

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS DEPLOYMENT OPTIONS: Find the Best Fit for Your Business



Unified communications (UC) technologies go beyond telephony by seamlessly integrating applications used by workers every day, no matter their device or location. With the capability to improve collaboration, productivity and overall business performance, choosing the UC deployment model that will best meet your needs is key. **Onsite, cloud or hybrid** — [learn how to find your best fit now.](#)

Why Unified Communications, Why Now?

The way we work — and how a business interacts with its customers — has changed dramatically. Has your business phone system kept pace with the times? More importantly, is it capable of helping you meet tomorrow's challenges? Today's unified communications solutions can help you meet the challenges head on. UC addresses the broader scope of business communications by integrating commonly used applications:

VOICE
EMAIL
CHAT/IM

MESSAGING
VIDEO

CONFERENCING
COLLABORATION



Drivers Behind the Demand for UC

Organizations of all sizes face a variety of challenges, both internal and external, around day-to-day operations. To help define your business case, start first by assessing what specific needs you want your UC solution to address. VoIP communications are key to your company, but there is much more that UC can add in terms of collaboration. Here are 3 key categories to consider as you make your customized UC business case:

Technological Requirements	Productivity Needs	Competitive Demands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility - Cloud integration - Remote/branch office locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent experience - Unique preferences - Dispersed workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agility - Globalization - Customer expectations

An Overview of UC Deployment Options

Onsite	Cloud	Hybrid
Business fully owns and operates the solution	<p>Applications hosted remotely, run either by the UC provider or a hosting partner</p> <p>Business consumes the service as a monthly subscription expense</p> <p>Cloud provider manages the service, relieving IT of most or all network-related tasks</p>	A mixed deployment with some UC elements remaining onsite and others hosted in the cloud



Onsite Deployment: Pros & Cons

Pros

- 1 | Provides the most control for IT and minimizes the reliance on external partners for reliability, quality and security
- 2 | As a capital expenditure (CapEx), there are no ongoing costs to finance the solution

Cons

- 1 | CapEx funding is harder to come by, plus high costs of maintenance, changes/adds/deletes, upgrades and replacements
- 2 | Obsolescence risk is high, especially for technology that is evolving constantly
- 3 | Deployment complexity is an adoption barrier, especially if IT resources are limited
- 4 | Limited flexibility when integrating with new applications and supporting new sites

An Onsite Solution Might be Your Best Fit if:

- You want to maintain control and ownership of the phone system and UC
- You want to avoid ongoing financial costs
- You have sunk costs in the current solution and/or are tied to a contract
- You have bad experiences with cloud-based UC or distrust the cloud
- You are only looking for a telephony solution vs. a full UC solution at this time
- You have no plans to integrate voice with other applications or plan to go with other providers for these services if/when deployed
- You want excellent voice quality and may perceive an onsite solution as superior to hosted options

Cloud Deployment: Pros & Cons

Pros

- 1 | As an operating expense (OpEx), it is cash flow-friendly which makes UC accessible for any size budget
- 2 | Scalable – Ideal for rapid growth and/or seasonal businesses
- 3 | Flexible – Easy to add features, new users and remote locations without IT staff
- 4 | Removes complexity so IT doesn't need a major skill upgrade and can focus on other business needs

Cons

- 1 | Giving up control over managing UC
- 2 | Can introduce new security risks, especially when UC is being used over the public Internet or WiFi
- 3 | While the economics are initially attractive, ongoing costs over time will be more expensive than onsite
- 4 | Quality and reliability perception concerns could be an issue if the UC partner is not carefully chosen

A Cloud Solution Might be Your Best Fit if:

- You have a hosted VoIP solution in place and want to add other cloud-based applications as collaboration needs become better understood
- Your existing onsite phone system is getting old and expensive to maintain
- You have IT infrastructure limitations
- You don't want to invest in an onsite phone system that will become outdated before its time
- You need to deploy the solution quickly and/or want to do a gradual rollout
- You have branch offices, but not the IT staff to support them
- You want your remote workers to have the same experience and capabilities as those in the office
- You need the flexibility to scale and/or add applications
- You need to control costs as your UC solution expands to support growth
- You have limited IT resources and/or want your IT resources to focus on other business priorities

Hybrid Deployment: Pros & Cons

Pros

- 1 | The ultimate in flexibility and best of both worlds – can balance a mix of models based on comfort level, budgets, locations and priorities
- 2 | Great way to future-proof UC plans by using cloud for dynamic applications and onsite for those that are more static or considered mission critical
- 3 | Reduces UC risk by deploying cloud elements at a comfortable pace for IT while protecting existing investments

Cons

- 1 | Can sometimes require more work and integration if cloud and onsite are based on multiple platforms, potentially making it difficult to deliver a consistent user experience
- 2 | Few vendors can support a true hybrid model – most can do one or the other, but not both
- 3 | Can be more demanding for IT to detect origin of problems, since two deployment models must be managed, possibly with multiple vendors

A Hybrid Solution Might be Your Best Fit if:

- You currently have a mixed telephony deployment where the main office is onsite, but smaller branch offices are resource constrained
- Your business is adding new offices and making greater use of remote workers
- You want the flexibility of using both models to keep the cloud deployment within IT's comfort zone
- You want to provide a smooth path for going back to onsite if cloud telephony doesn't work out as expected
- You want a simple transition to cloud telephony and UC, while still protecting existing investments
- You want onsite control with remote sites supported in the cloud, while providing a consistent user experience for all
- You want a solution that will work with what you have today, preserving your investment while also giving you the greatest flexibility for the future



What to Look for in a UC Partner

- The flexibility to offer and support all three scenarios from a single solution that is easy to deploy, manage and use
- A consistent user experience for employees, partners and customers no matter where their UC service resides
- A full suite of applications and capabilities to grow into as collaboration needs evolve
- The ability to offer both public and private cloud options (cloud-based solutions)
- The ability to provide an enterprise-grade telephony and UC experience
- Competitive pricing along with quality, reliability, security and user experience
- Flexible licensing that makes it easy to add features, applications and new users - onsite, in the cloud or hybrid - as the business grows
- A seamlessly integrated UC solution that makes life easier for IT and can be customized to the business' other systems and applications
- A user experience that is intuitive and simple, requiring minimal training
- A proven brand and reputation in the marketplace

Finding the Best Fit for Your Business

More and more organizations are embracing UC to improve collaboration, productivity and overall performance. If you're looking to step up your business communications and explore all the business benefits UC can deliver, contact the experts at Parallel today.