

A hybrid unified communications solution ensures interoperability across devices, applications, and platforms while offering the agility to scale with an organization's evolving business demands.

Hybrid Unified Communications Solutions Provide Customers with Flexibility and Choice

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Introduction

As work and business environments change, organizations need to address two critical aspects to modernize and transform their operations for success. They need to:

- » Enable flexible work for employees, allowing them to work from anywhere.
- » Integrate all employees regardless of role into a tightly connected collaboration network with shared workflows.

Work flexibility, that is, the option to work remotely either fully or partly, is a key ask from knowledge worker employees and critical for attracting and retaining talent leading to a more distributed workforce. For organizations, the challenge is how to connect employees in a tightly integrated communications and collaboration network when they are in different locations. This issue has primarily been dealt with for desk-based knowledge workers. However, the majority of the workforce are frontline workers who have remained outside the scope of modern communications and collaboration solutions.

Cross-functional communication and collaboration is now mission critical to organizational success as business environments move at a more rapid pace, competitive pressure ratchets up, and economic and political volatility make the future unpredictable. Creating a tightly integrated communications and collaboration network that includes all workers has not been easy to achieve. Organizations are complex with multiple roles, responsibilities, and requirements. Knowledge workers may work from home, the office, or as they travel. Frontline workers may work within a physical location (e.g., a hospital, manufacturing plant, hotel, school, or customer experience center) and use specialized devices or business tools/applications necessary for their work. Each set of employees has its own workflow requirements, including software applications and devices, and the complexity deepens when considering security and compliance along with the unique requirements of each and every industry.

AT A GLANCE

There is a demand for integrated hybrid solutions as they provide flexibility while fulfilling diverse business needs.

KEY STAT

Five in 10 organizations (50%) in the United States are using a combination of on-premises and cloud solutions.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Organizations want choice and flexibility. They do not want to be forced into a solution that does not meet their requirements.

Flexible IT solutions that adapt to all these work environments are needed to bring workers within an organization together. The hybrid nature of today's workforce means solutions can no longer be defined by one-size-fits-all unified communications (UC) environments. There are many architectural and solution options available including on-premises UC and different cloud formats such as multitenant public cloud, dedicated public cloud, and private cloud. What organizations need is the flexibility to compose a hybrid solution that combines various technology and deployment options to address the technological problems they are trying to solve and incorporates the requirements of various roles and functions while delivering a consistent user experience (UX). Such a solution will enable seamless collaborative workflows across the organization free from the rigidity of UC environments. Companies are seeking tightly integrated hybrid solutions that provide flexibility while fulfilling diverse business needs.

Factors Creating the Need for Agile Solutions

Need for Shared Workflows Across Roles

Employees want to be closely connected to ideate, cocreate, and solve problems so they can thrive at work whether that takes place in the office, at home, or in the field.

However, mainstream collaboration solutions have been geared toward knowledge workers even though the proportion of frontline workers is significantly higher than that of knowledge workers in certain industries. Not having frontline workers as part of the collaboration network creates a gap in terms of problem-solving, ideation, agility, and other tasks. Part of the issue is that collaboration solutions for frontline workers are not straightforward. They often need to combine communication with a specialized workflow that requires the use of specialized devices, tools, or applications with on-premises or wireless telephony. For example, workers who use 4G/5G mobile telephony often do not have a smooth experience when using a UC collaboration solution. Hybrid solutions address the gap and create collaboration across the organization, enabling shared workflows between knowledge and frontline workers.

AI Is Transforming How People Work

Generative AI (GenAI) is transforming how people work and collaborate regardless of role and location. In many cases, it drives knowledge worker productivity through meeting/chat summaries, follow-up items, and content creation based on interactions/communication, among other things.

For frontline workers, utilizing GenAI is more challenging due to data access and device compatibility. Moreover, many use cases require AI processing on the edge. Edge AI enables the frontline worker to make an instant decision without introducing delays created by cloud connectivity. Frontline workers in emergency services have a greater need for AI with edge processing as there is no room for latency given the urgent nature of their work.

