

RINGCENTRAL'S GUIDE TO UCAAS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

STAYING CONNECTED IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The world has changed. For many small businesses, achieving a physical presence to match their digital presence is a challenge. Employees working in satellite locations or on the road can help a business cover more ground, but separation can lead to disconnection from the rest of the company.

By the end of 2019, over three quarters of small business employees worked remotely for more than two days per week, and 22% of small businesses had over half their staff working remotely.¹ Businesses reported expecting those figures to increase over the next two years.

Remote working trends are creating a more disparate, even fragmented, workforce, bringing new challenges for businesses to address in order to remain competitive through the evolution of the digital age. Business communication is evolving to meet these challenges.

Meanwhile, the digital revolution is in full flow: the smartphone industry now boasts two billion users worldwide, and 80% of adults use messaging apps on a daily basis.²

Social media has empowered consumers to influence how businesses talk to their customers, using an average of seven different channels to engage with brands.³ When interaction becomes splintered, maintaining a consistent voice and message across all channels is a significant challenge.

The B2B market has seen an influx of communication tools to cover every type of interaction conceivable. The tools are effective and sometimes essential, but the volume and variety of communication tests human capacity. More than two-thirds of workers say they waste up to 60 minutes at work

navigating between apps, and 68% of workers toggle between apps up to 10 times an hour.⁴ Faced with so much fragmented communication, there needs to be systems in place to prevent employees getting overwhelmed by deluges of messages from customers and colleagues alike. Some form of consolidation is needed.

This is where unified communications as a service (UCaaS) comes in, presenting the opportunity to consolidate these communications into a single interface.

1. Cavell Group, UK Enterprise Insight Report 2019

2. Greenberg, Inc. in Messages That Matter, 2017

3. Aberdeen Group

4. [CITE Research study](#) for RingCentral 2019

UCAAS FOR THE MOBILE WORKFORCE

UCaaS uses the cloud to connect different communications and collaboration tools that employees can access from anywhere and at any time.

Given the cloud's capacity for scaling and establishing virtual connections, UCaaS is an ideal way to address the growing trend of UK businesses embracing mobile communications:

67% of UK small businesses provide mobile communications to at least 30% of their staff.⁵

12% provide mobile-only communications.⁶

The speed of change in today's business environment creates demands on physical and digital presence. Business development representatives or customer success managers visiting clients in the field want to avoid travel time disrupting their productivity. Missing calls can be a costly risk to take, and today's customers don't bear much friction before taking their business to competitors.

Mobile communications deliver that flexibility to meet customers beyond the restrictions of brick and mortar office environments. We used to say we can't be everywhere at once; digital tools are helping us achieve the impossible.

Done right, UCaaS bridges the physical gaps in the remote workforce, helping employees to keep "talking" wherever and

whenever they are. It avoids the "silo effect," where information is not shared between departments in an organisation and ensures that no matter where employees work, they can still access the same secure system. Some of the features that help to do this are:

- Voice and video communication
- Presence
- Messaging
- Team collaboration
- Conferencing
- Screen and document sharing

5. Cavell Group

6. Cavell Group

THE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING UCAAS

Put simply, UCaaS offers businesses more for less.

UCaaS is based in the cloud, meaning you don't need to store any private branch exchange (PBX) equipment on your own premises. Maintenance and upgrades are all managed by the UCaaS provider, saving time, money, space, and skills requirements. In terms of functionality, UCaaS provides many additional features on top of a phone connection.

THE SILVER LINING OF UCAAS:



Save money

UCaaS saves you money on calls by using the internet rather than traditional telephone lines. VoIP and video messaging services can offer cheaper or even free calls globally. Moreover, UCaaS demands none of the up-front costs associated with a fixed-line service.



Plug and play

UCaaS is quick to install and easy to use. Switching over will cause minimal disruption to your business. In fact, the barrier to full adoption among your employees is much lower than complicated legacy systems.



Be flexible

VoIP offers you greater flexibility such as instant control of channels or users. Rates are also flexible: you only pay for the services you use.



App-hop

UCaaS works in collaboration with various workplace applications such as video calling, click-to-call services, and messaging, among other things.



Go mobile

Don't feel like working from the office? No problem. Connect to your cloud communications system and use your phone exactly as you would from the office.

