SMART TALK
CHOOSING THE RIGHT UNIFIED COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

There's an old saying that goes, *"Predicting the future is easy … getting it right is the hard part."*[1] Below are a few important misses:

1876: "This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication." — William Orton, President of Western Union.[1]

1876: "The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys." — Sir William Preece, chief engineer, British Post Office. [1]

1992: "The idea of a personal communicator in every pocket is a pipe dream driven by greed." — Andy Grove, then CEO of Intel.[2]

Predicting the future has its risks, but as a leader in your company, it's your job to guide future technology decisions in a direction that not only keeps your business competitive, but positions you ahead of the rest. This guide will provide you with the tools needed to make a wise decision when choosing to bring unified communications to your frontline workers.

Unified communication is not the wave of the future; it is the way leading companies empower their frontline workforce and run their businesses today. For example, retailers enable customers to call their stores and speak to an employee who can answer a question. Delivery companies use communication so drivers can get help when they can't find their destination. Hospitals provide their nurses communication tools so patient care is delivered with the most accurate and up-to-date information. Warehouses use communication to resolve issues quickly, so trucks get loaded fast and on time. All these examples have a unified communication system running behind the scenes.

Unified communication means connecting all your communication systems into one common software platform so they can talk to each other. For example: cell phones, PCs and rugged mobile computers can all talk to each other seamlessly and workers can find each other no matter where they are or what device they are using. Choosing the right unified communication system is the goal of this guide.

What should you undesrstand and consider before you pick your unified communication solution? Here is a checklist to help you make the right decision.

Bottom line: Unified communication is the reality those "visionaries" at the start of this guide could not see at the time.

1. https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertszczerba/2015/01/05/15-worst-tech-predictions-of-all-time/?sh=4fa272b21299
2. https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/worst-tech-predictions-of-the-past-100-years-c18654211375/

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COMMUNICATION DEVICE

Will your staff ALL use the same communication device? You should assume the answer is NO. Some staff will use a cell phone, while others who sit in an office will use their laptop to communicate. If you have rugged mobile computers deployed typically for barcode data capture, plan on using those same devices for communication as well. Giving frontline workers two devices is not best practice. If you have workers with walkie-talkies, seriously consider replacing them with a rugged mobile computer.

Bottom line: It is VERY unlikely one hardware device will fit all your needs so DON'T consider a communication system that limits your choice of communication devices.

WIRELESS OPTIONS

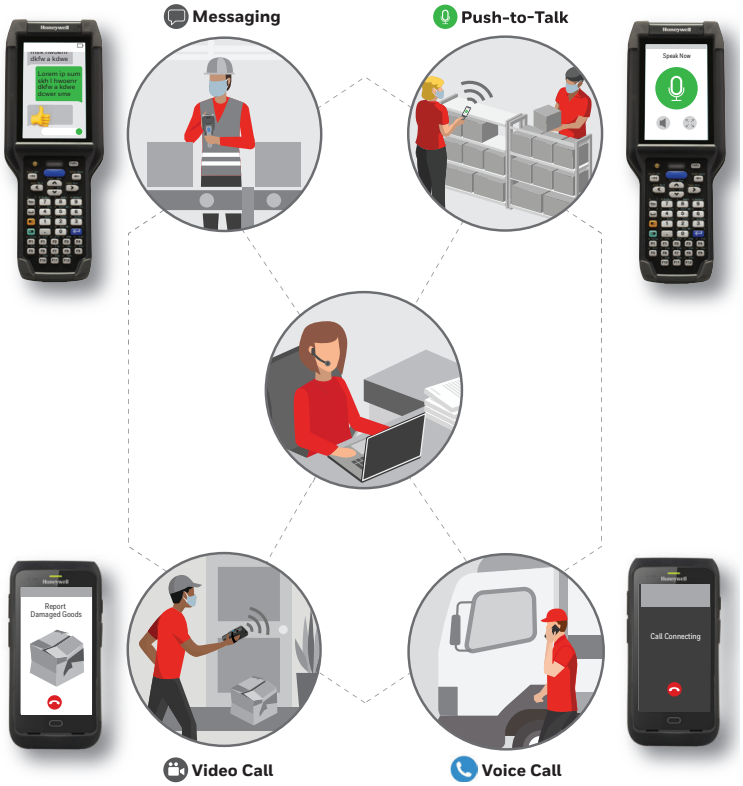
Your choices for wireless communication are Wi-Fi or Cellular. For workers in the field, cellular is a given. However, cell phones can't easily talk to non-cell phones, and that is going to be a key component in your final solution. Your rugged mobile computer users will connect to Wi-Fi in the building, so it's important to consider scenarios where some workers are in the parking area servicing trucks or moving material between buildings. As a solution, you will have to expand your Wi-Fi outside the building or provide them with a device that can switch between cellular data and Wi-Fi. Voice communication over cellular typically means you are purchasing a cellular voice data plan. The option to consider is with a unified communication solution, you can actually communicate on a cellular network using only a cellular data plan which typically is lower cost than a voice + data plan common with cell phones.

