

DEPLOYING UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS AT POLARIS  
SOFTWARE LABS PTE LTD.

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**Asia Pacific Market Insights**

*Frost & Sullivan's commentary on the Asia Pacific ICT industry, addressing opportunities, best practices, and major events*

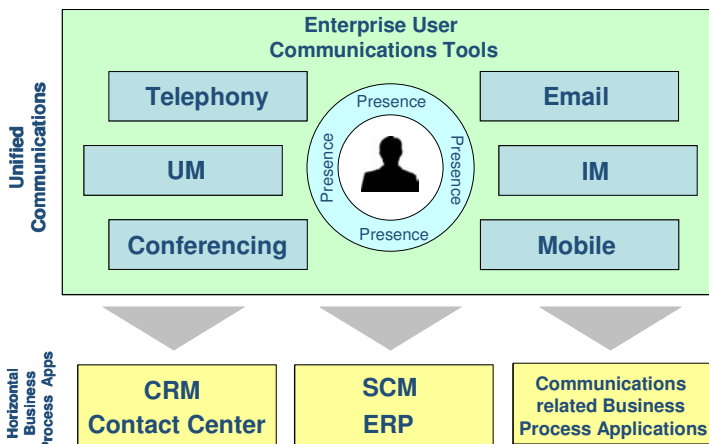


*“We accelerate growth”*

## What is Unified Communications?

Unified Communications (UC) has come to be defined in many ways by the different stakeholders of UC. There is the telecom manager, the desktop user, the iphone and black berry toting mobile worker and the call center agent who all seem to have similar needs of wanting to communicate in the fastest and easiest way possible. UC provides these individuals an integrated solution in response to their multiple needs. Through its features such as instant messaging, click to call, audio, video, web conferencing and integrated voice & email that are powered by presence awareness, UC offers its users agility and ease in communicating that was never before possible.

So what is UC? According to Frost & Sullivan Unified Communications (UC) is the integration of the various tools and applications used within an enterprise and with external partners for business communications.



Source: Frost & Sullivan

Although UC tools have been around for over a decade, it is only of late that businesses are exploring the wider spectrum of UC beyond the basic tools of email and telephony.

Attesting to this current trend, Frost & Sullivan predicts that the UC market in APAC will grow to 5.04 billion by the end of 2009. Much of the immediate growth is expected to come from collaboration led solutions such as audio, video and web conferencing, IP telephony migration and email upgrades embedded with UC applications.

## Justifying UC

So while UC promises to deliver on its mandate of cost savings and productivity gains among other benefits, what kind of organisations are likely to benefit from implementing UC? This becomes an important question in light of the business case justification that senior management need, in order to validate any IT spends given the tough market conditions that have frozen or reduced most budgets within organizations.

While UC does not discriminate against the size, vertical or type of organisations in the benefits that it can accrue, return on investment might be easier to correlate for some types of firms than others. Typically the following classification of organizations has been quicker to realize the benefits of deploying UC.

1. Enterprises that are present in multiple sites or geographies – these organizations typically incur high communication expenses for internal communications. Also in a recessionary time, travel is most likely to be cut back. UC applications such as conferencing will do well separately and as a component of UC in such a scenario.
2. Enterprises that have multiple points of human intervention in processes – At each of these multiple points there is scope for delays due to the dependence on finding the right mode of communication to reach the person in charge to move ahead in the process. Hence UC removes that latency and catapults decision making to the fastest channel of preferred communication.

3. Unified Communications in Business Applications - The Contact center is a good example of this category. By embedding unified communication applications into business processes, organizations can provide customers unprecedented service - not only by improving the call center's ability to respond more efficiently and effectively to customers, but by enabling the entire enterprise team to be more responsive to customers
4. Enterprises that have a large number of mobile workers - Sales organisations that have a large number of mobile workers typically need access to the right information at the right time. But having information dispersed across many communications sources — such as different platforms, multiple devices, separate voicemail and email systems, and multiple data servers and directories — can cause critical delays in responding to customer needs. Mobility applications address these very needs by consolidating interfaces and streamlining information to simplify interactions and providing greater ease of use.

