



The Aragon Research Globe™ for Unified Communications and Collaboration, 2020

The Race to Offer an Integrated Voice, Video, and Messaging Platform

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Issue: Who are the unified communications and collaboration providers, and how will they evolve?

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SUMMARY

Aragon Research releases its fourth Aragon Research Globe™ for Unified Communications and Collaboration that examines 15 major providers. The market for an integrated UCC platform is growing as the functionality becomes more seamless. The need to communicate in a seamless fashion is driving the growth of voice, video, meetings, and messaging—all in an integrated stack. In a market that focuses on all forms of collaboration and communication, UCC platforms are now integrated and intelligent, enabling true people-centric collaboration.

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Introduction

In a world that is more globalized and more vulnerable, enterprises are looking to have more unified communications capabilities to ensure their ability to get work done—even if associates work remotely. Unified communications and collaboration platforms are maturing as the modalities of voice, video, and messaging become mandatory. Messaging itself is poised to be a real-time alternative to emails. With AI now front and center, the ability to analyze what is being said in a meeting adds more value. In this fourth Globe for unified communications and collaboration (UCC), Aragon examines 15 providers.

In 2020, video meetings are taking on strategic importance as enterprises struggle to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Aragon feels that the ability of UCC platforms to offer multiple ways to interact will drive enterprises to invest more in a platform-based architecture. While features of each modality are important, so is national and global availability.

The integration of communications and collaboration features with other work tools is creating a UCC-driven work hub. Moreover, the convergence of content types under UCC will be greatly enhanced by a categorized, dynamic, and ontology-driven knowledge framework that goes beyond search. Once the framework supports are in place, UCC will accelerate its momentum at an even greater rate than it already has. This research note identifies the new elements of UCC, explains how enterprises can plan for the shift to multi-modal communications, and evaluates fifteen major providers in the market.

Communications and Collaboration—Vital to Business Continuity

While there was already growing demand for a centralized communications platform, the current crisis has given enterprises a renewed sense of urgency. The reason for the UCC platform's demand is that providers can offer multiple means of communicating—calls, voice, video meetings, and enterprise-grade messaging. 2019 saw providers expand their capabilities, with most now offering one unified client that all sessions can take place from.

In 2020, we've seen a surge in demand for meetings, even though email is still the anchor application for collaboration. The growth of messaging is the area to watch, and integration with meetings is key. Enterprises need to make a decision on enterprise messaging, and this may mean multiple offerings for a while. Tools that allow for messaging federation between platforms do exist—however, their providers are still in the process of establishing an enterprise standard. Video meetings are increasing, and

launching video meetings from an email client or a chat session is considered a standard capability.

Prediction: *By YE 2022, the team collaboration and web meetings markets will converge (70% probability).*

We feel that messaging and meetings are poised to challenge the dominance of voice calls. That said, the value of a UCC platform is its ability to deliver voice and video calls as part of one integrated stack. That, combined with reliability and redundancy, makes a difference in which vendor is selected. Because business leaders need to count on the platform provider, the need to consistently deliver—even in times of network contention— will cause the selection to be looked at more completely than just on the basis of feature comparisons. Today, business leaders want faster outcomes and are seeking providers that can deliver on this. The ability to integrate communications and collaboration capabilities with other business applications is one of the ways that enterprises can transform into fully-fledged digital businesses.

With the arrival of a worldwide pandemic, the need for a robust and redundant cloud-based communication platform is now an enterprise requirement. The fallout of COVID-19 will be a significant and accelerated migration to a cloud-based UCC platform. Because of the need for remote work, the need for all modalities of team collaboration, from voice calls to video meetings, is growing. This fuels the need for an integrated platform.

The UCC Platform—Fully Featured with Increasing Intelligence

With the features of UCC well-established, now begins the race to differentiate offerings through better analytics and national and global availability. Seamless switching between modalities is a given. The decision to select a UCC provider has now become more strategic, as these platforms will see a surge in usage. Real-time interactions, particularly messaging and meetings, are expected to grow above industry averages due to the current global health crisis.

Given the current environment, Aragon is recommending a global deployment of team collaboration. While many enterprises have a best-of-breed offering, adding one that is part of a UCC platform provides more seamless switching during daily use, saving time and increasing productivity.