Bottom line: When considering a communication solution, it needs to easily support both Wi-Fi and cellular, as well as seamlessly switch between them.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUE

Different workers will want to communicate in different ways and at different times. The type of communication changes to fit the need. Your choices are Push to Talk (PTT), Messaging (texting), Voice Calls and Video Voice calls.

- **Push to Talk** replaces Walkie-Talkies and has two options, 1-to-1 and 1-to-many.
- **Messaging** is similar to texting. The feature to look for is "secure" messaging, meaning messages are encrypted and ultimately protected. You will also want to look for a system that allows you to add attachments like pictures or files to your messages.
- **Voice Calls** are a lot like cell phone voice calls, but in a unified communication system, voice calls are called VoIP calls or Voice over IP. It is a fancy way to say the voice is translated to data and sent.
- **Video Voice** is more important than you might think. Picture a warehouse worker who sees a problem with a pallet he/she is about to move, but is not sure what to do. He/she can make a quick video call to the boss, show him/her the issue and get the answer. This is a perfect example of how communication can boost productivity.



Bottom line: You will want a system that supports a long-term communication growth strategy. Your workflows need more than PTT.

SUPPORTED INTERCONNECTIONS

Your company most likely has a phone system and calls are all being routed from outside to inside and from employee to employee through a PBX (Private Branch Exchange). It is critically important that you chose a unified communication system that can already talk to your PBX. Note, not all systems can because there are many different types of PBXs.

Bottom line: Look for a unified communication system that supports multiple PBXs and most importantly, your PBX. Also consider if your company were to merge with another, they might have another PBX type, so choose a vendor with the most PBX options.

CALL QUALITY

Call quality comes from three main factors:

1. The communication device speaker and microphone,
2. The software that controls the speaker and microphone, called a Codec, and
3. Wireless quality.

Look for a unified communication system that supports the most Codecs because that gives you the ability to tune your system to the optimum call quality. Also, look for a system that has call quality monitoring built-in, like a dashboard or control tower, so you can manage call issues when your Wi-Fi is not optimal or if other call issues develop.

Bottom line: No software system is bulletproof, so it's critical for you to invest in a system with built-in diagnostic and management tools.

Hopefully, you are now better armed to source and select the perfect unified communication system for your business. Do not assume it is going to be complicated and expensive to both buy and deploy. Honeywell has customers who have deployed their unified communication system in a day and at costs dramatically less than typical cellular monthly bills.

In your search, we hope you consider Honeywell's Smart Talk Unified Communication solution, which just happens to check all the boxes listed above and even some not mentioned. Give us a call at 1-800-934-3163 for a free evaluation of your unified communication needs.

For more information
sps.honeywell.com

Honeywell Safety and Productivity Solutions
300 S. Tryon St Suite 500
Charlotte, NC 28202
800-582-4263
www.honeywell.com

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