Multitenant Public Cloud Isn't Always the Right Fit

Cloud platforms have become the backbone of virtual collaboration. They are easily scalable, enabling organizations to adjust capacity based on changing needs. These open platforms also support integration with third-party business applications, connecting workflows across teams and departments. The centralized data they provide powers advanced analytics and AI capabilities.

However, multitenant public cloud models can create challenges for organizations as they don't always offer the flexibility or choice organizations need. In sectors like government and healthcare, strict regulatory requirements demand more control over data. These organizations often need to keep sensitive information and communications in-house or within

a dedicated public or private cloud environment while leveraging public cloud platforms for collaboration — making hybrid solutions essential. They may also require systems that can remain operational during major outages, including on-premises backups for resilience.

For most organizations, migrating to unified communications as a service (UCaaS) isn't the only available end goal but one option among many. A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't always work, especially for businesses with specialized needs. These organizations may often prefer to modernize at their own pace, blending on-premises systems with private or public cloud components. Flexibility, control, and the ability to evolve incrementally are more valuable than forcing a full shift to the public cloud.

The Need for Hybrid Solutions

Traditionally, multitenant public cloud was seen as the main option for business transformation. Organizations were presented with the prospect of ripping apart their existing legacy infrastructure to migrate to it. This approach has not proven to be effective or practical due to regulatory requirements, fear of losing control, and risk of disruption. Cloud is a key component for modern work environments, but the choice does not have to be limited to deployment options between on-premises legacy infrastructure and multitenant public cloud. Organizations should have the choice and flexibility to pair deployment options with the cloud formats that best suit their preferences and regulatory requirements and where they are in their digital transformation journey.

Organizations Often Operate Fragmented Communication Stacks

Organizations Are Using a Blend of On-Premises and Cloud Solutions

Today, over half of U.S. organizations are using on-premises and multitenant public cloud solutions in conjunction. According to IDC's *2024 Cloud Communications and Datacenter Services Survey* and IDC's *2024 SMB Communications Services Survey*, 47% of large organizations and 57% of SMB organizations that use UC&C have deployed either an on-premises or a hybrid on-premises and cloud communication solution. Two years from now, hybrid UC&C deployments will grow in presence across large organizations, with 51% of organizations indicating they plan to use the approach, including 56% in the healthcare industry and 67% in the manufacturing industry, industries that often have a notable percentage of mobile staff and field workers. As the deployment mix in the United States shifts, so will the mix of seat deployments in this part of the market. Currently, in large organizations with hybrid UC&C deployments, on average 31% of UC&C seats are deployed on premises. These organizations expect this figure to grow to 39% by 2027.