WHY UCAAS IS ON THE RISE

Businesses are constantly on the lookout for ways to do more with less. Be more productive without working longer; provide better customer experiences without increasing headcount; enable a workforce through technology without spending a fortune.

Structure and strategy are what keep companies growing in the right direction.

Well-integrated tools help to get the best out of people while allowing them to perform their duties regardless of location or device.

The vast majority of employees (92%) say a seamless communications and collaboration platform would make it easier to keep customers happy, improve customer satisfaction scores, and improve both the employee and customer experience.⁷

Around three quarters of customer service agents toggle daily between apps to resolve customer issues, some using anything from two to 12 apps on a daily basis to do their jobs. Three quarters of customer service agents say they can't serve customers well when coworker collaboration is hard.⁸

7. CITE Research

8. CITE Research

TRANSITION TO THE CLOUD

Businesses are moving away from on-premises communications stacks because of the obvious savings on time and money involved. Traditional communications setups required investment in network infrastructure, CRM tools, and a lot of bridging tools to create a fully homogeneous system.

Following the installation of the system, upgrades had to be conducted manually on premises, requiring recurring expenses of time and money. Given the rapid development of technology today, keeping on-premises systems constantly up to date is a big demand for small businesses.

UCaaS has emerged as a way to eliminate the wasted hours and cost that went into traditional deployments. Besides the savings on system implementation and maintenance, businesses also profit from the connectivity of UCaaS.



UCaaS is much more than a suite of channels: the unified nature of those channels is what allows employees to collaborate and share information in consistent and inclusive formats to encourage collaboration between users regardless of department or geographical location.

The right UCaaS platform gathers everything your employees need to connect, share, and work together in the same streamlined interface. While this is an ideal setup for large multinational businesses to manage a global workforce, the platform is size-agnostic and provides critical capability for

businesses of all sizes thanks to its base in the cloud. As Sean Lam, CEO of Walker Crips Group, states of UCaaS, "It has plenty of functionality: it brings big-company systems to smaller companies."⁹

9. [RingCentral case study](#), 2019

WORKING AS ONE

The explosive growth of communication apps equipped with collaboration tools illustrates how communication and collaboration are complementary to one another. Successful collaboration in the workforce relies on effective communication.

COMMUNICATION IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF ANY EXISTING COMPANY

The obvious direction for companies to communicate is externally—to prospects and customers, suppliers, shareholders, and the press. In order to maintain a motivated, enabled workforce, internal communication is also essential to every business.

There is a powerful connection between employee and customer experiences: nine out of ten employees believe that using a seamless communications platform that lets them

interact with coworkers and customers will improve employee experience and customer experience, and will ultimately benefit the bottom line. They're not wrong.

Any communications manager will tell you that both directions of communication must be dealt with strategically in order to fully reach and engage their respective audiences.

External communication strategy:

