

# UCAAS & MILLENNIALS: 8 REASONS CLOUD UC ANSWERS GEN Y NEEDS

By Anne Rawland Gabriel



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Anne Rawland Gabriel has more than 20 years of experience writing about business technologies as a journalist and marketing communications consultant. Her work spans technology ranging from the latest in Wi-Fi, network intelligence and SDN to traditional data center and desktop solutions. In addition to Channel Partners content, Gabriel currently contributes to other channel publications as well as to education, financial services and various industry trade publications. Previously, she spent nearly a decade as a contributing editor to Bank Systems & Technology, Insurance & Technology and Wall Street & Technology. Earlier in her career she worked as a communications executive at a top software company and established her own award-winning regional marketing communications firm. Gabriel holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Grinnell College.



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77% of UCaaS adopters say the technology enables supporting a mobile workforce.

—Frost & Sullivan

## MILLENNIALS ARE RESHAPING THE WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE WITH THEIR PREFERENCE FOR COLLABORATING ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, AND THEIR FOCUS ON

contentment over cash. For example, a recent [Deloitte Millennial Survey](#) reveals that millennials are more inclined to judge an employer based on employee satisfaction rather than profits. And, if dissatisfied, they are perfectly ready to look for opportunities elsewhere.

That matters to your customers because this cohort now represents the largest generational share of the U.S. workforce, [according to Pew Research](#), so engaging them productively and successfully is mission-critical.

Help your customers avoid employee churn, and other millennial quagmires, by deploying a unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) system.

Quick to deploy and easy to use, UCaaS offers the communication and collaboration tools millennials crave and businesses need to stay competitive in a changing competitive landscape.

To help get client conversations started, here are some reasons today's UCaaS offerings give SMB organizations the next-generation tools they need.

## **1** MILLENNIAL-FRIENDLY INTERFACES

As technology natives, millennials expect more than tools that work. They also want elegant and streamlined interactivity between applications.

"Millennials don't want clunky systems," says industry veteran Kate Jaffe, founder and CEO of **Convergent Technologies Inc.**, a Philadelphia area-based solutions provider. "They want a single pane of glass, with a single password, and integrated features — all of it accessible from their mobile devices, whether company-issued or BYOT."

Modern UCaaS solutions can answer these demands. They aggregate the applications millennials prefer for collaboration, such as text and video chat, with business-critical productivity tools like email and presence. Plus, for always-on mobility, UCaaS provides mobile twinning, where a person's office extension is replicated, or "twinned," onto a mobile device.

"Features once considered separate are now standard," Jaffe says. "They're not add-ons or extras."

## **2** SOCIAL COLLABORATION TOOLS

In addition to "standard" applications, robust UCaaS solutions supply social collaboration capabilities. These tools provide the ability to manage and collaborate on projects within the UC environment, which offers associated productivity and security benefits.

With social collaboration, projects occur within a "room" that is established at an initiative's outset. Team members are admitted to the room and all activities are conducted within that virtual space.

"This includes interactions, such as chats, as well as creating and sharing data files, like documents, spreadsheets, presentations and more," says Michael Finneran, principal at dBrn Associates and a frequent contributor to Channel Partners as well as UCStrategies.com and NoJitter.com.

Just one significant benefit is document version control, a perennial challenge when transmitting email attachments among multiple individuals. With social collaboration, all document changes and team member conversations get tracked.

"As a result, document forking is eliminated," says Finneran. "And, because team members have full visibility into what's already been discussed, projects can get completed more efficiently."

## Making the Sale

In addition to offering the right solution to meet a client's needs, successfully fielding the following common objections can help you make the sale.

### **We've already paid for our phone system, why should we switch?**

Peddling UCaaS as the latest phone system completely misses the mark. Instead, it's about doing business better.

"The transformative nature of UCaaS is the value proposition," says Brian Crotty, COO at Broadview. "This requires educating your customers, which solution providers frequently neglect. Open the conversation with: 'Let me show you how you can change the way you do business to be more efficient, effective and profitable.'"

