servers are in the public cloud and Cisco data centers with the Webex backbone interconnecting them both.

Cisco understands not all organizations will move completely to the cloud, and those that plan to will need time to contend with their existing on-premises investments. Therefore, hybrid deployments will be commonplace for some time yet.

To support organizations running a hybrid environment, Cisco developed a hybrid model allowing CUCM, Business Edition 6000 and 7000 and HCS to connect with Webex Teams (previously Cisco Spark) for a single integrated user experience.

Change can break things, so the ability to see who made the change, and where and when, is critical to resolution.

[How the IR Prognosis Cisco solution can help you](#)

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)



**UC is a multi-vendor
world**

02



02 UC is a multi-vendor world

Though today's UC environments vary in their use of the cloud, they also differ in which UC solutions they leverage. Microsoft, Cisco and Avaya hold the lion's share of UC deployments globally.

While Cisco and Avaya are long-time players, Microsoft has drastically disrupted the market in the past few years with the introduction of Skype for Business. One of the challenges with UC systems management is interoperability between these multiple vendors.

For instance, a company might have Cisco in its contact center and use Microsoft Skype for Business in other parts of the organization for real-time communications, raising interoperability concerns and adding expense, time and complexity. Here are the non-negotiables you need in a multi-vendor environment.

Multi-vendor UC visibility

Using [one tool](#) that has visibility into all vendors, applications, servers, endpoints and network devices will give you a comprehensive view of your entire environment.

Deep UC troubleshooting capability

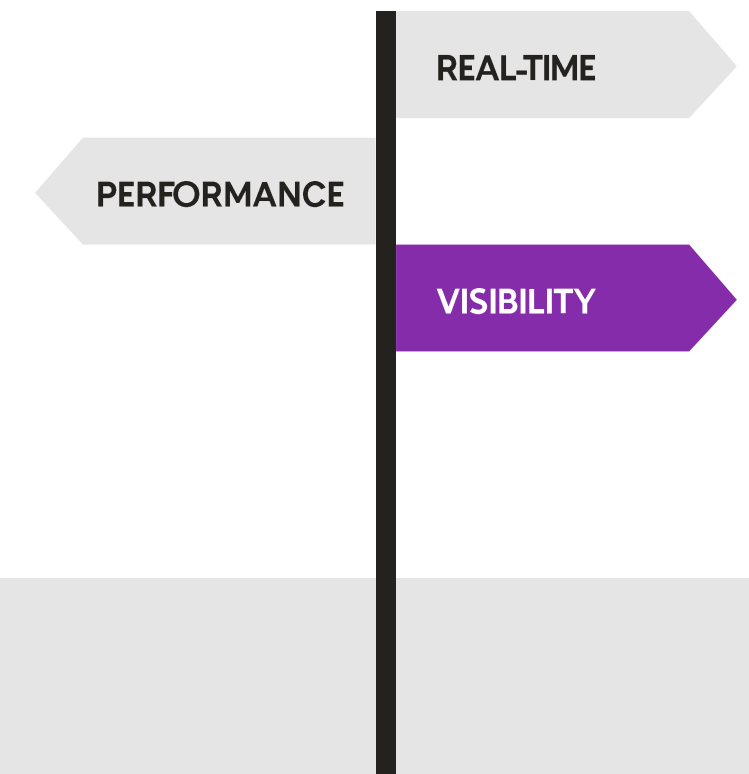
The ability to identify and resolve issues in a timely manner is crucial. Like with visibility, you need the ability to troubleshoot across the entire ecosystem, not just for one vendor. Having a tool that spans multiple systems and can troubleshoot across vendors can save a great deal of time and trouble by helping IT quickly find the root cause of a problem.

Are you in the UC cloud?

As discussed, the UC industry is moving inexorably to the cloud. A hybrid approach adds complexity and introduces questions about who owns what. Does a call fail due to an on-premises application or is it a problem in the cloud? Proactive performance management is more important than ever in a hybrid environment, because you need to know about potential problems immediately to maintain a productive workforce and a positive user experience.

Leveraging expert partner advice

Expert partners can help your organization minimize multi-vendor headaches and increase delivery speed by conducting thorough analysis and planning. Customers may for example spend millions on a Skype for Business rollout, then cut corners with low-end, uncertified headsets that result in poor call quality and an awful user experience. A good partner will ensure the best decisions are made and the user experience is top of mind.





Upgrading Cisco

03



03 Upgrading Cisco

When upgrading and moving collaboration architecture toward the cloud with Cisco, many organizations have decided that upgrading to Cisco's new flex licensing makes the most sense from a business value standpoint. This license allows a gradual transition to cloud-based components e.g. Communication Manager. For anyone looking to make the Cisco upgrade go smoothly, the first step is to get a precise idea of the current environment.

Assess the Current Ecosystem

A Cisco upgrade will give increased flexibility in video conferencing and may need to leverage tools like Verint and NICE. All these pieces of the puzzle must be accounted for to understand the potential bandwidth, server, and security requirements needed in the upgrade. Consider where the units are registered and how they may be used in the cloud. Those variables will impact network activity taking place on the edge and so will all the other vendors in this complex setup. This is where it becomes critical to assess the current ecosystem and have a single dashboard to ensure all parts of the implementation and upgrade will go smoothly. If any issues arise, they can be identified proactively instead of spending excessive engineering hours after the fact.