The new level of intelligence that is being added to UCC offerings means that the setup experience, the meeting experience, and the access to post-event content is more seamless and more automated.

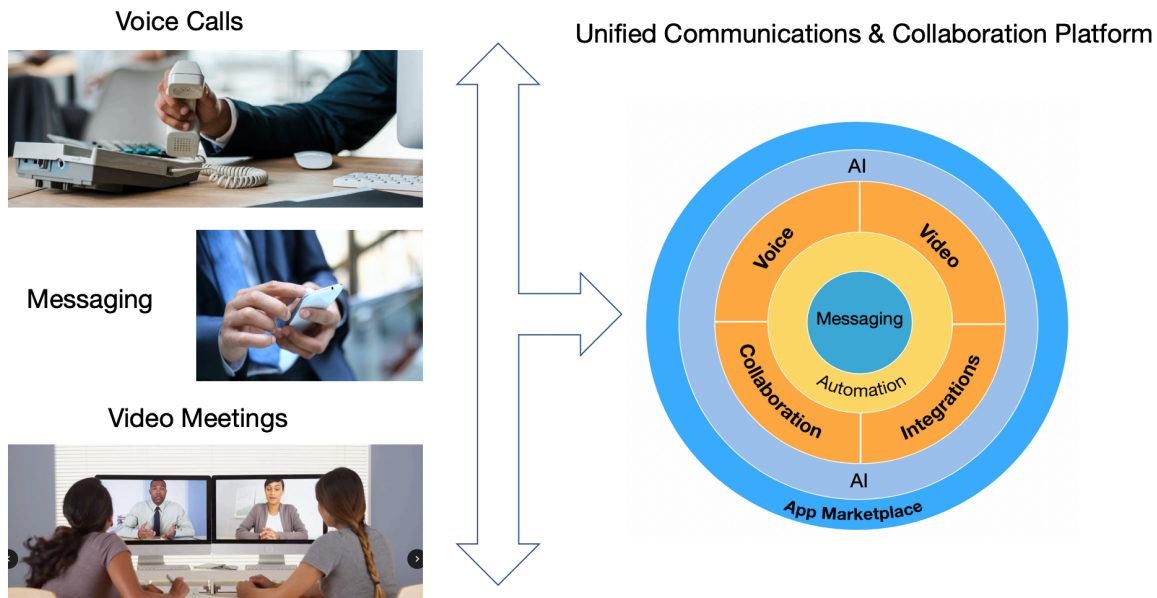


Figure 1: Best-of-breed applications are evolving to become complete UCC platforms as enterprises want more options for communications and collaboration.

The platform play is the key criteria for enterprises. Providers still focus on core strengths, but the evaluation should be based on the combination and the overall strength of the platform. The evidence of this focus can be seen in the unified clients many enterprise providers offer.

People-Centric Collaboration Starts with a Unified Client

Aragon has advocated for people-centric collaboration (putting the user first), and the market is now delivering on this. Many vendors have enhanced their offerings over the last year, including Cisco, Fuze, Microsoft, RingCentral, and Vonage. Aragon feels that the market is starting to put people at the center of UCC, which is more about people-centric collaboration than channel-specific UCC. Use cases will help to drive this, as will the addition of intelligence through predictive and prescriptive analytics.

At its core, people-centric collaboration is about enabling seamless communications and collaboration. It allows for calls that are both voice-based and video-based; it enables meetings with users and rooms; it is about the shift from instant messaging to mobile messaging, a shift that we have termed mobile collaboration. However, not all have been quick to recognize these changes in the market, particularly the impact of mobile messaging.

