



**RingCentral
Video:
Fixing the
Meetings Milieu
with a Video-First
Digital
Collaboration
Experience**

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IP COMMUNICATIONS
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

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Executive Summary

The workplace – and the nature of work itself – is changing in fundamental ways that are impossible to ignore. Technology plays a key role, as does the demographic shift from digital immigrants to digital natives. In some ways, it’s never been easier to be productive, but in others, it’s never been more challenging.

Some changes are happening faster than our ability to adapt, and this has created serious gaps between our desire to work effectively and our ability to do so. Collaboration in particular has become a strategic imperative, and while businesses are keen to close that gap, they are limited by legacy-based technology that has not kept up with change.

Meetings, in particular, are foundational to workplace productivity, but the experience is often so problematic that they are counter-productive. A better way is needed, and to this end, RingCentral has developed a new cloud-based collaboration platform — RingCentral Video (RCV). This white paper examines the pain points associated with meetings, and the approaches taken by RingCentral Video to address them. Furthermore, in a market crowded with unified communication as a service (UCaaS) offerings, this white paper also reviews the specific characteristics that make RingCentral Video more than just another collaboration platform.

The Meetings Milieu

Many businesses still rely on legacy, premises-based technologies for communications and collaboration. There are many reasons for this, and the call-to-action for this white paper is to show how this scenario constrains productivity, diminishes employee engagement, and hampers organizational agility.

This isn't a question of switching out an aging phone system or upsizing a video system to accommodate larger meeting rooms. What's really needed is a rethink of how to support *all* these needs. Cobbling together point solutions is, unfortunately, not going to work. In essence, the focus needs to be on delivering a digital experience that supports the needs of today's digital workers, and that's a major departure from the analog model that is so prevalent today.

A digital experience calls for browser-based applications, mobile-centric features, seamless multichannel engagement, location-independent access, and context-aware workflows instead of serial modes communicating that do not support a common goal. This way of working may be difficult to envision, so to make it more relatable, we will focus on one use case — meetings.

This use case is important not just because everyone participates in meetings, but it's also the prime vehicle for collaboration, which is now a strategic imperative for so many businesses. For the most part, workers can perform the transactional elements of their jobs fairly well via telephony, email, or messaging. Working in teams is far more involved, and if that mode isn't effective, a lot of things don't go well for the business — and several examples of that were cited earlier.

When focusing specifically on meetings and the associated pain points, it becomes easier to see why a holistic approach is needed for a solution that can effectively support today's communications and collaboration needs. The problem set is broader than most decision-makers realize, and to illustrate that, select highlights from a recent market study will now be presented.

The following data points are based on research conducted by Dynata for RingCentral, drawn from 1,000 U.S. knowledge workers during September 2019. In the context of this white paper, three main themes emerged.

Theme 1 — The meetings milieu

The research confirms what most businesses already know — meeting activity continues to grow, but the experience is clearly broken. This creates a milieu in the sense that there is no viable substitute for meetings, so if businesses want productivity to improve, the experience has to be better.

This isn't a matter of fine-tuning things like audio quality or supporting larger files for sharing. A better overall solution is needed that's more user-friendly and engages workers. While there are two types of meeting modes — in-person and virtual — the latter becomes increasingly important as the workforce becomes more distributed and as remote working becomes normalized. This is where the meetings milieu is most apparent, as per below.

- 62% are having more virtual meetings now than two years ago, while only 20% reported the same for in-person meetings
- On average, employees have six virtual meetings per week, lasting 42 minutes each, so the overall time commitment is significant, and growing
- Even the basic task of joining a virtual meeting requires effort, so right from the start, the experience can be stressful — 62% said it was easy but “not completely effortless,” “a little difficult,” or “very complicated”

Theme 2 — Poor user experience

Once workers get past the gate to join a meeting, the tools available to them do not ensure that the meeting itself will be productive. As outlined earlier, when applications are not integrated, a lot of time is spent managing them, and switching back and forth. This creates duplicated effort because there's no context or intelligence to streamline the workflows.

These problems become further exacerbated when workers are not using common applications or a centralized workspace. The permutations here are endless when each worker brings their own applications or endpoints to the process.

To be fair, the limitations of legacy technology are not solely to blame. No matter how good the technology is, people manage the meeting and determine how they interact with each other. As such, a poor user experience — UX — and ineffective outcomes are just as often due to human factors, such as not setting clear objectives, or not assigning actions and accountability to participants after the meeting.

Addressing those human factors is beyond the scope of this white paper but needs to be recognized when setting realistic expectations for better technology solutions. With that in mind, the following data points from the RingCentral survey are indicative of how poor UX undermines the value of virtual meetings:

- 69% said their meetings start late — 36% said they start 3 or more minutes late
- 92% multitask “during at least some of a typical virtual meeting”
- 44% said one in four of their meetings is a waste of time

Theme 3 — Video is the missing link

There are many ways to improve the UX of meetings and, in turn, employee engagement during those meetings. Video is one of them, and in some regards may have the greatest singular impact. However, there are nuances around video that make it more difficult to harness than other communications modes used in meetings.

At face value, video is the most immersive real-time mode, making it ideal for virtual meetings. That said, there have long been reservations around using video, especially among older workers, and while they may subside as the technology becomes more user-friendly, traces will remain for the time being.

There’s another aspect that is less generational and has more to do with not being engaged during meetings. When workers feel the meeting serves little purpose for them, their attention shifts to doing more pressing forms of work, and using video gets in the way of doing that. According to the RingCentral survey:

- 51% don’t use their camera even when they have the option for video
- 50% like to multitask and it’s harder to do with video
- 29% don’t feel camera-ready

These sentiments and behaviors may reflect valid concerns, but they do not negate the inherent qualities of video that make it such an effective mode for collaboration. This is clearly supported in the research:

- 53% are less likely to multitask when using video in meetings
- 48% think that video builds trust and relationships better than audio only
- 40% said they are more engaged than when on an audio-only call

The use case for video looks very different when considered on its own merits as opposed to being in a multichannel environment alongside voice and messaging. In this light, video is more of an antidote to the behaviors that happen when engagement is low during meetings. All of the above examples are exactly what nurtures engagement but only when video is being used. Employees don't opt out of using video because it's too intrusive; rather because it inhibits their behaviors when *not* engaged during meetings, and that's what they expect will happen.

Bridging these themes to a digital collaboration experience

Engagement is a tricky balance to strike, since you need to get employees to use video *first* so they can experience the behaviors that lead them to be more engaged during meetings. The more they feel connected to the team and part of the group, the less likely they'll be to multitask and feel that the meeting is a waste of time. On a broader, organizational level, the more distributed and more global your workforce, the more value video has to make everyone feel connected.

Achieving this balance isn't just about technology, so it's important to reiterate that the human factors addressed earlier go hand-in-hand with providing a digital collaboration experience. Setting clear agendas and managing the meeting process are fully within your control, and to complement that, you need the right set of tools and technologies to overcome the meetings milieu and get better outcomes from all modes of collaboration across your organization.

To a large extent, the technology piece here requires a shift in emphasis toward video. Legacy-based collaboration platforms position video as an optional mode, where participants choose to switch it on or off, just as they choose to mute their audio or use the chat feature. All of these user-centric options make it easy for participants to choose their own levels of engagement, and opting out of video is usually a sure sign they won't be fully engaged.

A key characteristic of a digital collaboration experience is being more immersive, more interactive, and more engaged. These are the behaviors that drive better outcomes, and video has a more central role to play here. For that to happen, however, you need a collaboration platform that is more *video-first* than video-optional.

The distinction is subtle, but important. To address the challenges and pain points reviewed herein, your chances of success will be much greater with a video-first solution. Video is not integral for every meeting or collaboration use case, but as the need for virtual meetings keeps growing, the call to action for a better meeting experience has never been stronger.