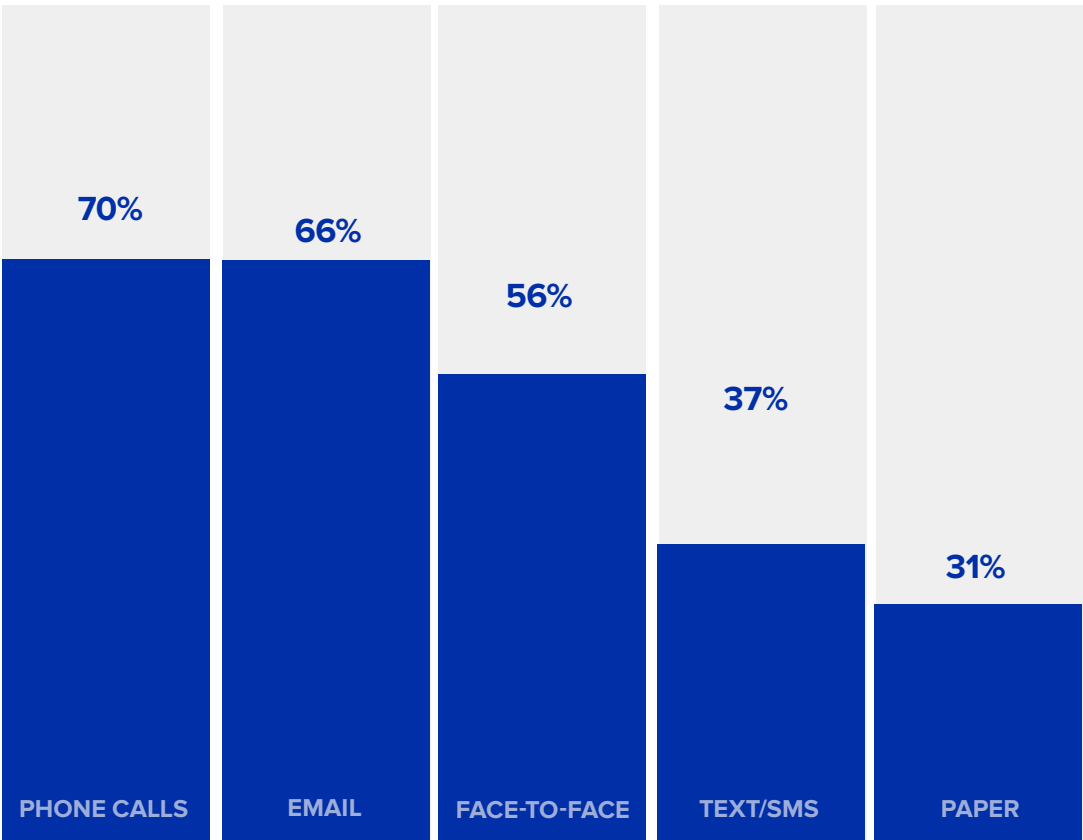
Covering the who, what, when, where, how and why of audiences external to the company. Every audience segment and the timing of every message should be considered in the strategy. External communication plans should be omnichannel, stretching all the way from VoIP to social media, email, SMS and more.

Internal communication strategy:

To drive productivity, employees must feel engaged, empowered, connected, and valued. Internal communication keeps remote workers in the loop, builds transparency and trust in an organisation, and ensures updates are delivered to the right people at the right time in the right way. Like external communication, internal communication frequently involves multiple channels such as email, intranet, and instant message.

PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESSES USING CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS

The chart below shows the most popular external communications channels used by UK small businesses:¹⁰



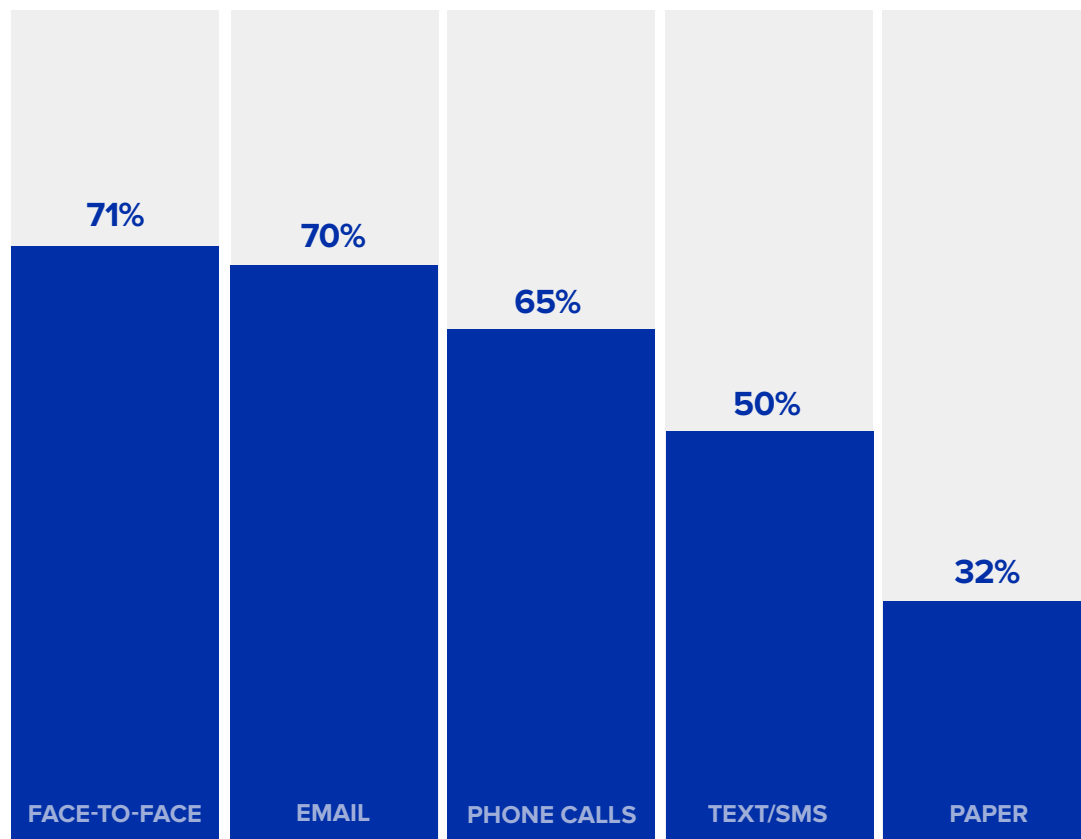
As far as small businesses are concerned, traditional communication channels remain the most popular. Small businesses use chatbots and video conferencing the least out of all the common options, suggesting either a lack of resources to invest in these channels or a perceived low ROI on that investment.

When it comes to UCaaS for external use, a quarter of small businesses have not yet adopted any UCaaS tools at all. While 35% of small businesses have adopted advanced collaboration tools, they lag behind medium and large businesses in terms of adoption rates.

10. Cavell Group

PERCENTAGE OF BUSINESSES USING CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH COLLEAGUES

The chart below shows the most popular internal communications channels used by UK small businesses:¹¹



Employees working in a less dispersed environment are able to talk to each other face-to-face more often. While email is a popular channel among all business sizes, the adoption rate of team collaboration tools and of project management tools is currently much lower for small businesses.

It's easier to keep communications centralised when the entire workforce is under one roof, as communication lines tend to be shorter. However, as small businesses adapt to business technology trends, they have the greatest potential to introduce UCaaS into their communications processes. As communication and collaboration applications are added to a business's toolbox, the need for consolidation and centralisation becomes greater, which is where UCaaS offers significant value.

Another factor keeping IT managers up at night is the creep of shadow IT—employees using their own, insecure hardware or software on a company's secure network. As digital enablement in our personal lives shapes our expectations of access to technology in the workplace, we seek out the tools we need

to help us work better. That could include applications that are already provided as part of a business's IT policy, or it could mean seeking and installing unregulated software on a local machine, beyond the control of the centralised IT system. These are the kinds of potential breaches businesses are at pains to avoid—and the only solution is to ensure the workforce is enabled with the tools that work for them, so they can be kept within the control of the company's own IT department.

Almost a third of small businesses have yet to adopt UCaaS for internal use. However, almost half have adopted advanced collaboration tools.¹² Smaller businesses are currently even less likely to use UCaaS methods internally than with customers. As more businesses of all sizes undergo digital transformation and seek to maintain their competitive edge, the adoption of UCaaS for internal use will increase. The improved productivity in using one centralised communication platform to call, message, and meet, rather than multiple different tools, means small businesses can't afford not to adopt UCaaS.

11. Cavell Group

12. Cavell Group

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION



While communication is about the sharing of information, collaboration in the modern workforce is about enabling people to contribute and work together on a project.

A lot of collaboration is internal, and collaboration tools are designed with internal collaboration in mind. That said, many collaboration tools allow

administrators to invite external guests with limited access to collaborate on projects without risking privacy and security complications.

Get communication right, and you'll create a natural partnership: if communication is clear, accessible, and easy to use across a range of touchpoints, it helps collaboration work.

COLLABORATION COMES TO THE FORE

As work becomes less about location and more about outcomes, the need for flexibility increases, and collaboration comes to the fore. Collaboration tools increase team efficiency by as much as 20%, and among UK businesses as a whole, the most common reasons to adopt collaboration tools are improved flexibility

and increased productivity.¹³ More than three quarters of businesses find collaboration tools make it easier to track and manage projects and allow them to deliver a better customer experience, and 80% of small businesses agree that using such tools leads to higher employee engagement.¹⁴

¹³. Cavell Group

¹⁴. Cavell Group

THE BENEFITS OF UCAAS FOR SMALL BUSINESS

UCaaS enables small businesses to operate leaner and adapt quicker to market demands. Rather than being a cumbersome, supposed fix-all approach, UCaaS is an approach that aims to get the most out of business communications and collaboration while demanding a lot less in terms of input.