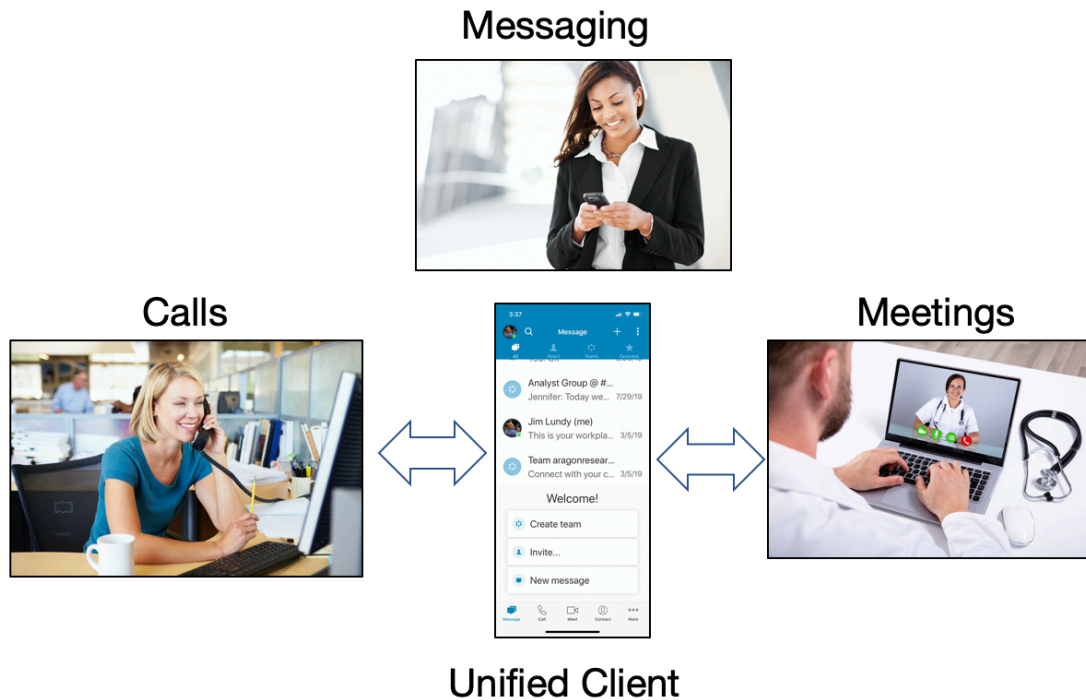


Figure 2: Unified clients make the communications and collaboration experience more seamless.

The UCC and Contact Center Angle

We have seen more demand for providers that can offer both UCC and contact center services. This was a buying consideration years ago and has become a buying consideration again, in part because it simplifies vendor management and provides one calling infrastructure. Enterprises should realize that today, while many providers sell the story of integration, the calling platform may still be separate and distinct.

The Key Elements of the UCC Platform

One of the biggest shifts in UCC is that these platforms are no longer the loosely coupled offerings they were just a few short years ago. Each element of UCC is important, starting with the emergence of a typical client. The demand for the key elements of the UCC platform is being influenced by current shifts in the market.

Voice: Cloud Migration Continues to Drive the Market

The shift to a cloud-based PBX has driven the growth of the market. Still, in 2020, the ability to offer a hybrid cloud offering—via Kubernetes containerization—means that enterprises can run their service in a local data center while still having the vendor manage the service. As mentioned above, shifting to a cloud-based voice offering is now a critical part of enterprise infrastructure. Service level agreements will need to be examined carefully to ensure quality and availability. Voice is still the largest market, but meetings and messaging are key to on-premise and remote work.

Today, the benefits and the innovations that a full cloud UCaaS offering provides are a must-have, as is immediate and seamless hot switching in the event that a primary cloud data center goes down. Hybrid cloud served as a bridge, but going forward, the costs of keeping old and new systems aren't always beneficial. In some cases, a hosted offering that gives the benefit of cloud and data privacy will be as popular as a multi-tenant offering.

Post-pandemic, the race will be to replace aging PBXs. For cloud UCC providers, this should deliver new levels of revenue growth. Global availability and reliability will also become key criteria for large enterprises.

Video Meetings Become a Key Part of the Workplace

The era of digital work is here, and automation and productivity are tied together. So too is getting more out the workday. This means meetings need to have a better experience—and leveraging video is a key part of this collaborative experience. Thanks to the consumer focus of providers like Apple (FaceTime), people at work are used to the idea of turning on their video cameras. In fact, Aragon believes that meetings are 40% more effective when conducted by video as opposed to voice alone.

