

10 Questions to Ask

Before Buying Unified Communications as a Service



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10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE BUYING **UNIFIED** **COMMUNICATIONS AS A SERVICE** FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Choosing to switch to [Unified Communications as a Service \(UCaaS\)](#) can allow organizations to unlock significant cost savings. However, outsourcing your communications tools to a cloud UCaaS vendor is much more than just a lever for saving money. Streamlining business communications and opting for on-demand cloud delivery can allow organizations to unlock new modes of innovation, operations efficiency, and increased productivity through mobility, superior reliability, and advanced functionality.

UCaaS offers advantages over well-established cloud communication technologies like Voice-Over-IP (VoIP) phones and web conferencing. Countless organizations worldwide are discovering the benefits of switching to cloud-based services and the pay-as-you-go pricing model of UCaaS. Organizations making the switch to UC platforms also appreciate better information security, lower IT workloads, and the flexibility to scale their service up or down according to need.

It's important to avoid underestimating the flexibility of UCaaS as you consider your options. Beyond VoIP phones and email, the most commonly-selected features include audio conferencing, web conferencing, instant messaging, presence, and screen sharing. While one of the best aspects of UC is the ability to add features as your requirements change, picking the right collaboration tools and platform can enable your organization to maximize value from the very first day.

Most importantly, selecting the right UCaaS service for your needs involves more than just thinking about features and costs. Businesses should also evaluate vendors as prospective business partners. Implementation support and customer service can have a big impact on your overall experience, just as much as the tools and features you choose.

Knowing the right questions to ask can help you determine the difference between great UCaaS providers and vendors that aren't the right fit for your company. When it comes to successfully driving value with unified communications, finding a vendor that shares your vision and goals is critical.

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE BUYING UCAAS

The following ten questions are designed to educate prospective UCaaS customers on how to interview providers to ensure you maximize the value of your investment, find the right type of service, and select the best vendor for your budget.



**WHAT UC
PLATFORM
DO YOU USE?**





WHAT UC PLATFORM DO YOU USE?



1. WHAT UC PLATFORM DO YOU USE?

With the UC market predicted to reach a value of [\\$143.5 billion](#) by the end of 2024, there's been a proliferation of vendors offering UC software or platforms. The majority of UCaaS providers work closely with one platform, which may include well-known options like Broadsoft, MetaSwitch, or Mitel. All of these options have a similar goal, which is to offer cloud-based communication tools with built-in interoperability.

Selecting the right platform is just as critical to your organization's success as selecting any other major technology option like email or customer relationship management (CRM) tools. Not all UC platforms have the ability to easily integrate with your existing software and systems. UCaaS platforms vary in terms of maturity, features offered, and strengths.



**DO YOU HAVE
YOUR OWN
INFRASTRUCTURE?**





DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN INFRASTRUCTURE?



2. DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN INFRASTRUCTURE?

UCaaS vendors with their own instance of a UC platform have a built-in advantage when it comes to high-quality service and business continuity because they're able to easily scale up their service to meet client demands, even when one server goes down or client call volume spikes. This approach also allows leading UC vendors to achieve cost savings, which are passed onto the clients.

Just because a UCaaS vendor is re-selling a solution to their clients doesn't mean they have their own instance of the platform. While resellers without their own instance may understand the technology they're working with fairly well, they can't necessarily offer the same quality or reliability guarantees as their competitors.





**HOW MUCH
PLATFORM
EXPERIENCE DO
YOU HAVE?
ARE YOU CERTIFIED?**





3. HOW MUCH PLATFORM EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE? ARE YOU CERTIFIED?

Selecting a UCaaS vendor with deep knowledge of UC software is an important tool for avoiding unanticipated implementation mistakes and getting the most out of your new solution. While it's not necessarily a red flag if a UCaaS vendor works with multiple platforms, it may be a sign that they lack expertise if they're not certified by the software company to resell your solution.

Verifying that a vendor knows how to operate a platform matters, but certifications are one of the most important ways to evaluate a provider's expertise with a UCaaS solution. UCaaS providers who are reselling a solution like Broadsoft should have obtained the necessary certifications in UCaaS design, deployment, and maintenance to become a registered reseller. Maintaining these certifications is an important way for UCaaS providers to prove their commitment to technical expertise with solutions and their commitment to the customer experience.