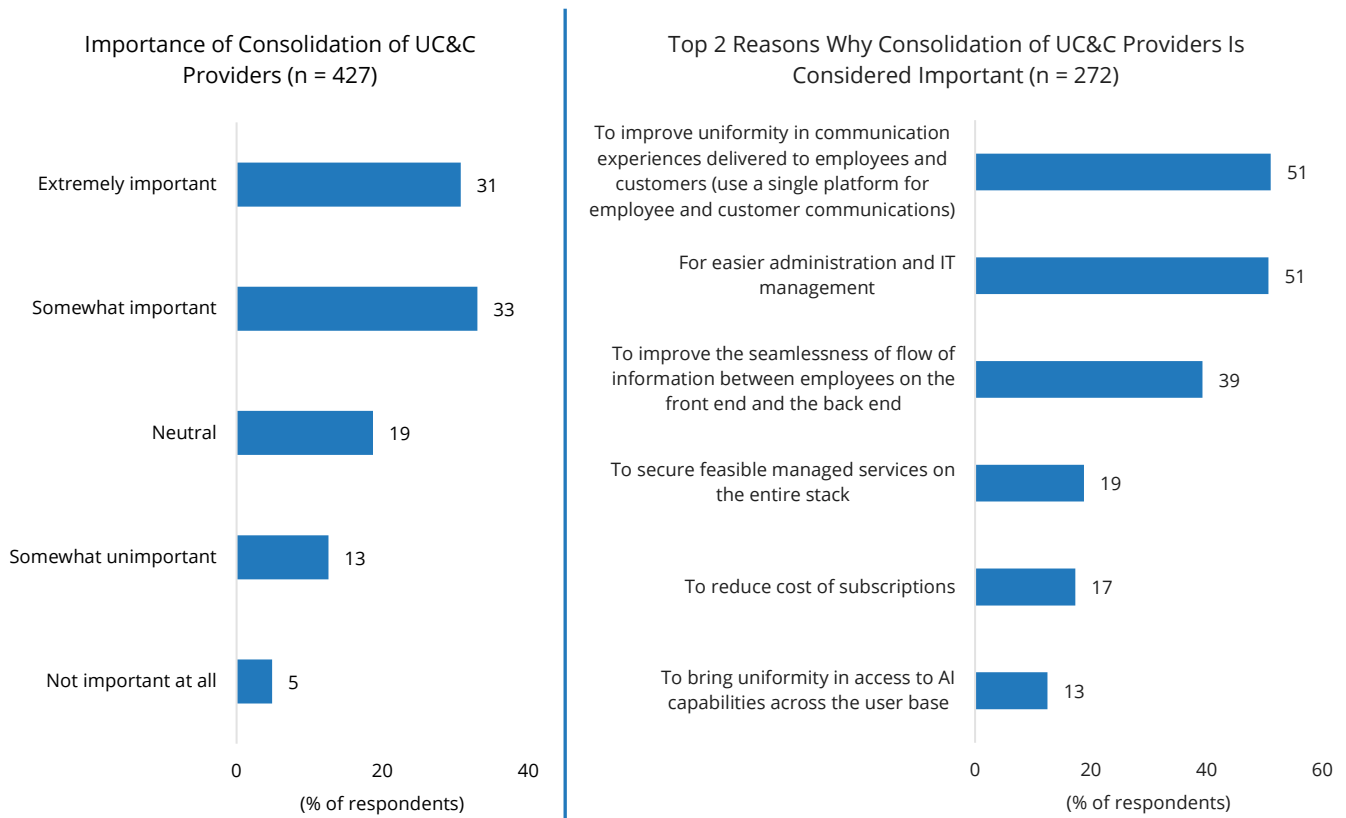
According to IDC's *2024 Cloud Communications and Datacenter Services Survey*, 38% of organizations with hybrid UC&C deployments said that "better security features" drove their UC&C solution purchase decision, while 25% cited customer service and support and 25% pointed to the quality and reliability of the voice communications. Migration from fully on-premises UC&C deployments accounts for the 48% growth in hybrid deployments among U.S. SMBs from 2023 to 2024. This is a market that prioritizes the price, customer support, security, and compliance of its procured UC&C solutions.

IDC surveys indicate that hybrid UC&C deployments afford businesses of all sizes the ability to incorporate cloud-based, AI-powered video capabilities as well as GenAI capabilities and to connect via seamless integration with other platforms. All these criteria are important to businesses as they consider new UC&C solution deployments. For example, Figure 1 shows how critical it is to large organizations across key countries around the globe to move to a single, integrated, unified provider experience. One major way of achieving this single unified provider experience is with a coordinated, preestablished hybrid UC&C deployment arrangement.

FIGURE 1: *Single Unified Communications and Collaboration Experience Is a Business Priority*

Q How important is it for your organization to consolidate the number of UC&C providers it currently has?

Q What are the top 2 reasons for your organization to consider it important to consolidate the number of UC&C providers it uses?



Note: Respondents represent businesses with 500+ employees in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Brazil, and India.

Source: IDC's Cloud Communications and Datacenter Services Survey, August 2024

Disjointed Communication Stack Creates IT Challenges and Poor UX

Organizations operating different IT infrastructure and UC deployment environments often have a fragmented IT system, which creates operational gaps. For some, telephony is on premises and collaboration is in the public cloud. For others, telephony could be both on premises and in different cloud formats, while collaboration is in the public cloud. As for collaboration, organizations may use different solutions from different vendors — one for video, another for chat, and so on — even if they are all in the cloud. Some industries use their own specialized communication technologies that reside independently alongside other communication technologies. These stacks usually do not connect, which can lead to multiple challenges, such as:

- » **Poor user experience:** Maintaining two separate deployments has a negative impact on efficiency and productivity as users have to switch back and forth between multiple applications/systems to perform tasks. For example,

collaborating with colleagues may involve escalating an interaction from chat to voice mid-conversation, which is not possible with two separate and disjointed stacks.