For example, four hours of round-trip windshield time for a two-hour meeting robs an employee of half the day. "With desktop video, meetings occur virtually, and employees gain all of that productivity back," Crotty says. "Plus, we've seen SMB travel budgets drop by thousands of dollars or more."

### **Our millennials like Skype and What's App. Why not use them?**

Besides lacking all of the integrated productivity tools of an enterprise UC solution, reliability is deficient in consumer tools. "A company's next call, chat, web conference or video call could lead to their next multimillion-dollar deal," says Brandenburg. "But consumer solutions only offer 'best effort' — there are no guarantees a call or text will work."

### **Our employees want truly seamless transitions. Do all UCaaS solutions offer that?**

While UCaaS platforms continue to improve their interactivity, execution varies. Jaffe suggests knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the solutions you're offering. "For example, twinning is more seamless with some solutions than others," she says. "When a customer is particularly interested in this feature, we showcase the solution with the strongest offering."

### **Our business is growing. Does UCaaS scale?**

Although the short answer is "yes," Kiliski notes a surprising number of clients and prospects ask this question. "We tell customers the UCaaS solutions we represent handle up to 5,999 employees," he says. "If they grow larger than that, we promise to build something especially for them."

### **We get that UCaaS is easy and advantageous. What if we still don't have the staff to support it?**

No matter how simple UCaaS is to use, many SMB clients are increasingly reliant on super-lean IT staffs. This makes administrating and supporting a UCaaS platform yet another area of opportunity for solution providers.

"Some clients still want us to manage their systems," acknowledges Kiliski. "Be prepared to offer this service in order to close the deal."



### **SELF-SERVICE OPTIONS**

Another millennial preference addressed by UCaaS is self-service. This is vital because millennials chafe at waiting for IT assistance.

"Giving millennials the tools to self-manage is key to their productivity," says Feliks Kiliski, managing partner and vice president of sales at **Glacier Communications**, a boutique master agent in New York City. "For example, they want the ability to instantaneously add a person to a group chat — or prevent someone from joining a chat."

CTI's Jaffe concurs. "The self-service features in modern UCaaS solutions are so easy and friendly," she says. "They really are targeted to millennials."

## 4 COMPETITIVE INSIGHTS

Modern UCaaS solutions are also providing increasingly sophisticated analytics and reporting capabilities for business intelligence and competitive insights. Some even integrate with popular CRM solutions, such as Salesforce.

“The world opens up with data and analytics,” says Michael Brandenburg, industry analyst for connected work at Frost & Sullivan. “When businesses can start recognizing patterns, they can become more proactive. For instance, if a customer calls every quarter with questions, then a business can anticipate that call and contact their customer first.”

In practice, Kiliski sees the benefits firsthand.

“Some of our clients are taking full advantage of the latest UCaaS analytics features,” he says. “For example, businesses with a dozen sales reps are drilling down to uncover information and hold employees accountable.”

Predictive capabilities can lead to savings as well.

“Other clients are using it to evolve their businesses,” he adds. “Based on analytics, they can add staffing expertise in particular areas, or adjust staffing levels at particular times of the day.”

## 5 FASTER PRODUCT UPDATES

In addition to supplying advanced features, UCaaS solutions enable customers to quickly roll out the latest tools, making expensive forklift refreshes and complex software upgrades obsolete. Maybe that’s a short-term hit for a partner, but longer term it increases customer loyalty and retention.

“Unlike on-premises UC, cloud-based systems are continuously and non-disruptively upgraded,” says Kiliski, who banks his profitability on UCaaS and other cloud-enable solutions. “As we get feedback from our business customers, we provide it to our UCaaS vendors and the new, or improved, feature sets just roll out. For our clients, that’s huge.”

## 6 IMPROVED RESILIENCE

Operationally, UCaaS offers the same business resiliency attributes delivered by other cloud-based systems. “Business continuity is vastly superior,” says Kiliski. “As long as employees can get to a viable internet connection, a business can function. And, no matter where an employee is in the world, they can look like they’re sitting in their office.”