**IS UCAAS SERVICE
DELIVERED OVER A
DEDICATED
CIRCUIT?**





4. IS UCAAS SERVICE DELIVERED OVER A DEDICATED CIRCUIT?

Many UCaaS vendors promise to offer a full suite of business communication tools, but they leave out one very important component: Internet connectivity. Clients are expected to “bring their own bandwidth” and use their new cloud communications platform over a public Internet connection. Unfortunately, signing with a UCaaS vendor who doesn’t offer dedicated circuit connectivity can result in downtime risks, quality issues, and more.

Organizations who are using a UCaaS vendor and a public Internet (commodity) provider share resources with home Internet users. Their data transmissions share bandwidth in-transit to their Internet provider and UCaaS vendor. During periods of peak demand for internet bandwidth, it’s common to experience delayed data transmissions, voice call quality issues, or even service unavailability.

Selecting a UCaaS provider who can install a direct connection via fiber-optic Internet connectivity will guarantee your organization’s communications never have to compete with home Internet user’s Netflix traffic. It can also result in cost savings and a host of other benefits, including simpler troubleshooting, improved reliability, and smarter business continuity planning.





IS YOUR BILLING
TRANSPARENT AND
CUSTOMIZABLE?





5. IS YOUR BILLING TRANSPARENT AND CUSTOMIZABLE?

Switching to UCaaS can result in much simpler billing statements than what you're used to receiving from your local phone company. However, transparent billing isn't always a guarantee. Some UCaaS bills are very difficult to understand. While bills are typically calculated by the number of users and features, the charges may be categorized by numeric codes instead of plain English.

Price doesn't always equal value in the world of UCaaS. While the [US Federal Trade Commission](#) requires that wireless providers give their customers "clear, factual, plain language descriptions of services for which you are being billed," these regulations don't apply to UC vendors. Regardless, every client has a right to know what they're paying for and why. If you're unsure whether a potential UCaaS vendor offers clear, transparent billing, ask to see a sample copy of customer invoices.

If your organization needs customizable billing, be sure to inquire whether your vendor has the flexibility to modify your monthly statements according to your need. Some organizations have a need to split their statements for multi-site UCaaS by location or department. Ultimately, the right vendor for your organization should have the flexibility to meet your accounting department's requirements.



WHAT **PHONE** **HANDSETS** ARE OFFERED?





WHAT PHONE HANDSETS ARE OFFERED?



6. WHAT PHONE HANDSETS ARE OFFERED?

While connecting your new softphone to the cloud voice-over-IP service offered by your UCaaS vendor is as simple as connecting a headset to your computer, choosing the right phone handsets is a bit more complicated. Just because your “VoIP-compatible” handset, whether they are very basic, generic phones with minimal features to highly-sophisticated, name brand conference room phones, you’ll need to make sure they will interoperate with your carrier.

Selecting a vendor who can help you shop for handsets--or better yet offers handsets as part of their UCaaS package--matters because it can help you stretch your budget further by making sure each user has exactly the phone features they need to do their job effectively. Vendors who offer handset sales can offer expert recommendations on the best phones for your organization’s requirements, and may even help you access premium products at the best possible price.

Opting for a vendor who acts as a one-stop shop for UCaaS and handsets may not only help you maximize the quality you receive for the price paid, it may also help you mitigate information security risks. Your vendor’s equipment experts should help ensure your VoIP phones are adequately password-protected at the time of installation to avoid vulnerabilities in your network security.



**DOES YOUR
PLATFORM
INTEGRATE
WITH MY **EXISTING**
CLOUD APPS?**





7. DOES YOUR PLATFORM INTEGRATE WITH MY EXISTING CLOUD APPS?

Providing a best-of-class customer experience is crucial for any organization, but studies reveal that [83 percent](#) of today's organizations are competing primarily on customer experience. UCaaS can allow organizations to integrate data across applications and provide an omnichannel customer experience that feels seamless. Understanding whether a potential UCaaS vendor's service can integrate with your existing applications is crucial to driving the best customer experiences and employee productivity possible from your new investment.