- » **IT challenges:** Separate stacks mean IT has to manage different vendors and interfaces (one for the cloud and another for on premises). Organizations can encounter technical debt and security risks due to inconsistent patching cycles and feature rollouts. Misalignment between cloud-first and infrastructure-focused teams can create strategic roadblocks. Separate estates make it hard to manage staff as different groups of experts are needed for different deployments.

Hybrid Solutions Connect Silos

Hybrid as a Driver for Shared Workflows

In the North American market and around the globe, businesses rely on specialized technologies for frontline workers. The usage of these technologies will continue into the future. Hybrid communications deployment helps organizations connect all their workers by leveraging modern cloud-based communications platforms while retaining their specialized communication tools. Hybrid deployment enables shared workflows across roles and teams.

Specialized communications tools can take many forms including 4G/5G smartphones and mobile devices. The mobile device plays a critical role in helping workers balance their work and personal lives. Almost every UC collaboration application provides for a mobile-compatible client, meaning that users can perform enterprise UC functions and access AI features like meeting summaries and action items using their own device or a corporately issued one. These tools extend the knowledge worker environment around frontline workers so they can participate in enterprisewide collaboration.

Frontline workers also have their own specialized tools. These include multiline calling platforms, dispatching tools, interactive display engagement and communications tools, enterprise DECT- and VoWLAN-based wireless networks and devices, integrated alarming and notification systems, and guest and/or customer service consoles. Each of these solutions integrates with a business workflow application that drives the business function of the frontline worker, whether an emergency response app, a patient management app, or a field service management app. In addition, the contact/customer experience center managed by contact center agents and all the integrations to CM and business applications also fall within this broad set of specialized frontline worker tools.

Each of these solutions requires deep integration with the core UC solution to serve the specific business needs of the organization and make each frontline worker more productive. A hybrid communications architecture is fundamentally designed to provide the flexibility and choice to meet all these requirements and enable the deep integration needed to ensure business success.

On Premises Does Not Mean Archaic

On-premises telephony is a relevant part of the communications market and will remain so, which has motivated vendors to innovate in this space. There have been interesting strides in desktop devices, with IP phones working as personal computers that can support videoconferencing, meeting reminder notifications, hotdesking, and other functions.

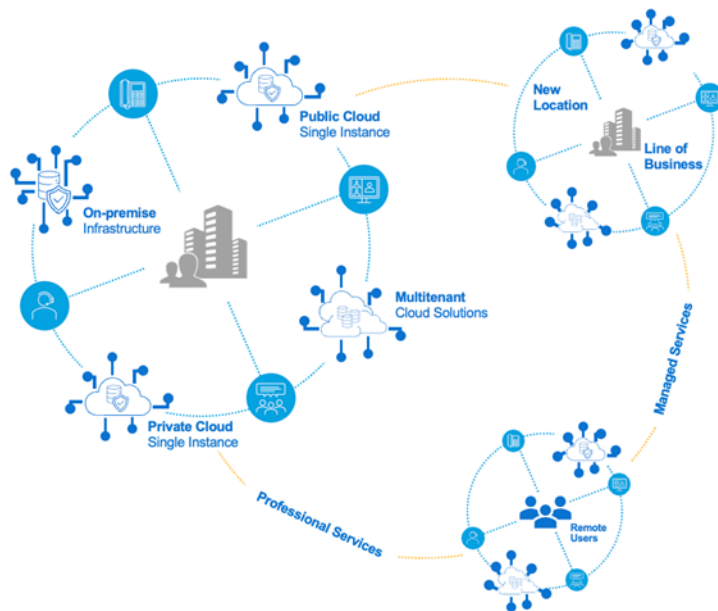
Not All Hybrid Solutions Are Created Equal

A hybrid IT estate is the flexible solution that organizations seek, but the available options come with their own challenges. In detail:

- » **Experience can be compromised due to lack of robust integrations.** How well hybrid systems work depends on the type of integration. Integrations can be clunky and require multiple apps or plug-ins for end users, leading to poor user experience, especially on mobile. Standard integrations available in the market come in different flavors including integration at an application level through APIs, but this is confined to specific functions. APIs may have limitations on scaling the data transfer volume. API documentation can be outdated or poorly recorded, making integrations more difficult. Integrations tend to be based on third-party platforms/middleware, which can increase the risk of service disruptions. Given the complexity involved with integrations, outages and service disruptions are a risk, and there may not be the necessary support to address technological issues.
- » **Compliance with data regulations can create challenges.** There are also complications with data governance, security, and compliance. There can be restrictions in routing data to a different system, and organizations may be required to keep data within premises even when there is a hybrid arrangement. The flow of data between systems can potentially lead to disputes, and resolution can be a challenge if the parties involved do not take ownership of the process.

