

Case study

HP fosters global collaboration with Lync



Unified communications platform helps employees connect more easily, driving improved business flexibility, agility, and responsiveness

Industry

High tech

Objective

Enable employees to bridge geography and time zones to foster better collaboration and faster decision-making.

Approach

Deploy a global Unified Communications platform that supports streamlined, easy-to-use functionality like Instant Messaging and “Click to” voice, conferencing, and file sharing.

IT matters

- Tasks like initiating phone calls are streamlined into single-click user operations; no dialing phone numbers or passcodes
- Average time required to dial into conference calls reduced from 45 to 1-2 seconds
- Ability to join conference with one click from your mobile phone when traveling—simple and seamless
- Enabled for all 140,000 registered mobile users
- Improved audio quality on phone and conference calls

Business matters

- Enhanced collaboration maximizes the ability of employees to contribute business value
- Allows HP employees to collaborate and communicate from their device of choice
- Faster decision-making, problem resolution improve business flexibility, agility, and responsiveness
- 10 million minutes/week of conference calls and 20 million minutes/week of long distance calls now carried internally, eliminating associated telecommunications service provider costs



“With our Lync UC platform, employees can connect immediately when they need to exchange information or make decisions, regardless of their geographical location.”

– John Grillo, director, Voice Network Engineering and Services, HP

HP employs some of the brightest minds in high tech—and today, those employees have access to a global Unified Communications platform that leverages Microsoft® Lync® to enable real-time collaboration and communication.

HP employs over 330,000 people worldwide, and they all need to communicate with one another.

It's a complicated problem, because HP is not only large, it's global. HP employees and other resources—80,000 or so vendors, partners, and contractors—are located in virtually every country in the world. Scattered geographically, spread across every time zone, it's neither practical nor economically justifiable for these individuals to rely on face-to-face meetings alone to foster collaboration.

So HP turned to technology: it implemented Microsoft® Lync® as a Unified Communications (UC) platform, a solution that enables HP employees to collaborate and communicate spontaneously and immediately—almost as if they are all working in the same room.

First phase: Instant Messaging and Presence

When HP first began planning its UC strategy, a key issue it faced is the deployment's inherent size and complexity. HP therefore decided to break the project into manageable pieces, deploying functionality in phases as the technology itself evolved, and using pilots to identify issues and establish baseline data for tracking consumption.

The functionality HP decided to implement first supports two primary capabilities: Presence—the ability to determine whether another individual on the HP network is online or offline—and Instant Messaging (IM).

“By enhancing real-time collaboration, our Lync Unified Communications platform has made HP a more flexible, nimble, and responsive enterprise.”

— John Grillo, director, Voice Network Engineering and Services, HP

The company chose to start with this functionality, in part, because employees were already adopting it themselves. “People were installing IM applications they purchased or downloaded as shareware,” recalls John Grillo, director, Voice Network Engineering and Services, HP. “They recognized instant messaging as a powerful productivity tool,

because it allows them to resolve issues and make decisions in real time. There is no time lapse as with email, and no playing phone tag.”

That said, Grillo adds, “If people can only message a subset of other HP employees, the value is limited. Our vision was a single, global tool people could use any time they were logged into the HP network.”

Another benefit of starting with Presence and IM was that the functionality was relatively straightforward. In fact, the software delivery was similar enough to Microsoft Exchange that, during the first phase, the deployment was handled by HP's Exchange team.

Adding “Click to” services and VOIP

HP handled the second phase of the UC deployment a bit differently, however.

For phase two, HP decided to add what the company refers to as “Click to” services. “Click to Talk” allows anyone logged into Lync to initiate voice calls by simply clicking on a person's name. “Click to Conference” supports the same one-click functionality to initiate conference calls. And through “Click to Share,” users can easily share information, including files or presentations from their desktops.

The “Click to” services also require a relatively robust and standardized network; fortunately, HP was prepared. “Well before the Lync roll-out, HP made a strategic decision to move to Voice over IP [VOIP] technology for its telecommunications,” Grillo notes. The global telecommunications group simply piggybacked on that effort. “As the network within the company was transformed, we deployed Lync ‘Click to’ services to those regions.”

The HP network itself, like all of HP's global IT infrastructure, is powered by HP hardware. “We leverage an ‘HP on HP’ strategy,” Grillo says. Primary HP Networking equipment leveraged for the Lync UC platform includes the Multi-Services Router (MSR) series and Survivable Branch Communications zl Module (SBM) for voice gateway services, along with thousands of HPN routers and switches that makeup the internal network at offices worldwide.

Because the Lync “Click to” capabilities require HP systems to dial external phone numbers, HP IT also coordinated with its telecom partners to build the architecture's telecom interfaces. “We worked with our external

Global collaboration—in real time

partners to ensure the system could handle both inbound and outbound calls,” Grillo says. “They also helped us deploy global conference call dial-in numbers in over 80 countries. Meeting participants outside of the HP network can now dial these numbers to join internal hosted Lync conferences, a capability any global conferencing service must support.”