Remote work is not the same as being with others in the workplace—but video meetings can go a long way to make it a better and more productive experience. This includes other use cases, such as webinars, live events, or video-based distance learning.

In 2020, intelligent content analytics will become more integrated into web and video conferencing. For example, in 2019, Cisco acquired Voicea and has already incorporated its voice analytics engine into Cisco Webex. Content analytics refers to the use of analytics to derive insights from content where the concepts in the input source—higher-level abstractions of the meaning or the intent of the source—have been extracted and organized in a model that can be mechanically processed.

The ability to transcribe what is being said in a meeting means that meetings become more valuable. Voice commands, transcription, note-taking, and even meeting actions are now being offered by a number of providers, including Cisco, LogMeIn, and Microsoft. With some being able to capture action items, the value of meetings is sure to go up, since this level of automation takes the pressure off of meeting organizers to create summaries.

HD Video: 1080p Quietly Challenges 720p

Business users are demanding rich, immersive video. More providers can now deliver both 720p and 1080p video reliably, with some requirement for MPLS connectivity between campuses. Aragon recommends that enterprises insist on product roadmaps that support a minimum video resolution of 1080p.

Team Collaboration as the Catalyst for Faster Customer Journeys

Team collaboration is also in a prime position to become a business platform on-ramp where teams can get work done and business can be transacted. Conversational AI's maturity, as well as its applications, have evolved, and new products are coming online to take advantage of this technology. That said, this has given rise to a new power struggle to own the team collaboration market.

For mobile workers, communications and collaboration capabilities must be:

- 1) Fully mobile
- 2) Fast
- 3) Seamless

The mobile worker needs collaboration tools that will allow them to be notified of things instantly from any—and all—of their applications without having to switch back and forth between them.

Aragon has observed over the past year that buyers want to be able to communicate fast when they conduct a transaction. At the same time, managers and their teams must be able to take action. Messaging enables both aspects of customer journeys and promotes more efficient experiences.

This is particularly true for mobile workers who need to be able to accept tasks and provide progress updates, and for parties involved in business transactions where an agreement must be reached. In some cases, a company-wide announcement can be shared faster via message than email because people tend to be more responsive to phone notifications.

Team collaboration is at the heart of a simpler and faster journey for all of these examples. When communication is expedited, work can be accomplished faster. This is one of the reasons that Aragon sees team collaboration growing even faster as a category.

CPaaS and Integration: Marketplaces Are the Future

While the integration of apps is a trend coming from the consumer world, it will become increasingly important in the enterprise. CPaaS (APIs) is enabling the integration of team collaboration with other applications. Many providers are making their CPaaS capabilities a core part of their platform, which powers their solution efforts.

Because mobile working is gaining traction, it is also especially important for people to stay on top of scheduling to stay on-target and on-time as they work on-the-go. Features like Google Calendar and Microsoft Teams are supporting this need. We will also see chatbots pushing productivity for mobile workers by becoming digital assistants, a phenomenon which we will dissect further in later sections.

There is still leftover pain with IT buyers over instant messaging, which never truly became a dominant standard in the enterprise. Team collaboration, however, is different because it is mobile-enabled and cross-application. This is one of the reasons we feel that it will become the dominant form of communication in enterprises along with its ubiquity and real-time nature.

Cloud-Based UCC: APIs Enable Marketplaces

There is a shift occurring in the communications and collaboration market, in part because enterprises need to move fast and on a global scale. There is a growing recognition that cloud-based UCC services are faster and easier to deploy. They also provide more flexibility for remote use cases.

What is under the hood of these UCC offerings is connectivity enabled by application programming interfaces (APIs). These API-enabled platforms are the glue that enables the connectivity with applications mentioned earlier. The new way forward is offering pre-configured connectors that leverage APIs.

The API-based connectors are now offered in online exchanges that help to make the core UCC platform more attractive to buyers, and now, as a result of the API layer, more providers are shifting to offer app marketplaces.

Conversational AI—Getting to Outcomes Faster

Chatbots, which need to mature to become full digital assistants, are becoming more of the norm. Today, major providers are either adding their own native bot development tools or partnering with other conversational AI providers to provide a growing marketplace for bots.