Considering Zoom Communications and Mitel

Zoom Communications and Mitel have rolled out a hybrid UC solution designed to meet market demand (see Figure 2), seamlessly enabling user experiences through a blend of on-premises, dedicated instance, and/or multitenant cloud platforms. This development is beneficial to Mitel and Zoom customers using specialized vertical-based solutions such as wireless devices, including DECT phones tied to on-premises infrastructure. Mitel customers can now use and benefit from Zoom Workplace, Zoom's AI-first collaboration platform. Zoom customers can benefit similarly from being able to integrate users into one UC workforce and workflow environment while gaining access to a broad portfolio of enterprise-grade SIP phones and DECT wireless phones.

FIGURE 2: **Enterprise Needs Drive Hybrid Requirements**

- ✓ Enterprises already have multicloud architectures for business apps.
- ✓ Hybrid comms is the path of least resistance because of the cost and complexity of change.
- ✓ Security and regulatory requirements drive the compelling event.
- ✓ Comms integrations to business-generating apps drive value.
- ✓ CIOs want to enable control, resiliency, and modern capabilities for the enterprise.
- ✓ Enabling both their frontline and knowledge workers is critical.
- ✓ A segment of enterprise CIOs simply want to outsource it.

Source: Mitel Networks Corp., 2025

Customers of both companies can also take advantage of:

- » **Zoom AI Companion capabilities at no extra cost:** Access to AI Companion with Zoom Workplace is available at no extra cost with eligible paid plans. This AI-first personal assistant can boost employee efficiency and productivity by streamlining work, answering questions, and supporting content creation. It can summarize interactions, emails, and documents; identify key themes; and provide meeting notes and summaries. AI Companion also has a side panel that can be displayed in product tabs in the Zoom Workplace app to notify a user that their name was mentioned in a meeting or to create documents or project plans.
- » **Modernization without rushing to cloud:** Mitel customers can access Zoom Workplace benefits while retaining their on-premises PBX. The solution includes Mitel telephony features like making/receiving calls, call hold, transfer, conference calls, voicemail, and call history. Customers can use Mitel phone systems and Zoom collaboration apps from one integrated application, allowing users to elevate Mitel-powered telephony calls to Zoom video meetings. This hybrid solution helps organizations modernize without disrupting IT operations and provides data sovereignty, security, and control over current investments.
- » **Options for frontline workers:** The Zoom and Mitel hybrid UC solution offers frontline workers more choice when it comes to their communications needs. They can continue using their on-premises telephony solutions with specialized devices, such as DECT wireless devices or a specialized frontline communications solution, with the option of using Zoom Phone or Zoom Workplace client to reduce disruptions to existing business operations. This is beneficial for sectors like healthcare, hospitality, and retail that rely on PBX systems but need mobility options.

