White Paper

How Identity as a Service Makes UCaaS/SaaS Integrations More Scalable, Productive, and Secure
Executive summary

The huge shift to cloud communications and collaboration is happening in parallel with an array of SaaS apps rapidly becoming critical components of enterprise workflows. Logging into cloud apps is how many workers begin their work day. Unfortunately, UCaaS (unified communications as a service) systems are typically not linked to these must-have cloud business applications. What’s more, each newly deployed SaaS app can become an island of identity, causing end users to drown in too many passwords. This decreases productivity and creates security risks because password fatigue tends to cause users to reuse passwords or otherwise circumvent security policies. IT also finds it difficult to provision users to the mushrooming number of apps, or quickly deprovision them when they leave the company.

Integrating UCaaS capabilities into business applications

RingCentral has taken cloud communications and collaboration to the next level by integrating UC features into the business applications that knowledge workers depend on to do their jobs. For example, the RingCentral integration with Google’s G Suite embeds the UC feature set directly into the Google ecosystem, where many employees spend a considerable amount of time. Users can do things like make and receive phone calls within their Chrome™ browser or schedule RingCentral Meetings™ within Gmail™.

Similarly, with the RingCentral integration for Salesforce®, sales and support staff can click to dial a contact directly from their record in the Salesforce Sales Cloud, saving time and eliminating common dialing mistakes. The integration also generates an automatic log of the call, which does away with the need to manually create a record of each call and provides more accurate and complete information on interactions with customers. The company can gain valuable business insights by performing analytics on this data.

Without having to constantly switch back and forth between the phone or other UC features and business applications, collaboration and communication becomes second nature. This seamless integration with core business applications—which enables productivity enhancements like click-to-dial calling or the ability to send and receive text messages from within an app—also allows users to accomplish tasks more quickly, serve customers faster and better, and get more work done.

Despite the tremendous benefits of integrating UCaaS with cloud productivity applications, IT needs to address two key problem areas associated with the proliferation of cloud SaaS solutions: passwords and provisioning. And IT needs to do this while constantly dealing with tight budgets and a scarcity of skilled security experts. This is where identity as a service (IDaaS) comes into play. IDaaS solutions are cloud-based offerings that allow organizations to deploy Single Sign-on (SSO), using authentication and access controls to provide secure access to their growing number of software and SaaS applications.

IDaaS is growing 66% year over year.¹
Basically, SSO allows users to access all their apps with one password. These solutions also automate provisioning of new users and de-provisioning of existing users to the various software apps and cloud services, making it easier to manage the entire user lifecycle. Better still, since it works with a single operation, adding a user in IDaaS automatically adds users to the apps they will need, minimizing the amount of work required.

Recognizing the needs of users as well as IT, RingCentral has created integrations with two leading IDaaS providers: Okta and Google. The Okta Universal Directory solution syncs with Microsoft Active Directory™ (AD) or other user stores, including LDAP and human resource information systems (HRIS) like Workday. Meanwhile, admins can use Google’s Auto User Provisioning feature to manage user access to G Suite. Both IDaaS solutions also enable SSO, using the employee’s RingCentral number. When users log in using their RingCentral phone number on one device, they are automatically logged in to both the UCaaS system and all of their other SaaS apps across all of their devices.

**RingCentral for Okta**

Enterprises of all sizes are increasingly moving away from investing in on-premises hardware and software. In fact, "cloud first" strategies jumped to 47% in 2017, with more organizations evaluating cloud-based IT solutions before making new IT investments.²

However, along with the benefits of these approaches come new user management issues. For example, you may have quickly gone from managing dozens of user accounts to managing thousands. Plus, every user wants access to a unique set of cloud apps, and they all want to work from anywhere, on any device.

RingCentral for Okta addresses these challenges with an enterprise-grade identity management integration that combines the power of the Okta Identity Cloud with the RingCentral UCaaS solution. This integration provides secure identity management and SSO to the cloud phone/UCaaS system as well as third-party cloud SaaS apps, using a customer’s existing Active Directory or Okta's Universal Directory. With RingCentral for Okta, IT can manage any employee’s access to any application or device to provide users with a seamless and secure connection.
How it works

RingCentral for Okta automates new user account provisioning and deprovisioning based on AD and Universal Directory users and groups. The integration also provides SSO support so that when a user signs in to the RingCentral system they are automatically logged on to all the applications connected to the Okta Identity Cloud. RingCentral admins can use Okta to connect to Active Directory for free, directly from the RingCentral console. Then they can programmatically sync a user’s RingCentral phone number to other Okta-connected applications such as Microsoft Office 365™ or G Suite. This makes it possible to streamline your initial user import from AD to RingCentral by pulling in basic user information (first name, last name, email address, mobile, department, etc.)

It also automates user life-cycle management driven from AD. This includes enforcing extended security policies such as multifactor authentication, password management, and on network/off network controls.
RingCentral for G Suite

As part of deepening its Recommended for G Suite Partnership, RingCentral provides enterprises the flexibility to choose the Google authentication method for their IT environments. The RingCentral UCaaS solution integrates with Google's SAML implementation for Single Sign-on (SAML SSO). The security assertion markup language (SAML) is a standard for logging users in to applications. In the case of IDaaS applications, the service provider (e.g., RingCentral or Salesforce) agrees to trust the identity provider (e.g., Google) to authenticate users. The RingCentral for G Suite integration provides preconfigured SAML connectors for popular applications such as Salesforce, Google G Suite, Zendesk®, and Dropbox™.