The vision for people-centric collaboration is to have a communications digital assistant (i.e., an AI chatbot) with the ability to help schedule or begin a call, start recording, schedule and launch meetings, make adjustments for any encountered errors, or execute other commands. AI chatbots will be able to accomplish more tasks for people in the quest to make communications and collaboration more seamless.

Prediction: *By YE 2021, 50% of UCC providers will offer an AI-based digital assistant to enable a more seamless collaboration experience.*

The Landscape of UCC

Due to the maturity of the UCC market, there are now new ways to evaluate providers. Instead of looking at the heritage of the provider, enterprises should evaluate:

1. Providers that have most or all the elements of UCC offered as a bundle.
2. Digital work hub providers that focus on work management and are adding UCC capabilities.
3. Providers that have national and global delivery capabilities with proven reliability.

Many of the providers evaluated in this Globe report are at different stages of an integrated UCC offering—all have different strengths across their portfolio. Partnerships and integrations are an area to watch for enterprise buyers.

UCC Consolidation: Team Collaboration May Be the Driving Factor

Consolidation in UCC now shows some signs of slowing down. In recent years, the need for a full UCC platform caused many providers to consolidate because the fastest way to accomplish this was to acquire a customer base.

While there are more partnerships occurring, we also see the possibility of more deals in two areas:

1. Team Collaboration—some providers will not be able to build team collaboration fast enough.
2. Chatbots and Digital Labor—while integrations are fine, UCC providers may find themselves stuck depending on third parties who may actually be competitors.

Last year, we said that we expected to see more UCC providers expand their focus on team collaboration and on AI. Now that both areas have matured, it may be the time to acquire in lieu of organic development.

How to Use This Globe

From a buyer's perspective, this Globe represents a wide assortment of vendors that have expertise in different parts of the UCC spectrum. Within this converged market, there are different levels of convergence. At one level, there are providers that specialize in voice PBX, which is often the anchor application when it comes to vendor selection. At another level, web and video conferencing has become vital to many enterprises, and some enterprises will want to improve existing capabilities.

Our advice to enterprise buyers is to first consider what your core requirements are in regard to UCC. We encourage buyers to go beyond just the positions on the Globe graph: consider which capabilities and products best fit the required use cases that pertain to your enterprise or buying center. For example, if the requirement is for global calling, this may change the list of finalist providers that you consider.

The table below segments the providers in this report by the key capabilities they support:

Vendor	On-Premise Offering	Cloud Voice PBX	Video Meetings	Team Collaboration	Unified Client	Marketplace
8x8		✓	✓	✓		✓
Avaya	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cisco	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dialpad		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fuze		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Google		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intermedia		✓	✓	✓	✓	
LogMeIn		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Microsoft	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mitel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NEC	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Nextiva		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RingCentral		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unify	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vonage		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1: Comparing the capabilities of the different providers.

Aragon Research Globe Overview

The Aragon Research Globe graphically represents our analysis of a specific market and its component vendors. We do a rigorous analysis of each vendor, using three dimensions that enable comparative evaluation of the participants in a given market.

The Aragon Research Globe looks beyond size and market share, which often dominate this type of analysis, and instead uses those as comparative factors in evaluating providers’ product-oriented capabilities. Positioning in the Globe will reflect how complete a provider’s future strategy is, relative to their performance in fulfilling that strategy in the market.

A further differentiating factor is the global market reach of each vendor. This allows all vendors with similar strategy and performance to be compared regardless of their size and market share. It will improve recognition of providers with a comprehensive strategy and strong performance, but limited or targeted global penetration, which will be compared more directly to others with similar perspectives.

Dimensions of Analysis

The following parameters are tracked in this analysis:

Strategy reflects the degree to which a vendor has the market understanding and strategic intent that are at the forefront of market direction. That includes providing the capabilities that customers want in the current offering and recognizing where the market is headed. The strategy evaluation includes:

- Product
- Product strategy
- Market understanding and how well product roadmaps reflect that understanding
- Marketing
- Management team, including time in the job and understanding of the market

Performance represents a vendor's effectiveness in executing its defined strategy. This includes selling and supporting the defined product offering or service. The performance evaluation includes:

- **Awareness:** Market awareness of the firm and its product.
- **Customer Experience:** Feedback on the product, installs, upgrades, and overall satisfaction.
- **Viability:** Financial viability of the provider as measured by financial statements.
- **Pricing and Packaging:** Is the offering priced and packaged competitively?
- **Product:** The mix of features tied to the frequency and quality of releases and updates.
- **R&D:** Investment in research and development, as evidenced by overall architecture.