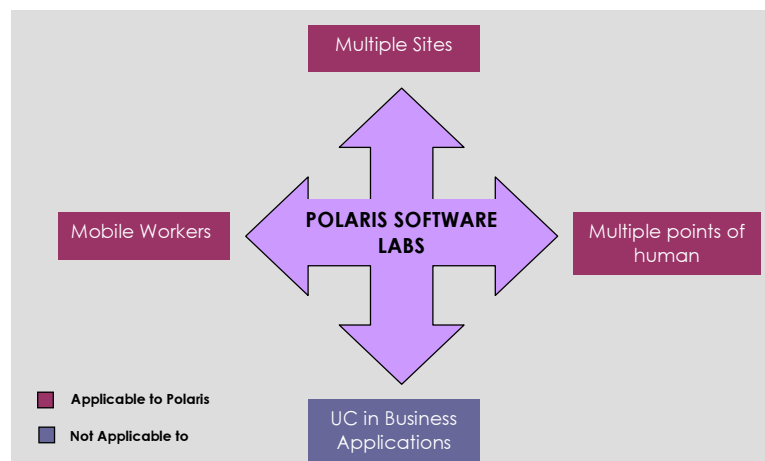
## Deploying UC: Case study – Polaris Software Labs Pte Ltd.

An enduring player in the Banking and financial industry, Polaris has a track record of over 2 decades in the industry. With an assortment of product solution suites and services, the company has a turnover of over 250 million USD, 7,000+ employees worldwide working within 12 geographies and serving top names such as Citigroup, UBS, Lloyds TSB, SEB, Shinsei Bank, MHB, & Deutsche Leasing, to name a few

### Communication Challenges faced by the company:

The organization which consists of techno-bankers, banking & insurance practitioners, technology experts, quality process experts and widely distributed sales, marketing and project delivery teams had over past two years got into the routine of organizing conference calls in order to conduct multiparty discussions. Over time a conferencing culture was born from the need to maintain constant communications between distributed teams in an organized and non intrusive way. Conferencing culture, deeply ingrained into all the Polaris managers was identified by the IT strategy team as the first cultural step towards ushering in Unified communications. At the peak volume of five hundred thousand minutes a month of conferencing volume that was completely outsourced, the time felt ripe for a shift towards the next steps in effective collaboration through an Internal intuitive and integrated VOIP – webinar - conferencing solution that had the potential to yield return on investment in six months, which reduced costs of running outsourced and disparate conferencing solutions, and also one which could be scaled up with the growing needs of the organization.

In the case of Polaris Software Labs Pte Ltd., the organization matched three of the four categories that were outlined earlier under 'business case justification' and hence promises a very good return on investment.



## Unified Communication Solution

Polaris's UC journey began with the first foundational step to simplify and integrate voice and data networks as the pre-requisite for building a scalable interoperable global VOIP and conferencing solution.

The pre-existing infrastructure primarily consisted of a standard data network linked from point to point, a proprietary VOIP network running in parallel and a TDM based PBX with several tie lines interconnecting the PBX. Not only was this infrastructure expensive to maintain, it was also archaic and did not allow room for integrating improvements in technology - the switch from TDM to VOIP was seen as the first step to building a business critical voice network as well as a conferencing solution.

With a vision for unifying voice and data, the organization embarked upon a program to replace all point to point data links with an MPLS data network, and also replace all the long haul TDM and proprietary VOIP links to standard VOIP using Cisco Routers to which all the existing PBX were connected. This step simplified the voice networks while significantly enhancing capacity, reliability, resilience, and maintenance at a much lower operations cost. This VOIP global network now permitted the introduction of VOIP Soft phones as well as deploys VOIP phones globally – connected to the available VOIP PBX systems.

The next step was to introduce voice broadcast integrated webinars as a means to avoid expensive conference calls for large 'training' type of events where everyone did not need to speak. This – supplemented by traditional 'phone in' interaction was effective in reducing costs.

Complementing above, Avaya soft phones and end points have been set up along with Avaya's conferencing system -Meeting Exchange. A logical step in choosing Avaya's UC solutions was because it interoperates with the organization's email, calendaring, webinar and instant messaging application (IBM Lotus) seamlessly.