According to Jaffe, ensuring viable internet connectivity also becomes an opportunity to sell redundant MPLS.

“As a partner, you can demonstrate value by showing you have relationships with multiple telecom vendors,” she points out.

## Adding Value: Addressing Security and QoS

Selling UCaaS offers channel partners various opportunities for adding value. Key client conversations include:

- **Mobile Device Security.** For UCaaS platforms launched prior to the mobile app revolution, some industry experts say security capabilities suffer. “In general, none of the established vendors tackle mobile device security as well as the newer players,” says Raul Castanon-Martinez, senior analyst for enterprise mobility at 451 Research.

That’s because most existing players have layered mobile apps on top of their UC foundations, creating predictable vulnerabilities. “When an app resides on a device, IT staffs supporting BYOT environments typically have limited control over devices connecting to these UCaaS platforms,” Castanon-Martinez says.

Partners can help their clients overcome this hurdle by ensuring the adoption of an appropriate mobile device management (MDM) strategy. “Integrating MDM definitely should be part of your UCaaS solution discussions,” Jaffe says. “Even with some of the more recent platforms, it’s an important conversation to have.”

- **Quality of Service (QoS).** As UCaaS vendors are responsible for providing a voice- and video-optimized MPLS connection to your business clients, it’s tempting to believe that QoS challenges are solved. The reality is otherwise.

“Voice packets from the UCaaS travel through a company’s LAN on their way to a phone or mobile device,” says Finneran. “This means QoS in the local LAN environment absolutely matters.”

Help customers set service level expectations, then test to ensure the network can meet them — look at latency, jitter and packet loss, not just bandwidth. We discuss designing a network to support videoconferencing in [this free report](#).

“It’s critical to assist your clients with performing a pre-implementation stress test,” he adds. “Then, help them optimize their internal LAN accordingly.”

### **7 SIMPLIFIED INFRASTRUCTURE**

UCaaS also significantly streamlines infrastructure investments and reduces complexities versus premises-based UC.

“Fully benefitting from on-prem UC required decisions and investments around physical storage, regulatory requirements, business continuity and licensing,” Jaffe says. “For example, where do we store the voicemails that get routed to an email, and for how long? What happens when there are regulations like HIPAA involved?”

While addressing such requirements is burdensome, it’s especially onerous for compliance-centric businesses.

“Many of our premises-based customers didn’t even turn on various productivity features because of the infrastructure and policy complexities,” she says. “With UCaaS, all of those decisions and investments go away.”

**IDC says cloud-based UCaaS will account for 60% of UCaaS implementations by 2017, with market revenue reaching \$26.9 billion in 2016.**



## **8** REDUCED COSTS

Unsurprisingly, reducing continuity and infrastructure complexities translates to UCaaS offering lower costs than a premises-based alternative.

“In addition to dedicating help desk resources and supporting physical telephones, every time a user is added to an on-prem solution, you have to add a license for the phone, a license for the software, a license for the upgrade and so on,” says Jaffe. “There’s also the cost of a redundant server for resiliency and the redundant server licenses. That model nickels and dimes businesses to death.”

With UCaaS, businesses pay per user or by groups of users. Everything else comes with the service. “For continuity, businesses frequently invest in an extra MPLS circuit, but that cost is so small by comparison it becomes moot,” Jaffe says.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Beyond the many UCaaS benefits, telecommunications veterans like Jaffe and Kiliski say recommending today’s enterprise solutions just makes sense.

“I believe we’re on the precipice of all businesses moving to a cloud-based solution,” says Jaffe. “Even our larger enterprise accounts are considering UCaaS because, from an R&D perspective, that’s where the innovations are occurring.”

To put it another way, says Kiliski, “if you’re not discussing UCaaS with your clients, someone else is. It’s that simple.”

**87% of millennials believe the success of a business should be measured in terms of more than just its financial performance.**

—2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey