



## Making Online Meetings Frictionless

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A Frost & Sullivan White Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

Frost & Sullivan research shows that over the past decade, companies have fully embraced unified communication and collaboration (UCC) technology, including Voice over IP (VoIP), conferencing, instant messaging (IM), unified messaging (UM) and team spaces. But while employees are willing and able to use advanced UCC tools to work with one another across cultural, geographic and physical boundaries, they are increasingly forced to rely on an ad-hoc set of software to do so. It's the result of a casual approach to deploying UCC tools throughout the enterprise, combined with the impacts of BYOD and consumerization. And it has led to a proliferation of disjointed and disconnected communications applications and services. The often random set of tools may or may not meet all users' needs, don't always comply with corporate security and compliance requirements, and are difficult if not impossible to integrate with one another, let alone with back-office applications and processes.

Now, many companies are facing a growing need to consolidate their multiple UCC solutions. Users are looking for a consistent experience regardless of device or location—across mobile endpoints, desktops, executive offices, open spaces, huddle rooms and large conference rooms. That requires a single provider supporting a multi-functional platform that offers audio, video and web conferencing; marketing and training webinars; on-demand content; file sharing; and more. The goal: make communications frictionless, effortless and more productive.



## UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR FRICTIONLESS MEETINGS IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE

For the past several years, Frost & Sullivan has conducted a survey of global IT decision makers about how they and their employees work, and the tools they deploy to enable digital transformation in the enterprise. One fact has been crystal clear in every iteration of the study: the workplace is becoming increasingly virtual with each passing year.

What do we mean by “virtual”? Simply put, a virtual workplace is one in which the majority of employees don't regularly work in the same location as their teammates, managers or direct reports. Interestingly, even employees

who are based at a headquarters location can be “virtual” if enough of their colleagues work remotely on a consistent basis; the result is the same: none of them can simply walk down the hall to communicate and collaborate whenever the need arises.

The virtual workplace is so popular because it offers companies and employees significant benefits, including better flexibility, productivity, loyalty and the ability to hire the best people regardless of where they live in relation to the organization. But it also poses challenges, especially when it comes to enabling the kind of deep collaboration that’s required for differentiation and success in the modern marketplace. That’s because in today’s business environment, multi-tasking, white noise and distractions are inevitable—and yet, it’s crucial that employees be able to work together to act on information quickly, from anywhere, at any time and on any device.

**Companies that want to improve business outcomes should ask themselves:**  
*Have you deployed the right technology to drive collaboration, creativity and innovation?*

**Bottom line:** how we work is undergoing a fundamental shift. Employees must be able to connect with colleagues around the globe throughout the day. They must be fast, flexible and innovative, which requires balancing focused work with ad-hoc collaboration. Multitasking is the new normal (employees typically take their cell phones and laptops to meetings), and companies sometimes expect employees to stay connected even during their off hours. All the while, they must find ways to ensure that those same employees are not disengaged, distracted or even misunderstood during virtual team engagements.



## DO YOU HAVE THE NECESSARY TOOLS FOR SUCCESS?

A well-designed collaboration environment can enhance job satisfaction, foster trust, improve communication, drive productivity and have a positive impact on the bottom line. But too many companies take an ad-hoc approach to purchasing, deploying and even using technology that enables effective teamwork. Frost & Sullivan recommends a different approach—one that treats your collaboration implementation as you would any other strategic IT initiative.

That doesn't mean collaboration tools must be expensive, complex or difficult to use and support. Indeed, quite the opposite: most applications are cost-effective, intuitive and easy to troubleshoot, especially if they are delivered in the cloud. But it's important to work with line-of-business, IT and end users to identify needs and select a suite of services that will ensure all necessary capabilities are met.

### Specifically, make sure your next collaboration tool includes:



**Video, web and audio conferencing.** Frost & Sullivan research shows that conferencing is the most commonly deployed collaboration tool in the enterprise. In a recent global survey of nearly 2,000 IT decision makers, almost two-thirds report that their companies use web conferencing, and 61% also use stand-alone audio conferencing. That's followed closely by room-based and desktop video (60% each), and almost half use huddle rooms specifically equipped with video capabilities. But what most respondents don't do is deploy their conferencing in a calculated way, using a single provider for the underlying infrastructure or even the software and endpoints. That can impact cost, support and even productivity as users may struggle to learn multiple systems. And there's plenty of room for growth: only 4.2% of meeting rooms today are equipped for video conferencing.