Asking if a potential vendor's UCaaS solution will integrate with your existing collaboration apps is important to achieve seamless integration of your communication tools. Some best-of-class UCaaS platforms like Broadsoft's UC-One and Team-One offer built-in integration with cloud apps like Google G Suite, Office 365, Salesforce, Twitter, and more.





**DO YOU HAVE A
TRACK RECORD OF
SUCCESS?**





DO YOU HAVE A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS?



8. DO YOU HAVE A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS?

No one wants to be a UCaaS vendor's first test case. Selecting a provider with years of expertise in telecommunications and UCaaS can help you ensure a smooth implementation and ongoing satisfaction. Evaluating a vendor's prior track record of implementations can be especially important if your organization has unique requirements, such as operating in a highly-regulated industry, having multiple sites, or specific implementation needs.

How do you know that a UCaaS vendor's performance matches up to the experience they claim on their website? Ask for examples of times they've helped companies that resemble your own in terms of industry, size, of technology requirements. Customer case studies, client references, and online customer reviews are three important ways to verify a vendor has helped organizations succeed with UCaaS in the past.

To learn how Atlantech Online helped Montgomery College switch to UCaaS via the Broadsoft Platform and achieved a seamless implementation across multiple sites, download the [Montgomery College Case Study](#).





**DO YOU GO ABOVE
AND BEYOND TO
PROVIDE SUPPORT?**





9. DO YOU GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO PROVIDE SUPPORT?

Every UCaaS vendor will claim that they're dedicated to customer service, but what are their clients saying? Look beyond testimonials to verify online customer reviews of prospective vendors. Better yet, ask UC vendors to provide client references that can verify their commitment to going above and beyond to provide customer support.

Leading UCaaS vendors are committed to meeting their clients' needs, even if a customer calls at the end of a Friday with a request to have a new PRI installed or has an immediate need to double their data bandwidth. While a commitment to exceeding client expectations isn't always the cheapest or easiest way for UCaaS vendors to operate, it's a sign of vendors who form long-term client relationships.

Finally, make sure that your UC vendor's customer service is available 24/7/365, even if your organization primarily operates during 9-to-5 business hours. Communication outages can be devastatingly expensive for organizations of all sizes, and no one wants to find out that their customer service call is ringing to a voicemail inbox when they're dealing with service quality issues after-hours. Every UCaaS client deserves the peace of mind that comes with knowing that even if they call at 5 am on New Year's Day, their vendor will field an expert who's ready to provide exceptional support.



**ARE YOU ABLE
TO SEAMLESSLY
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ARE YOU ABLE TO SEAMLESSLY TRANSITION US TO UCAAS?



10. ARE YOU ABLE TO SEAMLESSLY TRANSITION US TO UCAAS?

Downtimes, outages, and failures are a massive expense for modern organizations. Periods of time without connectivity are also surprisingly expensive. One recent study revealed that one hour of downtime costs 81% of businesses [at least \\$300,000](#). It's important to understand before the ink dries on a UCaaS contract whether your vendor can transition you from your current communication tools to your new platform without downtime. Regardless of whether your organization is anticipating a complicated implementation, getting a statement of work from your vendor prior to implementation is critical.

Implementation requirements can vary significantly according to an organization's needs, the number of sites involved, and even factors like training requirements. Ideally, any vendor should be prepared to work carefully to understand your requirements and design a custom-built plan for implementation. Avoiding the risk of downtime for your organization could mean a unique approach to implementation such as batched porting of numbers or using a hybrid phone system for a short period of time, which is defined as an implementation where both old and new phones are used during the transition.



GETTING THE MOST VALUE FROM **UCAAS**

Making a successful switch to Unified Communications as a Service is more complex than selecting the right communication tools at a price that fits your budget--though cost and features are certainly crucial. Knowing the right questions to ask to select the right technology and vendor can help you ensure that you are able to design the best UCaaS solution for your budget, achieve a seamless implementation, and form a long-term relationship with a vendor that you trust.

By understanding the complex factors that can shape your total experience as a UCaaS client, from dedicated connectivity to customized billing and application integration, you can position your organization to realize the most value from your investment possible.

To learn more about how UCaaS can position your organization for globally-connected collaboration in the present and future, contact Atlantech today to [get a quote](#) and additional information.