Introducing RCV – RingCentral Video

RingCentral has emerged as a leading cloud communications provider, with widely used platforms for both UCaaS and Contact Center as a Service (CCaaS). Being cloud-native, the company has scaled the SaaS model into a billion-dollar-per-year business and has been innovating on several fronts to keep their momentum strong. One of those fronts is to address the aforementioned meetings milieu, for which its new RingCentral Video online meetings solution has been developed.

Launched in March 2020, RCV represents the company’s approach for a better meetings experience, and with that, a better way to drive productivity for workers and teams, along with agility for the organization. Overall, this is a far-reaching product promise, and to help you determine *how* RCV delivers on that, this section outlines three key considerations.

Consideration #1 — Key features and capabilities

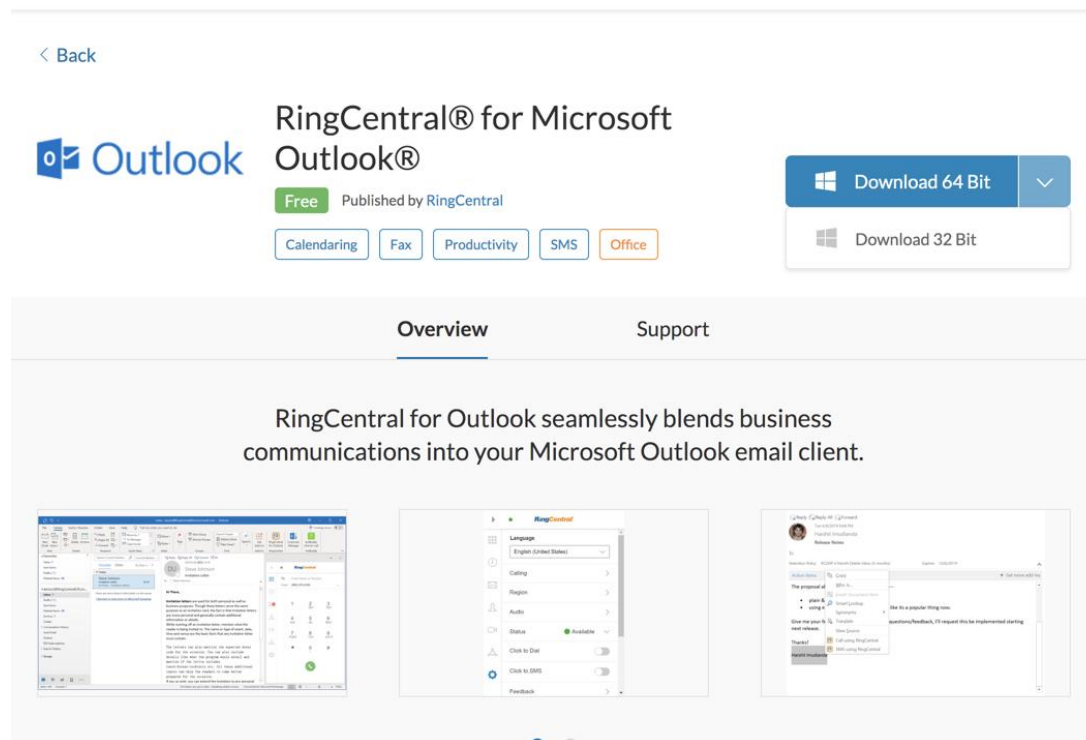
RCV has been developed to address the challenges and pain points around meetings, and this requires more than just a rich feature set. RCV certainly has that, with the key features and capabilities summarized below. To varying degrees, all collaboration platforms have a similar checklist, but what’s notable for RCV is how they translate into a UX that’s built around ease of use and active engagement. These are the qualities that drive video-first adoption and yield tangible results for meetings.

All-in-one platform — RCV natively supports all the modes needed for collaboration — voice, video and messaging. Ideally, meetings would be video-first, but what’s notable here is that end users can start or join a meeting from any of these modes. The UX is the same from any starting point, either by mode or by endpoint. Not all collaboration platforms have this degree of seamless interworking, where there is only one starting point for a collaboration session.