THE FIVE MOST SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS OF UCAAS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES ARE:

- **Cost savings** through the use of VoIP and consolidated subscriptions
- **Mobility** to log on and work from wherever there is an internet connection
- **Flexibility** of services, channels, and user control
- **Simplicity** of installation and use
- **Breadth of integration** with popular work applications

UCaaS helps small businesses keep their teams running smoothly with relatively little initial investment. In fact, UCaaS services can eliminate the traditional CapEx spend associated with on-premises communications.

One of the biggest issues any company faces with communication is the pressure to embrace multiple channels offered by multiple providers. Small firms feel the pressure to find a system that ties these different channels and services together without going over budget. To compete, any small company needs to innovate quickly, communicate constantly, and keep expenses low.

UCaaS enables small businesses to achieve the omnichannel goal by consolidating multiple channels within one system, with a consistent user experience, without compounded costs.

UCaaS is a powerful solution, suitable for companies of all sizes, that integrates desk phones, computer software, and mobile devices with a range of additional capabilities. Employees can use functions like voice recording, video calling, and instant messaging without having to switch tools or windows. Put simply, anyone in a small business can connect with the right person, at the right time, using any device.

The UCaaS proposition for small businesses

UCaaS is size-agnostic, with benefits for every specific use case. As small businesses seek to improve their external connections with customers and enhance their internal communication efforts to engage and enable employees, UCaaS presents a low-cost, high performance solution to these challenges.

Higher productivity: All your communications channels accessible through the same streamlined interface. Employees can operate more efficiently in a more connected way.

Genuine flexibility: All the tools your employees need to communicate efficiently no matter where they are. Immediate engagement over any channel, from video conferencing to instant messaging.

Lower overheads: Embrace remote working with a cost-effective, cloud-based way to access expertise from around the globe. Cut your operating costs and your office space requirements.

UCAAS IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT IN A SMALL BUSINESS

The key to successfully implementing UCaaS is to work backwards from the user. Determine the areas in which your business needs to empower your workforce, increase productivity, or generate new business. Small businesses don't need to spend big money on extensive suites with snake-oil promises. UCaaS is an adaptive system that can be optimised to the needs of each specific company.



Consider your short- and medium-term business strategy, look at your company's strengths and opportunities, and identify how incremental improvements can add up to big wins. How can UCaaS remove barriers to your employees' high performance? In what areas does your business need to operate more efficiently?

Take stock of your specific needs, as they are key in determining the communications system you might want to use and the provider you choose. You might want to look out for services that cover the most common communications system requirements of small businesses:

- Integrated voice, web meetings, audio conferencing, and fax
- Call and fax from your business line on your mobile device
- Easy and fast activation, with plug-and-ring-ready phones
- Convenient online access for admins and users
- Professional call management features

The whole point of UCaaS systems is to unify, but there is a great variety of tools used by businesses—and not just for communication. Thankfully, some UCaaS systems are also able to integrate with businesses' existing tools through APIs, streamlining the workflow across the whole business. Whether it's CRM tools like Salesforce and Zendesk, productivity tools like Trello and Asana, or marketing tools like Hubspot and Mailchimp, your business probably relies on indispensable tools you need to keep in your processes.

It's possible to find a UCaaS system that can adapt to the needs—and improve the performance—of your existing business. The clearer you can identify critical areas for integration and potential areas for improvement, the easier it will be to choose a cost-effective UCaaS vendor.

As you consider partnering with a UCaaS provider, there are several vital points to consider in your selection process:

- How easily will the system scale to support your fluctuating needs?
- Is the provider flexible and adaptable to your current and future requirements?
- Does the service reduce costs now and into the future?
- Can the service enable “bring your own device” (BYOD) and mobile workers across a distributed workforce?
- Will the system make it easier for your IT, admins, and users to make small changes, updates, and fixes?

Once you have your needs and preferences clearly defined, you'll be able to compare and contrast providers and the service they can offer you. For more information on confidently purchasing UCaaS, see our [SMB Buyers Guide](#).

For more information, please contact one of our solution experts. Visit ringcentral.co.uk or call 0800 098 8136.

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of cloud Message Video Phone (MVP), customer engagement, and contact centre solutions for businesses worldwide. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems that it replaces, RingCentral empowers modern mobile and distributed workforces to communicate, collaborate, and connect via any mode, any device, and any location. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading third-party business applications and enables customers to easily customise business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.



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