**Cloud adoption is booming. Frost & Sullivan research shows that 61% of businesses are currently deploying video conferencing in the cloud; another 26% plan to move to the cloud in the next two years.**



**Support for small-group meetings.** Frost & Sullivan data show that more than 75% of the time conference rooms are used for meetings of three to four participants. Make sure your platform supports actually getting work done rather than simple information sharing. Look for flexible invitation options offering one-click access to meetings that can be scheduled in advance or launched on the fly; screen and application sharing; markup capabilities that let you highlight what you and your colleagues are seeing; the ability to pass control to any participant; and built-in video capabilities to make personal collaboration easy.



**Support for large events.** Webinars remain popular as marketing tools and for large internal meetings, but you need a robust platform to deliver a valuable event. Look for a solution that covers your needs from planning to event to follow-up services. These should include customized branding options, email automation and various registration options; advanced video and presentation capabilities that enable maximum interaction; and reporting and analytics that make lead management easy and effective by tracking sources, in-meeting activity and other relevant information.



**Recording and archiving capabilities.** Frost & Sullivan's own experience shows that more people view webinars after the fact than attend the live event, so it's critical to have recording and archiving capabilities built into every event. In addition to webinar recordings, you'll also want to record small-group meetings and then make them available to participants and other employees, so that everyone can review information and action items as well as leverage them as part of your knowledge-management system.

## HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY DEPLOY COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY

Deploying advanced meeting tools to enable collaboration should be easy, especially if you use a cloud-based system. But you'll still want to pay attention to four key factors to ensure a successful implementation:



- **Complete suites: do your users have what they need?** While many companies have adopted a hodge-podge of collaboration tools over the years, now is the time to settle on a single platform throughout the enterprise. That gives employees a consistent experience, streamlines provisioning and billing, and makes integration simpler on the back end. Standardizing on a single solution across the enterprise can lower costs thanks to volume discounts. Additionally, the single-platform approach can be advantageous on certain features like audio, where integrated toll and toll-free services provide not only ease of use and reliability but significant global cost savings. Finally, supporting a single platform is much easier than trying to manage multiple applications and services across various lines of business or geographic regions.



- **Training: it's not just about the technology.** While collaboration technology is generally intuitive, don't overlook the importance of training your end users on any new software or services. This should include the usual introduction to features and capabilities, but it must also emphasize meeting etiquette and rules of engagement, corporate culture and the best ways to leverage different tools depending on the circumstances and users' goals.



- **Culture: make collaboration count.** Millennials came of age in a sharing economy, and they value the prestige that comes from extending their knowledge and expertise to colleagues and partners. But older employees may need a push to prioritize collaboration over individual success. Everyone will benefit from a corporate culture that emphasizes the value of teamwork in measurable ways.



- **Choose your provider wisely.** Not all collaboration solutions are alike. Companies that want to enable planned and ad-hoc meetings on any device and in any environment—as well as offer larger webinars inside and outside the organization—should settle on a service that is easy to purchase, deploy and use; supports personal, proactive interactions; and offers business-grade reliability, security and support.

## CONCLUSION

In an increasingly virtual workplace that demands collaboration for the best business outcomes, technology is changing the way people work. By letting employees leverage video, web and audio conferencing to collaborate across geographies, time zones and cultures, companies can increase productivity, lower costs, shorten cycle times and create a stronger bottom line.

Look for an all-in-one suite of services that will support all your users' needs for any use case on any device and in any environment. In addition to ease of use and other user benefits, this also presents the opportunity for cost savings with potential product bundling and other upsides like unified support. Make sure your solutions support crystal-clear audio and video conferencing, as well as desktop and application sharing, markup features, one-button recording and archiving, and customizable branding, invitations and follow-up capabilities.



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