

Unified communications: Not profiling employees poses risk to investments

LONDON, UK / JOHANNESBURG, SA: Research reveals employees are often consulted, but their opinion rarely exerted influence.



A dangerously low 21% of organisations recently interviewed by research firm Ovum stated that when it comes to profiling their employees' unified communications and collaboration (UCC) needs, they believed all employees had the same requirements. A further 13% of organisations did not see the value in profiling their employees' requirements and 21%

assumed all employees had the same needs. Only 38% of respondents reported that they had profiled their employees, while 25% had simply not considered a user profiling exercise.

This is highlighted in the [Dimension Data 2013 Global UCC Study](#) carried out by Ovum on behalf of [Dimension Data](#), which polled over 1,320 enterprise ICT decision-makers and 1,390 employees in a broad spectrum of industry verticals in 18 countries.

"This finding is alarming, considering the strategic approach more enterprises are taking towards UCC, the BYOD trend, the focus on mobilising UC and social collaboration, and aspirational goals to increase business agility," says Gavin Hill, Technical Director: Solutions, Dimension Data South Africa. "This lack of user awareness poses a risk to the success of UCC investments; especially since decision-makers expressed that they're basing UCC investments on improved business processes and productivity."

SA generally ahead of the pack

Hill says UCC uptake in South Africa is ahead of the global curve, with further investment imminent. "Overall, the South African large enterprises we spoke to are ahead of the global trend when it comes to UCC investment. Our results show that 91% of large South African firms have a strategic plan in place to evaluate and implement at least some UCC applications in the medium term, similar to firms elsewhere. These results point to a relatively aggressive approach when it comes to UCC and its constituent technologies. South African enterprises have typical uptake rates higher than their global peers in key new areas such as personal video, social software, team workspaces, and UC clients on smartphones/tablets (mobile UC), and report a sustained interest in maintaining or extending that investment."

South African employees bring their own smart devices to work, and generally, employers in the region support this. "Our research shows that more than 74% of South African employees who own smartphones and tablets bring these to work and use them for work. When asked about BYOD, almost one third of South African enterprises indicated support for any employee-owned smartphones and tablets, with 53% indicating support for those which have arrived in the organisation with official vetting. However, almost a third of respondents indicated they had no plans to support 'any device' BYOD at all, with almost a quarter planning no official BYOD policy."

A need to extend employee outreach exercises

Hill says that aside from the impact UCC could have on specific job roles, and the importance of employee uptake as a measurement of success, it appears the majority of those organisations surveyed recognise the need to get at least some user input, but simply do not use this opportunity to conduct a profiling exercise.

"ICT underlines the need for more enterprises to extend their employee outreach exercises and gather not only a wish list of functions from users, but information that will enable them to link functionality with role or employee type. Given the

highly personal and increasingly consumer-oriented nature of UCC, it seems the culture of some enterprises' ICT departments may present an additional barrier to UCC success," he says.

What the Ovum research also revealed was that of those employees who were often consulted, their opinion rarely exerted influence. According to the IT decision-makers interviewed, line-of-business managers, local managers and users were frequently consulted for UCC investment planning, with over half of enterprises reaching out to each of those stakeholder communities.



"This is relatively good news, until enterprises are asked whether such stakeholders make a major contribution. The answer is that they do not. As expected, IT managers and WAN managers are the most influential, with over 70% of enterprises making a UCC investment relying on global IT directors for major contributions, compared to less than 20% getting major contributions from users.

'UCC decision-making not a zero-sum game'

"UCC decision-making - especially as the breadth of UCC technologies and services expands - is not a zero-sum game. IT directors and managers should be making major contributions. However, it appears that organisations are not taking employee and line-of-business feedback as seriously as they could be, increasing the risk that UCC investment will not be matched by employee uptake," he says.

Hill points out that there is a great deal of risk inherent in not granting significant weight to employee expectations and requirements. "Our research also indicates that user uptake is a critical success metric for UCC investments. A user-aware, or even user-centric, UCC strategy implies that these requirements help to shape UCC investment strategy. In the future, users will increasingly be the catalysts for evolution in the UCC market."

About Dimension Data

Founded in 1983, Dimension Data plc is an ICT services and solutions provider that uses its technology expertise, global service delivery capability and entrepreneurial spirit to accelerate the business ambitions of its clients. Dimension Data is a member of the NTT Group. www.dimensiondata.com

About Dimension Data's 2013 Global UCC Study

In August 2007, Dimension Data commissioned research firm, Ovum (then Datamonitor), to conduct a primary research study on the attitudes towards unified communications, its adoption and perceived benefits. 390 IT Managers and 524 technology users from 13 countries were interviewed. This year's study has drawn even greater levels of participation with over 2,700 respondents from 18 countries. The report provides managers with a tool to understand current market conditions and identify best practices. The content of the report is ideally leveraged in the development of a UCC strategy. www.dimensiondata.com/Solutions/UCC.

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