[How IR can help with Cisco Upgrade](#)

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)

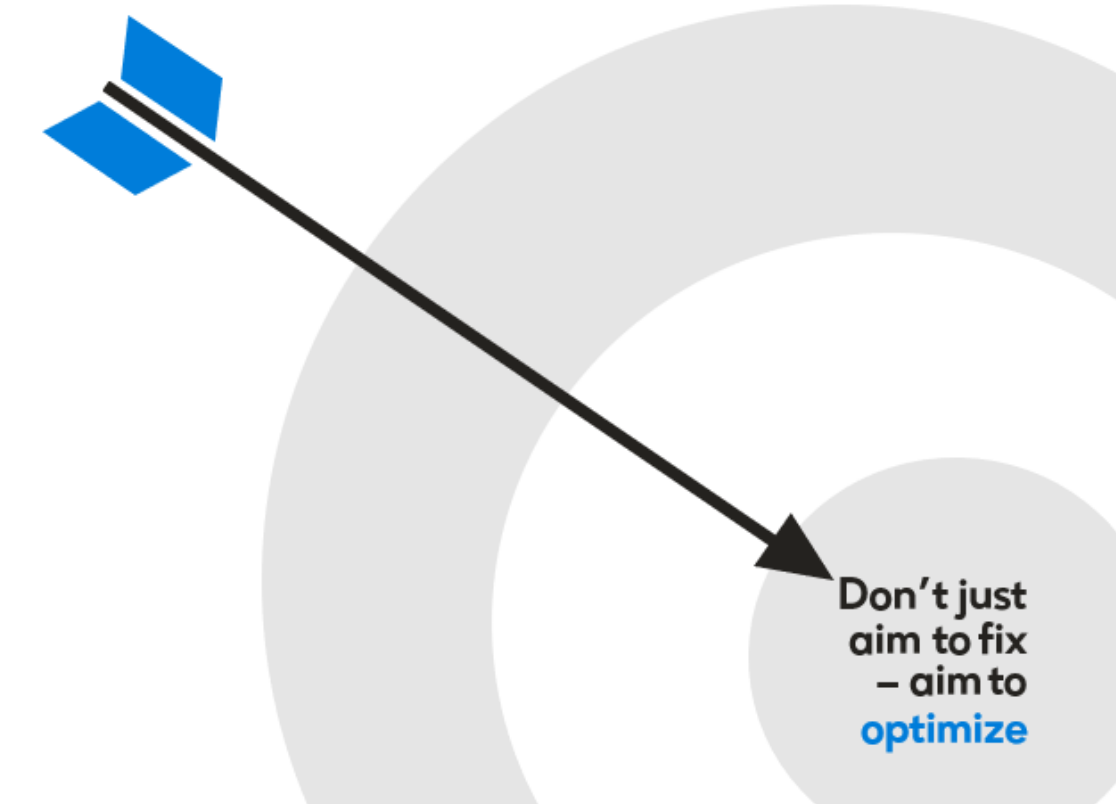
Pay Attention to Endpoints

Aside from determining the requirements for the upgraded architecture, this is the opportunity to take a look at the network endpoints. Now that you are upgrading, it will be possible to support features like video on the desktop to provide more effective collaboration. As Cisco brings BroadSoft onboard post-acquisition and continues their open architecture approach, they will provide support for phone software across multiple platforms. To take full advantage of the multi-platform support and all the other parts of the cloud that Cisco offers, you must investigate whether your endpoint devices will support these features.

Be Prepared to Tame a Complex Environment

The majority of IR customers are large enterprises with complex multi-vendor architectures spanning the globe. However, there are smaller companies with mission critical requirements and UC environments that need to be understood at all times. While upgrading Cisco, you must investigate everything in the UC system to ensure that it's solid and ready to handle increased demand. Whether it's Polycom devices, session border controllers, or other components supporting the contact center, you must understand their current state as you transition through the upgrade process. It is critical to understand if they are taking any additional stress, and if they are capable of working in the faster upgraded environment.

The more complex the collaboration architecture, the greater value IR brings.





Managing UC cloud migration strategy

04



04 Managing UC cloud migration strategy

Growth of cloud and its challenges

If you're migrating to the cloud, a successful cloud migration is vital to achieving an optimized UC environment. Yet many IT teams are still anxious about the consequences of migrating to the cloud and are uneasy about maintaining the quality of the user experience. This isn't surprising. Cloud migration is not without its hazards. You must consider your internal network performance and the network connecting you to your cloud provider (i.e., the ISP's network and the public internet, or a dedicated connection), which sit between you and your cloud vendor's UCaaS service.

Managing migration is a big undertaking for IT departments. They're switching entire strategies for providing communications and collaboration solutions to their employees and mission-critical communications simply can't go down. If the user experience isn't acceptable or interferes with their productivity, they will find an alternative solution or simply stay on the old system – delaying the ROI, driving up costs, and negatively impacting IT operations.

Moving to the cloud doesn't eliminate the need for proactive performance management. Customers can't rely on the UCaaS provider for troubleshooting, as the UCaaS provider likely won't have visibility into the customer network. If there is an issue, the UCaaS provider might say "it's in your network," but the customer will have to do further analysis themselves.