- » **Native integration:** The Zoom and Mitel hybrid UC solution integrates across all of Mitel's enterprise PBX platforms and Mitel's 6900 and CP series desk phones. Users can access Zoom collaboration apps and Mitel phone systems in the same common Zoom Workplace application, with integrated presence across both systems. Administrators will benefit from Mitel and Zoom's jointly developed integrations that simplify user and change management and provide a centralized portal to enable new hybrid capabilities through Mitel's CloudLink Administration interface. Mitel and Zoom's hybrid solution also provides customers with new flexible hybrid mixed deployment options by combining Zoom's Bring Your Own PBX (BYOP) and Bring Your Own Carrier (BYOC) direct routing capabilities with Mitel's recently Zoom-certified session border controllers (SBCs). This tight integration allows users to make and receive calls via Mitel PBX and connect with colleagues using Zoom Phone by dialing short-code dialing extensions and providing a common directory across the entire ecosystem. An additional benefit to Zoom customers is that Mitel's 6900 and CP desk phones are now certified by Zoom, providing customers with new hardware options if their businesses require new IP phones, ensuring compatibility and helping reduce the total cost of ownership for customers that wish to reuse their existing Mitel devices.
- » **Cost-effective IT operations:** The hybrid UC solution consolidates contracts, reducing IT operational complexity and costs. It allows failover between cloud and on-premises systems, minimizing the risk of outages and workflow disruptions.
- » **Flexible deployment and consumption options:** Customers can deploy the hybrid solution on premises, on Mitel's Secure Cloud, on a partner-hosted cloud, or on their own-hosted cloud. The integrated Zoom platform provides modern AI-first collaboration solutions, making it ideal for organizations that need flexibility due to vertical solutions. Mitel also offers a choice for customers that need flexible commercial buying options. Mitel offers its solutions via traditional licensing options and new modern-day subscription/opex-based offers; it also offers professional services and fully managed services.
- » **Professional services:** Mitel can tailor the hybrid strategy to a customer's business process and has the expertise in demanding industries and geographies to ensure critical aspects of the solution are compliant and resilient.
- » **After-sales support:** Mitel offers after-sales support for the solution, which can help assure customers that issues will be addressed and resolved.

Challenges

Integrated hybrid solutions are not very common, and their benefits will need to be well communicated by the Zoom and Mitel teams by emphasizing the tight integration leading to seamless experience for users and admins.

Conclusion

Changing business requirements have redefined the UC requirements, emphasizing the need for seamless integration across all UC deployment options, from cloud formats to on-premises environments. While multitenant public cloud has been touted as the only option for modern (office/desk) work, not all organizations have the flexibility or need to move to public cloud. A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't meet the diverse needs of today's workforce. A hybrid UC solution such as the one from Zoom and Mitel helps deliver interoperability, scalability, and a seamless user

Hybrid UC positions organizations to meet both immediate and future needs.

experience across roles, devices, and locations. By offering the flexibility to adapt while maintaining reliability, compliance, and industry-specific capabilities, hybrid UC positions organizations to meet both immediate and future needs, empowering teams to work efficiently from anywhere while future proofing their operations in an increasingly dynamic market.

About the Analysts



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Denise Lund is a research vice president on IDC's Worldwide Telecom team. Her research focuses on advanced communications services including VoIP and unified communications as a service (UCaaS). In this position, she provides coverage of voice communications including fixed and legacy voice (local, long distance, and PRI ISDN) and IP voice (hosted VoIP with/without UC, SIP trunking, IP phone) as well as emerging migration and usage trends occurring in the voice market.



Oru Mohiuddin, Research Director, European Enterprise Communications and Collaboration

Oru Mohiuddin is a research director in the European Enterprise Communications and Collaboration team. Based in London, she is responsible for IDC's coverage of UC&C in the region. Her work focuses on tracking the markets for premise-based and cloud solutions and new developments and trends, particularly in light of changing work patterns impacting the traditional mode of enterprise communication.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

The Mitel and Zoom hybrid UC solution combines Zoom's AI-powered collaboration tools with Mitel's enterprise-grade telephony, delivering the best of both worlds for hybrid deployments. Organizations gain flexibility with on-premises, private cloud, or hybrid cloud deployments while maintaining control over mission-critical communications.

Users can leverage any of Mitel's Enterprise PBX systems alongside Zoom Workplace, including AI Companion, Meetings, and Team Chat, for enhanced productivity. Seamless integration provides a unified experience with secure, compliant communications.

The solution supports industry-specific integrations for healthcare, hospitality, government, and financial services. Zoom AI Companion improves efficiency with smart content creation and task prioritization. Additionally, Mitel 6900 and OpenScape CP Series devices are Zoom Phone certified for seamless interoperability.

With a single, modern interface for telephony and collaboration, this hybrid solution delivers business continuity, security, and a superior user experience.

www.mitel.com/solutions/business-need/hybrid-communications

Here is a solution showcase of what Mitel & Zoom offer to customers: www.mitel.com/products/zoom-workplace.



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