The RingCentral for G Suite Auto User Provisioning feature also significantly simplifies the onboarding process by allowing IT administrators to automatically create and delete users in RingCentral Office®, G Suite admins can also use the RingCentral admin console to automatically assign users a RingCentral phone number. Plus, everyone in the company will be able to see new colleagues as RingCentral contacts immediately. (Note: your company must have a valid G Suite account.)
Business benefits of integrating communications and collaboration with IDaaS

SaaS applications like Salesforce have become such indispensable tools that many companies are deploying them enterprise-wide. However, the tendency of these apps to be siloed has made identity management, user access, and authorization/authentication a growing challenge. The task of onboarding users can be a time-intensive, manual process that involves administrators across multiple departments, which can introduce risk. Additionally, in most enterprises, Microsoft Active Directory (AD) or G Suite is the authoritative user directory that governs access to basic IT services such as email and file sharing.

Integrating communications and collaboration with IDaaS addresses this challenge. A chief advantage of this integration is savings. Provisioning identity on site, with software such as Active Directory Domain Services, can be full of costs. Your team has to keep up servers and purchase, upgrade, and install software. You also have to back up data regularly, pay hosting fees, monitor the additional attack surface for network security, set up VPNs, and much more. But with IDaaS, costs are included in the subscription fee. Besides these savings, ROI for IDaaS includes improved cybersecurity and saved time with faster logins and fewer password resets. For example, Forrester Research states that the average help desk labor cost for a single password reset is about $70.³ Whether a user is signing in from an open Wi-Fi network at an airport or from a desk in the office, the process is seamless and secure.

RingCentral integrations with IDaaS solutions like Okta and G Suite also allow organizations to easily scale business communications by alleviating the administrative overhead and headaches typically associated with administering users, accounts, and passwords. IDaaS, together with RingCentral Office, offers businesses advanced identity and device management capabilities, while giving IT staff a way to deploy, manage, and provision users more efficiently. This eliminates the need to repeat the same task in multiple systems such as the directory app or the or the RingCentral directory.

63% of data breaches involve weak, default, or stolen passwords.⁴
Verizon Enterprise

The explosion of SaaS apps also means account passwords are multiplying, which can expose corporate data and lead to increased help desk calls from frustrated users. For example, we have all experienced password fatigue, which is the stress stemming from the need to create, re-enter, remember, and change a large number of passwords. It can also constitute a security issue as requirements to remember and enter passwords frequently encourage users to select simple passwords, write them down, or reuse them across multiple systems.
With SSO enabled by IDaaS, however, users can choose a single strong password that will allow them to access all of their applications. Better still, by entering the SSO password when signing onto RingCentral Office, users are spared the need to log on to the phone/UCaaS system as well as numerous applications, which eliminates frustration and gives them more time to get work done. Plus, the improved security can keep companies from facing a hack or breach that might topple their business.

Compliance

From healthcare to financial services, government and industry regulations for governance and privacy have grown stronger and gained teeth, with some even including criminal prosecution for falling out of or failing to demonstrate compliance. A strong IDaaS solution can support compliance with regulatory standards such as Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA, and the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). This can be particularly valuable where apps and UCaaS support contact center functions.

Conclusion

Enterprises seeking to improve collaboration, communications, and productivity are increasingly turning to cloud-based UCaaS and SaaS business productivity applications. RingCentral has taken these solutions to the next level by integrating UC features into SaaS applications so that users can have seamless workflows—without having to constantly switch between the phone system and CRM, for example.

RingCentral integrations with leading IDaaS providers help IT departments deal with realities of an increasingly mobile workforce and a highly distributed and complex network of applications. These IDaaS integrations ease management pains, streamline provisioning and de-provisioning, boost user productivity, and secure your applications and data. At the same time, they lower costs, reduce demands on IT, and provide the enterprise with comprehensive data to assist in complying with regulatory standards.

More importantly, these integrations make it seamless for users to communicate, collaborate, and connect. And by enabling SSO, the integrations for Okta and Google enhance security and worker productivity by making secure authentication to multiple applications and the UCaaS system fast and easy using one highly secure password. IDaaS enables a true cloud ecosystem of apps that work in tandem and helps to eliminate the barriers of data across apps, significantly increasing the return on the cloud investment.

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1 Gartner: 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Access Management
3 F5 Report: The State of Application Delivery in 2017
4 Verizon Enterprise: 2016 Data Breach Investigations Report
About RingCentral

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of global enterprise cloud communications and collaboration solutions. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises systems, RingCentral empowers today's mobile and distributed workforce to communicate, collaborate, and connect from anywhere, on any device. RingCentral unifies voice, video, team messaging and collaboration, conferencing, online meetings, and integrated contact center solutions. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading business apps and enables customers to easily customize business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.

For more information about the RingCentral video conferencing solution, visit ringcentral.com.