It can be difficult to decipher differences between vendors and solutions. One way to get an objective perspective on what's available is to seek analyst opinion and recommendations. For example, Gartner

has evaluated Cisco and Microsoft from a cloud PBX perspective. Gaining an understanding of analysts' expert views on the capability set of these solutions is important, especially if you will become an early adopter. Because each cloud UC solution will have a specific set of trade-offs, you must decide which features you are (or aren't) willing to live without in the short term as the market matures.

In the enterprise market, ensure your chosen cloud UC solution supports requirements such as survivability in the event of outage or service interruption. If you have an IVR, receptionist or executive assistant, determine all their requirements will be adequately met as you move into the cloud. Newer solutions like Google Hangouts, Slack and Microsoft Teams are designed as cloud-only solutions. They don't support a hybrid journey, and they don't allow for an easy migration path. If you have a large existing CAPEX investment in a telephony system, these solutions may not be an ideal choice.

If you're migrating to the cloud, a successful cloud migration is vital to achieving an optimized UC environment.

Hybrid UC is the new normal

Many UC environments are a mix of vendors and solutions, and moving everything to the cloud becomes a daunting prospect. But is this even the right approach to take?

Transitioning to the cloud doesn't have to be a hard-line plan. Many enterprises embrace a hybrid approach, moving some systems or users while continuing to run others on premise. It might be ideal for some users to move to the cloud right away. Others (like contact centers, for instance) may need to stay on premise. Some companies have long-term contracts with telecom providers for PSTN connectivity. Hybrid solutions take advantage of on-premises infrastructure and successfully marry it with cloud services. A hybrid approach lets you move gradually to the cloud at a pace that best suits your organization, while maximizing your investment in existing on-premises infrastructure.

Hybrid gives you the flexibility of testing various aspects of your environment without having to migrate everything completely to the cloud. This gradual approach also mitigates the risk of moving entire systems to the cloud all at once. By moving one application at a time, you can effectively troubleshoot any issues that occur without losing your entire environment and impacting users.

A hybrid approach also gives organizations more features to use, as they can leverage the benefits of both on-premises and cloud applications. Many cloud systems are still building out their services, while on-premises systems still offer more feature-rich services, especially for advanced users.



04

Managing UC cloud migration strategy

The framework: plan, deploy, operate

The framework for both migration paths, hybrid and pure cloud, is the same – plan, deploy and operate.



Plan

The planning phase defines necessary features and requirements. Undertake an honest assessment of your current environment and determine whether it can support the migration and what improvements will be needed. This assessment doesn't just include technology – you must also assess people and processes. Once this assessment is complete, set goals and SLAs to measure the success of the migration.

Deploy

The deployment phase is where you track adoption, monitor performance, and guide users as you roll out. Communication is key during this phase – timelines, features gained and lost, expectations, success criteria and training. You should measure adoption against the success criteria outlined in the planning phase, e.g., features utilized, the extent of each feature adoption, and so on. To secure end-user adoption ensure troubleshooting is prompt and proactive during deployment. It's easy for end users to blame the technology if issues occur, so utilizing monitoring tools to pre-emptively address any performance issues is key. A multi-vendor monitoring tool is ideal, as it will provide visibility across the different technologies within your UC ecosystem.

Operate

The operations phase is where you provide ongoing support, refine tools and processes, and gauge the progress of your UC migration. A support model is a must, and coupled with the monitoring setup during the deployment phase, will allow you to effectively identify and correct failures and enable additional features for users. Tracking and reporting on SLAs continues during this phase, and ongoing testing of your environment ensures it remains healthy. Reporting should also include analytics on the return on investment of your migration, and if deploying a hybrid environment, whether your organization is ready for a full cloud migration.

[IR can help with your UC cloud migration: before, during and after. Just talk to our team today.](#)

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)



04

Managing UC cloud migration strategy

UC cloud migration – what not to do

Migrating UC to the cloud is usually part of a larger digital transformation initiative, so it's critical to get this process right to see return on investment. Here are five key mistakes to avoid during your migration project.

DON'T: Move everything to the cloud purely on principal

This can be a huge mistake. By taking a "move everything to the cloud regardless" approach, you're failing to recognize the intricacies of individual applications. It might make more sense to keep some apps on-premises. Adapting a hybrid approach is a smart move.

DON'T: Fail to assess or test your UC environment

Testing identifies the quality, availability and readiness of your UC environment, which is critical for a successful migration. It will help answer important questions like: "Do you have enough bandwidth at peak load?" and "Can we scale as the business demands?" Test for usage today and for the future.

DON'T: Move too fast

By taking a slow and steady approach, moving team by team, branch by branch, you can use the learnings from smaller moves to improve the process, identifying potential issues before they erupt. A gradual approach lets users get familiar with new systems without experiencing network disruptions, which will impact user adoption and ultimately ROI. Remember, slow and steady wins the race.

DON'T: Fail to monitor ongoing performance and quality

It's not uncommon for organizations to run into issues even after extensive testing and a successful deployment. Ongoing proactive monitoring and troubleshooting should become part of day-to-day UC management to ensure cloud benefits are realized continuously.