Full feature set for all use cases — Beyond supporting voice, video, and messaging, RCV provides a richer collaboration experience in a variety of ways. On a broad scale, with native UCaaS and CCaaS platforms, RCV use cases can extend beyond the needs of internal employees. HD for both audio and video maintains user engagement, and with support for up to 200 participants, RCV can scale for the vast majority of meeting needs. In terms of geographic scale, RingCentral’s backbone network and PSTN support means that RCV is natively available in over 40 countries, making this a truly global platform.

Integrated and open — These attributes are critical for the utility of any collaboration platform. RCV has extensive integrations with the leading third-party platforms, such as Office 365, MS Teams, Google G Suite, Slack, and Salesforce, and extends to both the applications and scheduling for meeting planning. RCV has over 200 packaged application integrations, and with a pool of over 30,000 developers, that number will steadily grow. Given all of the above integrations, this means APIs and SDKs can be leveraged across many use cases, including productivity applications, vertical market applications, cloud recording, live streaming, CRM, and contact center.

Example – RCV integration with MS Outlook:



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Browser-based UI — This is a key element for providing a digital collaboration experience that is fundamentally different from legacy-based platforms. Being WebRTC-based, RCV is browser-driven, meaning that no downloads or plug-ins are needed. WebRTC is particularly important to note, as it is not the only standard for browsers, and platforms using these other standards may not be as easy to use or as secure.

Whether a meeting is voice or video-based, the UX with WebRTC is simple and fast, not just for starting the meeting, but during the meeting for applications such as screen sharing. At launch, this holds for Chrome — on both desktop and mobile screens, and in time, support for other browsers will follow. With native support for both UCaaS and CCaaS, this streamlined UX goes beyond internal meetings, where external guests can easily be added, and enables any employee to have to rich customer-facing communication on the fly.

Carrier-grade platform — Underlying the features, applications, and integrations of RCV are a variety of capabilities that come from having a global footprint of 24 data centers and providing end-to-end carrier services in 40 countries. Beyond that, RingCentral can support BYOC in 40 others where carriers are more regulated and provides international virtual phone numbers in over 100 countries.

All of this makes RingCentral more than just a cloud provider or an OTT player, and their overall architecture is built to provide five 9s uptime, with financially backed SLAs. This may not be apparent at first look, but the engine driving RCV is critical for delivering a digital collaboration experience, not just reliably, but at scale. If this isn't part of how you think about technology partners for collaboration solutions, it really should be.

Secure and compliant — To some extent, this is an extension of being carrier-grade, but these capabilities are notable in their own right. Security comes in many forms, both for protecting the network and the data traversing it. For example, browser-based applications, like those used in RCV, are continuously updated, and that includes security patches. Since there are no downloads with WebRTC, no data is left behind, and all transmission during an RCV session is encrypted end-to-end.

In terms of compliance, not only does RingCentral have extensive certifications and designations — SOC2, HITRUST, HIPAA, FINRA, PCI, GDPR, ISO 27001, Skyhigh Enterprise-Ready for cloud security, etc. — but the company is transparent about compliance so customers know there's a comprehensive security stack behind RCV. Another important consideration here is that with RCV being based on RingCentral's technology, these security compliance capabilities are applied consistently across all modes and applications. Maintaining this security posture is possible when using third-party partners, but it's harder to do, and is harder to be transparent about.

Consideration #2 — End-user benefits

The above examples represent the key nuts and bolts of RCV, but what matters most is how they translate into UX. There are many ways to define UX, and for RCV, the driving principles would be ease of use and low effort. As reviewed earlier, legacy-based technologies fall short here, and these qualities are the essence of a digital collaboration experience. To reiterate, this means being browser-based, mobile-centric, and cloud-based, with all of these being the building blocks for RCV.