HP also managed one other piece of equipment to support the rollout of the Lync “Click to” services: end user headsets. By funding and deploying certified headsets, the company ensured users will experience consistent call quality when using the services.

A third phase of the roll-out built on phase two functionality. HP enabled additional capabilities and integrated its voicemail to its Microsoft Exchange system. Peer-to-peer desktop video service were also added, along with scheduled audio conferencing services. These further enhanced employee collaboration, for example by enabling HP staff to more easily hold video conferences.

User training facilitates acceptance

There was one other major difference between the first and later phases of the Lync project: end user training.

When HP deployed Presence and IM, extensive user training wasn’t really necessary. The functionality of those applications is fairly intuitive and simple. The “Click to” services, on the other hand, were a bit more complex, so for that roll-out, HP launched a full-blown user training program. “We worked with Microsoft to offer webinars,” Grillo says. Up to 500 people could attend each session, which were run by professional instructors. Sessions were also recorded and posted on HP’s intranet so that people who could not attend could play them back at their convenience.

The HP IT voice services web page also publishes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section and a collection of quick reference guides to help users master the “Click to” services functionality.

In addition to functional training, HP also developed semi-formal etiquette guidelines to help optimize the “Click to” services user experience. “The sound quality of the Lync conference calls is so good, that we found we need to encourage people to use the ‘mute’ button during calls,” Grillo says. “Otherwise,

the ambient noise on conference calls can be distracting to participants.”

Reduced telecommunications costs, improved employee productivity

Ask Grillo how HP’s Lync UC platform benefits the company, and he explains that its value can be categorized as a mix of hard and soft benefits.

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– John Grillo, director, Voice Network Engineering and Services, HP

Hard benefits include cost savings—and they’re significant: HP’s internal Lync platform now carries over 10 million minutes per week of conference calls and another 10 million per week of long distance calls. For these calls, the cost of using external conferencing service providers has been eliminated.

The primary soft benefit is improved employee productivity. “It takes 45 seconds, on average, to dial into and join a traditional conference call,” Grillo says. And in a company of HP’s size that 45 seconds must be multiplied hundreds of thousands of times every day. “Every month, Lync gives our company back over half-a-million minutes of productivity, just by joining conference calls via a weblink instead of dialing phone numbers and passcodes,” Grillo says.

And then there’s the value of more fluid, real-time collaboration. “With our Lync UC platform, employees can connect immediately when they need to exchange information or make decisions, regardless of their geographical location,” Grillo notes. “It gives us the ability to speed up business decisions and processes, which drives productivity.”

Another important benefit to HP is that the Lync UC platform roll-out gives the company’s consulting organization an additional

Customer at a glance

Hardware

- Survivable Branch Communications zl Module (SBM)
- MSR 30/40 and MSR 50/60
- HPN Routers at remotes sites
- HPN Switches at transformed sites for end-to-end Quality of Service (QoS)

Software

- Microsoft® Lync®

opportunity to enhance its expertise in sizing, architecting, and deploying Unified Communications solutions. This expertise, in turn, enables HP to offer enhanced UC-based consulting and outsourcing services to its customers.

Enthusiastic acceptance by users

Judging by how enthusiastically they've embraced the technology, HP employees recognize that the Lync UC platform helps them do their jobs: the number of platform users within HP has risen steadily since the first phase of implementation. In the six month period following deployment of the phase two functionality, the number of weekly active users grew by over 25%. In any given week, a quarter to a third of the 410,000 users with access to HP's UC platform takes advantage of its "Click to" services.

In feedback the global telecom group has collected from HP employees, users have indicated that it improves collaboration and supports a more flexible work environment. "Like most people working for global companies, I interact with many individuals around the world on a daily basis," notes Dragana Beara, senior marketing manager, HP Networking. "My manager is in a time zone that is three hours behind mine. I often have meetings that are outside of the regular 9 to 5 day." HP's UC platform gives Beara the flexibility to work collaboratively with these individuals, regardless of where they're located. "With Lync, I can easily stay in touch. I can quickly communicate with anyone, in any format necessary, over any device. I can call colleagues and partners around the world, join conference calls and get instant response from my colleagues with just a click of a button."

HP employees also praise the functionality of the Lync software. Beara, for example, appreciates being able to see who is speaking during audio calls. "In the past, audio calls that included new individuals could be a frustrating experience," she says. "Now I always know who is speaking on calls.

"With Lync, we can also detect the lines that produce too much background noise and have them muted," Beara adds. "The audio quality is much better as a result."

The system's ease-of-use is another plus from users' perspective. "Lync's desktop sharing function makes conference calls a breeze," Beara notes.

Capitalizing on a core strength: HP employees

In coming months, HP will continue to expand one final enhancement to its UC technology: PC Phone services. With this functionality, the Lync platform will carry HP calls to external parties, as well as calls that originate external to HP, for legacy desk phone replacement.

Like the rest of the Lync functionality, the final enhancement will let HP capitalize on one of its most prized strengths: its people. "HP employs some of the best and hardest-working people in high tech," Grillo concludes. "By implementing our Lync UC platform, we give them the tools they need to work together more effectively. It's impossible to overstate how much value this delivers to HP as a business."

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