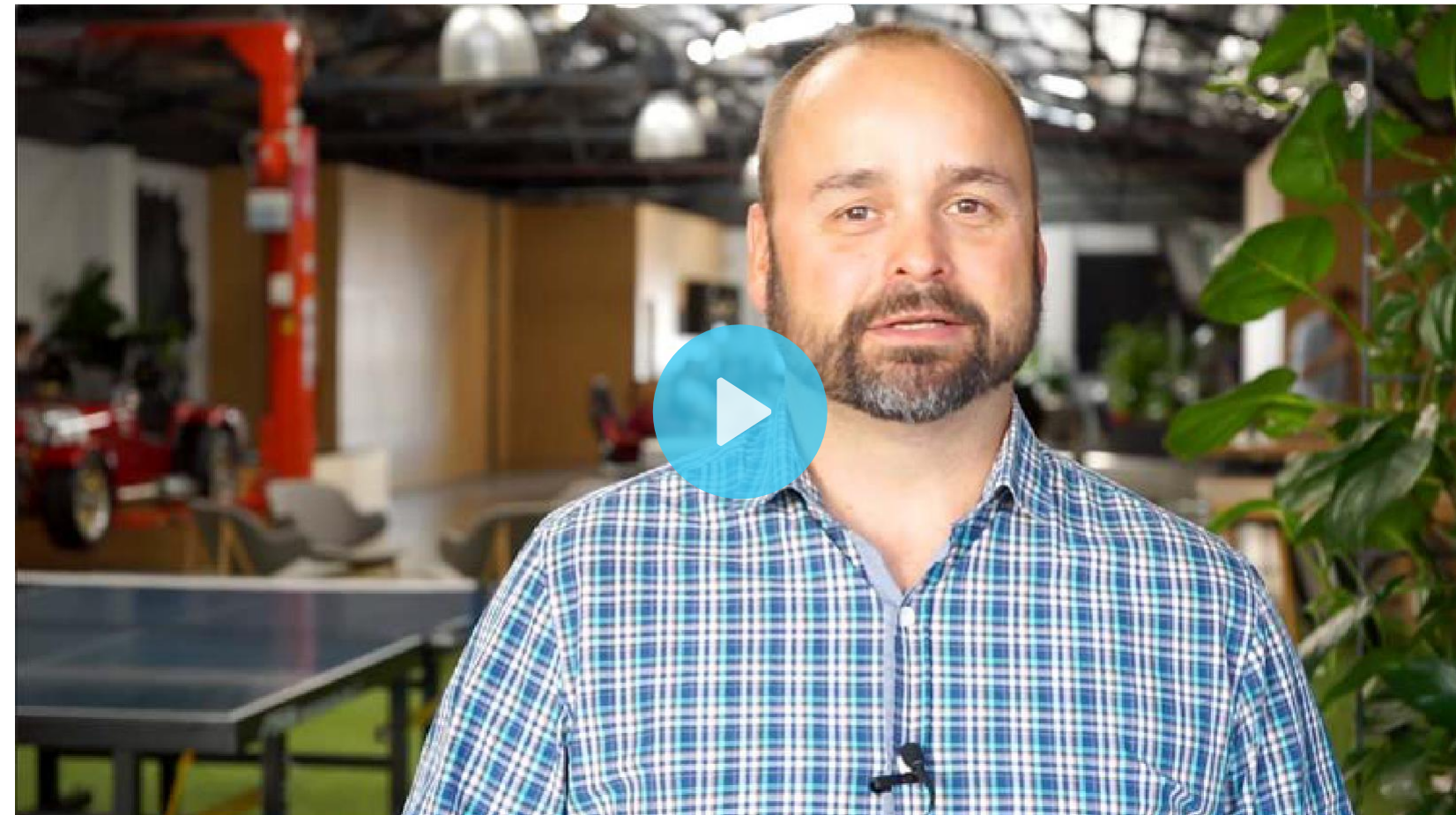
DON'T: Assume all applications are cloud enabled

All UC environments have connected apps. But can they all work in the cloud? Not all apps are cloud enabled and for those that are, generally, their app settings need to be updated when migrating to the cloud.



UC CLOUD MIGRATION: MISTAKES TO AVOID

The biggest mistakes businesses make when migrating their unified comms to the cloud



[IR's UC Assessor can help you test your network capabilities ahead of UC rollouts](#)

[FIND OUT MORE >](#)



**Endpoint
Management**

05



05 Endpoint Management

There are a lot of things to consider for successful UC endpoint management; the day-to-day challenges of video room conferencing, the growth of huddle rooms, employees working from home and the variety of collaboration tools in play. To be successful with endpoint management the UC team needs to master all domains – and have visibility, thresholds and alerts in place for when they're misbehaving.

Did you know?
IR Prognosis can alert you when a HDMI cable is disconnected in a video conference or huddle room.

Challenges of Video Conferencing

The biggest offenders wreaking havoc for video room conferencing are:

- "It's not working at all"
- Poor quality - video and/or audio
- Disconnected cables
- Not reaching ROI
- Encryption concerns
- Lack of utilization & adoption reports
- Distinguishing where the problem lies

Growth of huddle rooms

As workspaces evolve and open plan offices are the norm teams are adopting smaller huddle rooms for casual meetings instead of opting for large formal video conference rooms. However people still expect the same technology to be available in these huddle areas: large screens for taking voice calls, video calls and desktop sharing.

Huddle spaces can pop up wherever people congregate: around a coffee table, at stand up desks: even next to the table tennis area. It can be difficult for UC teams to manage these endpoints as often their original intention isn't aligned to current usage.

Working from home

Cloud UC environments have increased employees working from home. This flexibility is great for the individual but can cause some headaches for the UC team if UC performance is poor. Workers expect the performance to be identical no matter where they are but for UC teams there are many endpoints and connections they don't have control over when an employee is working from home.

Collaboration Tools

Most companies have many collaboration tools in operation, but they aren't always directed or lead by IT (or management). Often collaboration tools are implemented by a few users working with a free version or taking on a trial and it grows from there. Suddenly 6 months later there's an onslaught of users, IT must support it and users expect voice, video, chat, document sharing, etc. to work as efficiently as standalone tools that IT "own". IT & UC teams must be able to monitor, manage & troubleshoot new collaboration tools proactively as they are introduced.

Visibility of the biggest offenders in endpoint management; disconnected cables and poor audio/video quality is key to success.



**Troubleshooting like a
ninja**

06



06 Troubleshooting like a ninja

If troubleshooting was easy, everyone would be successful at it. There's an art to troubleshooting, and with the right tools and training, you can effectively combat your UC issues.

Where to start

- ✓ Check your server health
- ✓ Check the conference call history
- ✓ Check inflight conference calls
- ✓ Check network capacity
- ✓ Check endpoints



The UC model for problem solving

Step 1

Inspect the network problem and draft a succinct problem statement. Note symptoms and likely root causes.

Step 2

Collect the data points required to help isolate potential causes.

Step 3

Analyze possible root causes based on the data points and facts you collected.

Step 4

Design an action plan based on the causes. Start with the most probable cause and create a plan where you can test one variable.

Step 5

Deploy the action plan; implement each step carefully while testing to see whether the symptom goes away.

Step 6

Scrutinize the results to determine whether the problem has been resolved. If resolved, accept that the process is finished.

Not resolved?

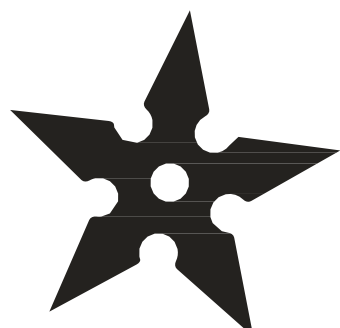
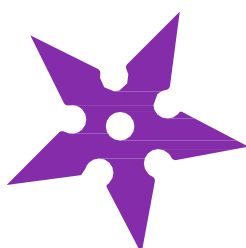
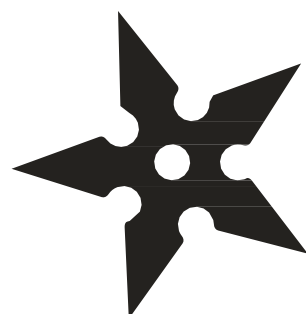
Devise an action plan based on the next most likely cause on your list. Return to step 4 and repeat the process until solved.





06

Troubleshooting like a ninja



Getting more advanced

Servers running hot

Check the infrastructure metrics such as CPU, memory, services (if applicable) for your monitored devices. Overutilization of UC devices can cause performance issues in your application. Setting up proactive alerting to let you know via email or SNMP trap when infrastructure metrics are about to hit critical is key for you to proactively monitor your environment.

Voice quality

All major vendors allow you to report on voice quality metrics from Avaya, Cisco and Microsoft to SBC vendors like Oracle, AudioCodes and Sonus. Being able to historically search and review troublesome calls is critical for finding out the root cause of voice quality issues. Searching by user or extension in a performance management tool like Prognosis allows you to view calls a user or extension made and diagnose by looking at degradation factions like packet loss, jitter, latency. If you have an SBC in the environment, you can also view the call path from end to end with VQ360.

Use a network troubleshooting feature set like IR Path Insight:

- a. If you're using Avaya or Skype for Business, you can view the network hops that a call has taken. The Network Hop [visual diagram](#) shows the latency between each hop. You can click on these router/switches in the diagrams to get plain english root cause analysis of that network interface. For Cisco, even though network hop data is not reported by the vendor, you can still go into the network troubleshooting link in Prognosis Web UI, and review problematic interfaces.
- b. If you're having voice quality issues, it is always a good idea to check if QoS (DSCP) is enabled on your network. This indicates whether the voice is being prioritized correctly over other traffic. Path Insight comes built in with a synthetic call simulator that allows you to run a test to indicate exactly which router or switch is stripping or not configured for QoS.

[How IR customers are leveraging Path Insight](#)

FIND OUT MORE >

Top tips

Cross off the basics

Tech support always starts by asking "Have you unplugged it and plugged it back in?" UC troubleshooting is no different, so start with the basics like verifying that all end points are connected correctly, whether the network is down, and the state of your server health.

Trust your instincts

If you have a hunch on where a problem started, investigate accordingly until you can rule it out or find the root cause.

Stay curious!

Have you ever been reviewing analytics or pulling reports and something completely off topic catches your attention from the corner of your eye? Our advice: stay curious. See what is causing you to pause and squint at the screen; you might just solve a problem or prevent one from occurring.

Traits of a blackbelted troubleshooter

- Tenacious
- Curious
- Persistent
- Patient
- Outside the box thinker
- Competitive
- Attention to detail
- Stars Wars fan



Vendor versus third-party monitoring tools





07 Vendor versus third-party monitoring tools

IT leaders rely on UC performance management tools for multiple functions: reporting, performance monitoring, analytics, problem resolution, uptime, event monitoring, auditing, root cause analysis and fault management.

By preventing or shortening outages or slowdowns, companies experience less downtime and fewer related problems such as lost sales and diminished productivity. They can also reduce IT staffing requirements and other operational costs to operate a UCC infrastructure.

According to Nemertes Research (2017) UC performance management tools themselves save more than they cost. Since many IT leaders cite not having budget as a reason to not invest in UC management tools it's clear there is a gap in awareness. The report found that when organizations use specialty management and monitoring tools, their operational costs are substantially lower than for those who do not use such tools. In addition to lower operational costs, the use of performance management tools has shown to increase user adoption., the use of performance management tools has shown to increase user adoption.

The difference between third-party and vendor monitoring tools

Vendor monitoring tools are made specifically for certain equipment; they monitor only the solutions of the supporting vendor. When it comes to third-party monitoring tools, you get much more. Third-party UC monitoring and troubleshooting tools generally have a multi-vendor capability. Third-party performance management tools have a wider view of the equipment and environment they monitor and manage.

Eliminate silos and connect the dots

If numerous people from various teams are trying to troubleshoot the same issue but from their respective areas, it's best to have all systems joined together to eliminate silos and see the bigger picture. It's easier to connect the dots when you can see all the dots on the same page.

Swap finger pointing for evidence-based insights

Have you ever been in a situation where you need information from other teams (network, desktop, network or security) to troubleshoot a current issue? Third-party monitoring tools provide you with deep factual insights. You can use this evidence to drive actions with your vendors or across internal teams, where the issue occurred. You can start resolving the issue faster, rather than wasting time finger pointing.

The downside of out of the box

First-party vendor tools lack customization features, so what you see is what you get. The static nature of out-of-the-box solutions common in first-party vendor monitoring solutions means there is limited depth to available metrics.

Certification matters

It's key to have vendor-certified solutions in house. This will give you the confidence that the tool is going to work with the equipment you are going to monitor.



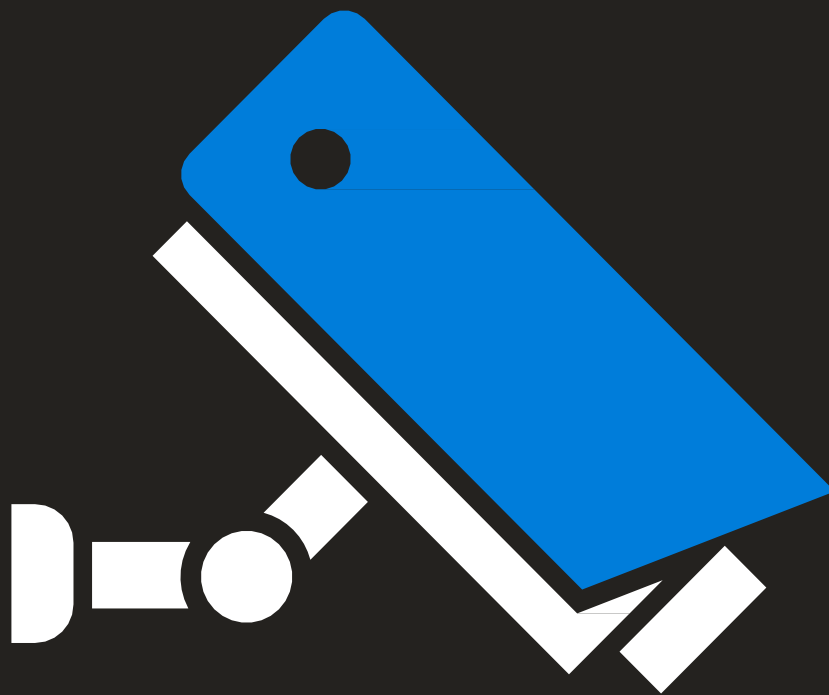
07

Vendor versus third-party monitoring tools



THOMAS PILZ

Differences between third party and vendor UC monitoring & troubleshooting tools





Moving the dial with Cisco





08 Cisco HCS supported by IR

Service Provider must make sure their customers have a great experience, every time. Customers go to SPs because they don't want to deal with service issues themselves. It's important for the SP team to have a positive experience and get to the root cause of underlying issues fast.

Prognosis Service Provider Edition for Cisco HCS

IR's Service Assurance, Performance Analytics and Experience Testing solutions are widely adopted by Cisco-focused Cloud and Managed Service Providers around the world. Cloud, managed and outsourcing services are all supported from our market leading, multi-tenant and highly scalable platform that today manages millions of endpoints for Service Providers globally.

Get a single view across your Cisco and multi-vendor UCaaS and CCaaS services. Accelerate time to revenue, reduce service delivery costs and be enabled to exceed your SLAs.