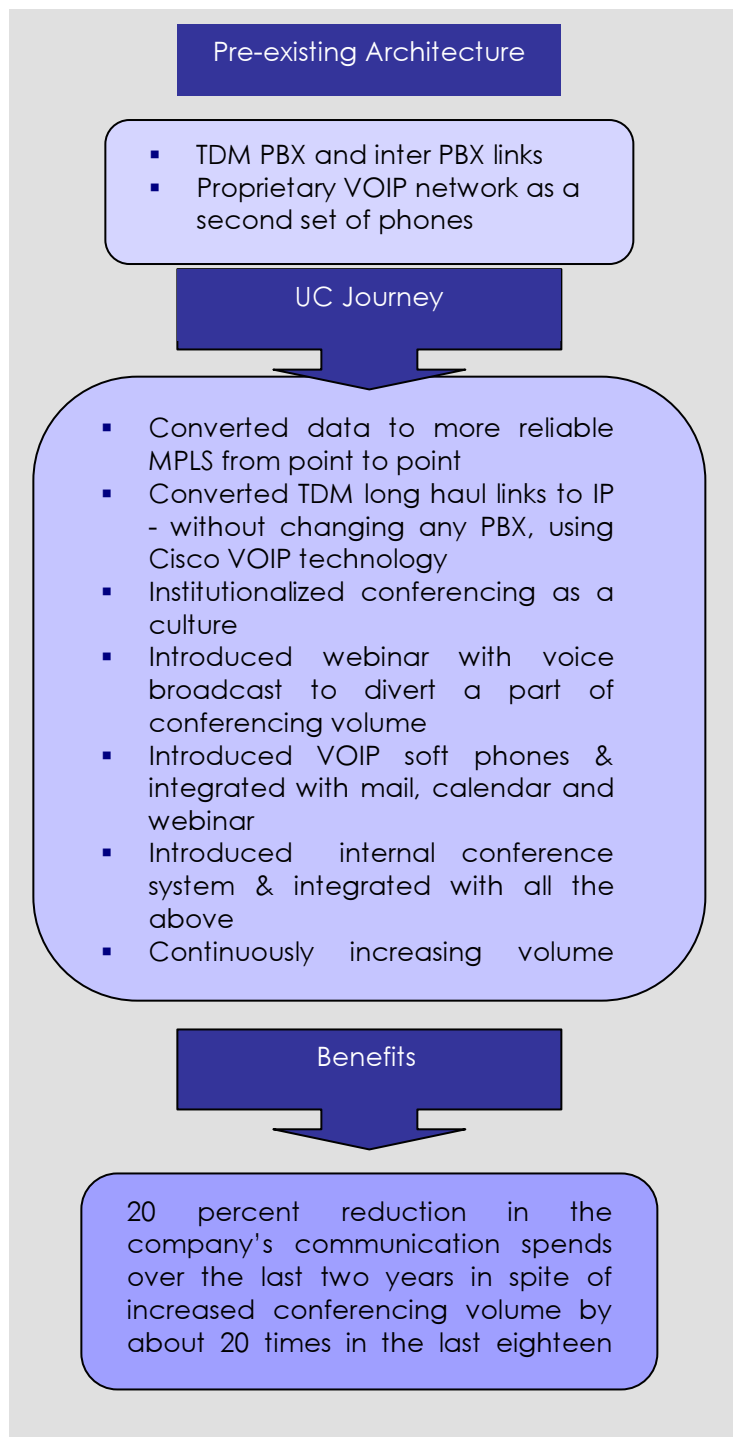
Avaya Meeting Exchange for IBM Lotus Sametime extends the value of the latest version of IBM's platform for secure, scalable and proven instant messaging and Web conferencing. By integrating Avaya's audio conferencing capabilities, the solution provides users with added collaboration capabilities, including multi-party click-to-conference from Lotus Notes and Lotus Sametime contact lists. In addition, Avaya Meeting Exchange integrates with the Web conferencing in Lotus Sametime to offer meeting participants a single, unified interface for both audio and web conferencing. Workers can see web and audio presence, including who is speaking, and they can manage audio and web conferencing in real-time – mute noisy lines, disconnect participants or dial out to new participants – making it easier and more cost-effective for businesses to collaborate.

## Benefits from deploying Unified Communications

In the words of the CIO, Mr. Balakrishnan V who has been instrumental in architecting this infrastructure makeover, this reengineering of data cum voice networks and implementation of Avaya's conferencing solution in tandem with Lotus's web conferencing has resulted in a 20 percent reduction in the company's communication spend over the last two years in spite of increased conferencing volume by about 20 times in the last eighteen months.

With evident success and cost savings soaring thanks to converged communications, the solution continues to be rolled out with good acceptance in all the global offices.

## In a Snap Shot – The Polaris UC Journey:



### About the Author:

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