Ease of use is about one-touch meetings and seamless movement across communications modes — voice, video, and messaging. When context carries with these transitions, end users don't have to repeat steps or duplicate messages, all of which reduces effort. When end users don't need to think about which mode to use to start or join a meeting, effort again is reduced. And when they do join a meeting, they hit the ground running, which means they're engaged.

When that happens, there won't be much multitasking, and meetings won't be viewed as a waste of time. Perhaps most important of all, with video-first meetings, employees will connect more authentically and contribute to the team in ways that drive better outcomes, regardless of how distributed your workforce is.

If this was so easy to do, all vendors would have figured it out by now, but based on today's meetings milieu, that's not the case. This isn't to say that RCV is the ultimate collaboration solution, but in terms of what's missing for end users, RingCentral is focusing on the right things here.



Consideration #3 — IT benefits

With so much focus on end users, it's easy to overlook this consideration. What makes RCV a complete collaboration solution is RingCentral's holistic approach, and that includes the impact on IT. Aside from the security and compliance elements, RCV provides an extensive set of QoS capabilities for IT to actively manage the deployment, rather than passively view it as just another cloud application running over the network.

By providing deep visibility into the network with QoS analytics, RCV enables IT to provide another layer of value to the organization beyond what end users will bring when collaborating more effectively. RCV does this by providing two types of metrics for IT. One would be QoS

analytics and reporting around RCV performance to help IT optimize network capacity and troubleshoot problems.

These metrics can be broken out by type of application — voice, video and messaging — providing IT with deep QoS visibility for each collaboration session. From there, more granular metrics are available by department or line of business, as well as by individual end user. Stepping back, IT can also manage performance metrics by region, by carrier or ISP, by type of network, as well as type of endpoint.

The second type of metric would be analytics about adoption and usage of RCV's features and capabilities. This data is invaluable for understanding how end users are actually utilizing RCV, and over time, will help organizations develop performance-based metrics for collaboration. From the outset, however, IT benefits from metrics on how each RCV application is impacting network resources, along with tracking the utilization of meeting spaces.

Other metrics will be of more interest to management and LOB leaders, such as how often teams are meeting, the duration of meetings, which communications modes are being used, which collaboration applications are being adopted, etc. Altogether, there is an extensive set of analytics and metrics to make IT's job easier, and this is another area where RCV benefits from being fully native with RingCentral.

With RCV, IT gets full visibility across the platform and every element within it via a single, integrated set of analytics. This will certainly be easier for IT to manage than having to work across multiple data sets and dashboards when using a collaboration platform built on best-of-breed applications. To illustrate, below is a dashboard showing easy to read analytics for the adoption and usage of RCV features.

Conclusion

There is a lot of room for improvement with how businesses communicate and collaborate, and the legacy technologies that most businesses use are holding back productivity. Today's digital technologies can provide a richer communications experience and engage workers more deeply when collaborating. Video in particular can be a strong driver for workplace productivity, but only when it plays a central role with meetings.

The starting point for fixing the meetings milieu is moving to a cloud-based platform, not just because it natively supports all the right applications and use cases, but also because it can provide the digital collaboration experience that workers expect today. Workplace productivity and organizational agility require browser-based applications, a mobile-centric UX, and a cloud-based architecture that is scalable, secure, customizable, and globally available.

All of these capabilities are required for digital collaboration, and legacy, premises-based solutions can provide none of them. Once you're ready for cloud-based collaboration, the next step is to consider what kind of platform and what kind of partner to work with. Digital collaboration requires a multichannel experience, where voice, video, and text can seamlessly interwork.

As your journey to evaluate collaboration partners progresses, it will become clear which ones can natively support them all, and which ones are really only strong in one or two of these modes. Similarly, you should consider which offerings can support the needs of your entire organization, both in terms of applications (UC and contact center) and by stakeholders (end users, IT, and management).

This white paper has outlined how RCV addresses all of these needs. We recognize the difficulty for objectively comparing collaboration offerings on an apples-to-apples basis, but in our view, RCV represents a leading choice for businesses that are ready for a cloud-based digital collaboration solution.