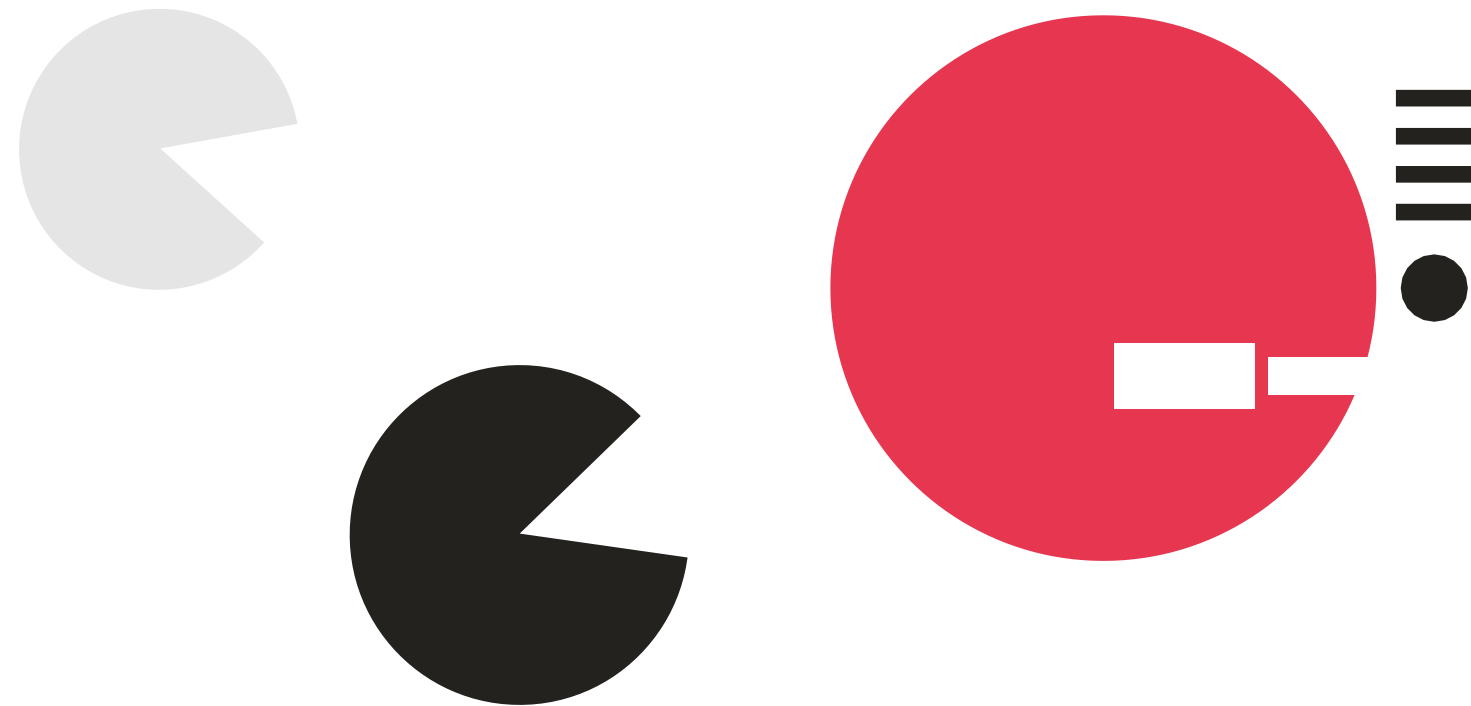
IR is a long standing Cisco Preferred Solution Partner and Prognosis has undergone interoperability verification testing (IVT) for many years.

Prognosis for Service Providers can:

- Accelerate time to revenue
- Reduce service delivery costs
- Exceed your SLAs
- Achieve a single view across UC & CC
- Works for Multi-vendor & Multi-tenant

[IR's Cisco HCS offering](#)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)





Looking ahead: 2018 UC trend watch





09

Looking ahead: 2018 UC trendwatch



2018 predictions

Blair Pleasant

Blair Pleasant is President and Principal Analyst of COMMFusion LLC and a co-founder of ucstrategies.com, an industry resource on the growing UC arena. We asked for her view on what is to come in 2018.

Q We saw Cisco announce their intention to acquire BroadSoft in October – what impact will this have in 2018?

A I think this is a very positive move for Cisco, which was struggling in the mid-to-low end of the cloud market. BroadSoft gives Cisco a strong solution for service providers to sell cloud solutions, and I expect them to do well with it. It will cause some competition for companies that compete with BroadSoft, such as GENBAND and Metaswitch, and will also create more competition for companies like RingCentral and Five9.

Some of BroadSoft’s partners are concerned about how they’ll fit in a Cisco world, especially the Tier 2 and 3 players. I believe the Tier 1 players like Verizon and AT&T really welcome this news, but the smaller players are more concerned. They’re afraid that they won’t get the love and attention from Cisco that they got from BroadSoft.

Q Do you think the Skype for Business Online/ Microsoft Teams announcement at Ignite rocked the boat for Skype for Business? How do you see this playing out in 2018?

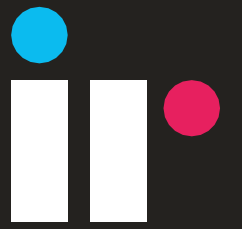
A I think this actually sets Microsoft back a bit – customers will put decisions on hold until they hear more from Microsoft about dates and service offerings. Right now, it looks like they muddied the water a bit. Teams doesn’t have telephony features, and Microsoft has stated they will be available in the second half of 2018 via integration to the Skype for Business Enterprise Server. The lack of clarity right now will cause some customers to look for alternatives for telephony.

Q Do you think Avaya is likely to make any big waves on the UC market in 2018 after their emergence from Chapter 11?

A Under new leadership, I expect to see Avaya moving quickly to show that they haven’t been keeping still while going through Chapter 11. Avaya’s big push in 2018 will be in the cloud. I don’t know if they’ll be making any big waves, but they’ll need to show that they’re still innovative and not just supporting an aging product base. A big part of what Avaya will be doing in 2018 will be focusing on verticals. The company has also been busy innovating and will be introducing products related to AI, bot frameworks, blockchain, and other emerging areas.

Q What UC trends do you think will dominate 2018?

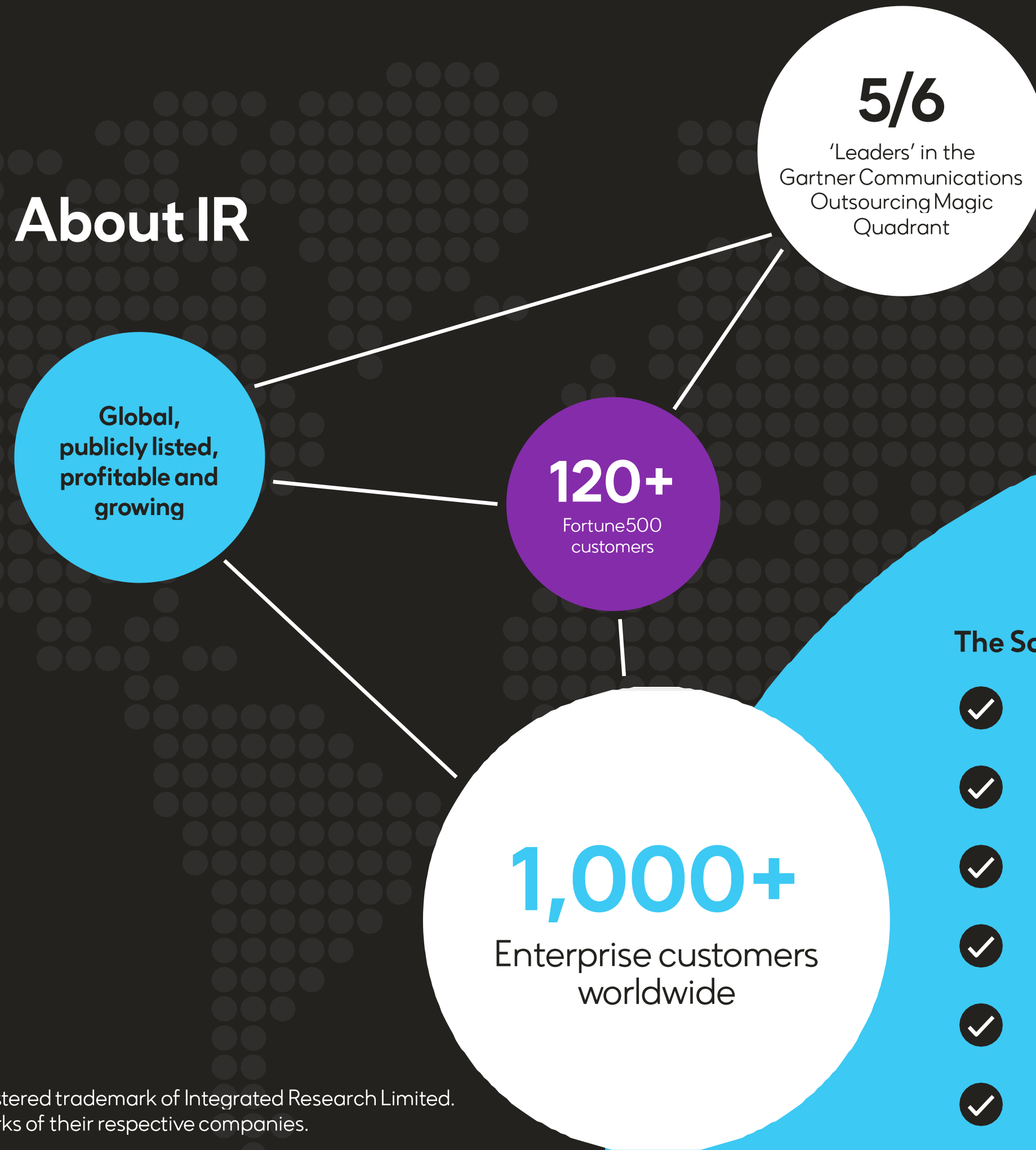
A AI will be a big trend as companies add AI capabilities to their offerings. This will range from basic bots (which may or may not be considered AI), to intelligent assistants that help schedule and manage meetings and calendars.



Conclusion

Delivering a great user experience across your UC environment is no small task. But with careful planning and the right technology partners, you can optimize your UC management in a way that enhances the communications experience for your colleagues and customers alike.

About IR



The Solution: Prognosis

- ✓ Market-leading communication experience and performance management
- ✓ 17+ million endpoints managed by Prognosis
- ✓ Cisco certified management solution, listed on Cisco SolutionsPlus
- ✓ Skype for Business certified and recommended in FastTrack
- ✓ Avaya sponsored and recommended solution
- ✓ Multiple 300K+ user deployments

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