Reach is a measure of the global capability that a vendor can deliver. Reach can have one of three values: *national*, *international*, or *global*. Being able to offer products and services in one of the following three regions is the third dimension of the Globe analysis:

- **Americas** (North America and Latin America)
- **EMEA** (Europe, Middle East, and Africa)
- **APAC** (Asia Pacific: including but not limited to Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, Singapore, etc.)

The market reach evaluation includes:

- Sales and support offices worldwide
- Time zone and location of support centers

- Support for languages
- References in respective hemispheres
- Data center locations

The Four Sectors of the Globe

The Globe is segmented into four sectors, representing high and low in both the strategy and performance dimensions. When the analysis is complete, each vendor will be in one of four groups: *leaders*, *contenders*, *innovators*, or *specialists*. We define these as follows:

- **Leaders** have comprehensive strategies that align with industry direction and market demand and effectively perform against those strategies.
- **Contenders** have strong performance, but more limited or less complete strategies. Their performance positions them well to challenge for leadership by expanding their strategic focus.
- **Innovators** have strong strategic understanding and objectives but have yet to perform effectively across all elements of that strategy.
- **Specialists** fulfill their strategy well but have a narrower or more targeted emphasis with regard to overall industry and user expectations. Specialists may excel in a certain market or vertical application.

Inclusion Criteria

- A minimum of \$6 million in primary revenue for unified communications and collaboration or a minimum of \$8 million in revenue in a related market (voice, video conferencing, collaboration, and mobile collaboration/messaging).
 - UCC, as defined by Aragon, is an evolving market. A vendor needs to have at least two modules to be evaluated. UCC modules include voice, video conferencing, collaboration, and mobile collaboration/messaging.
- Shipping Product: the product must be announced and available.
- Customer References: the vendor must produce customer references in each hemisphere that the vendor participates in.

Aragon Research evaluates markets and the major technology providers that participate in those markets. Aragon makes the determination about including vendors in our Aragon Research Globes with or without their participation in the Aragon Research Globe process.

Inclusions

- ***Intermedia***

Exclusions

The following vendors were not included in the report but are notable:

- ***BlueJeans***
 - BlueJeans offers web and video conferencing, featuring Dolby Voice, and also supports meetings, webinars, and room systems.
- ***PGI***
 - PGI offers web and video conferencing services.
- ***Zoom***
 - Zoom offers cloud-based video conferencing with multiple use cases, including meetings, webinars, and room systems. Its recent launch of voice dialing plans has it headed more in the UCC direction.

The Aragon Research Globe™ for Unified Communications and Collaboration, 2020 (As of 4/16/20)



Figure 3: The Aragon Research Globe for Unified Communications and Collaboration, 2020.

Leaders

Avaya

Avaya has continued to evolve in the UCC market as a provider of cloud and on-premise UCC solutions as well as contact center offerings. In 2019, it announced a strategic partnership with RingCentral, where Avaya will sell Avaya Cloud Office as its UCaaS offering, powered by RingCentral. Avaya Cloud Office will be sold via Avaya partners and will be targeted at public UCaaS buyers.

In February 2020, Avaya announced enhancements to Avaya Spaces that will combine its existing contact center capabilities with robust team collaboration. Besides Spaces and Avaya Cloud Office, Avaya also has a complete portfolio of phones and video huddle offerings to enable an enterprise to be fully outfitted. Avaya leverages its highly resilient core platforms into its cloud offerings, providing full native support for the underlying communications and collaborations capabilities, including voice, video, meetings, mobility, team collaboration, messaging, and customer contact.

Avaya's contact center offering, Avaya IX Digital Contact Center, has been enhanced with partnerships with Google, along with its own chatbot, Ava. With Avaya's ability to deliver cloud, on-premise, and hybrid cloud offerings, enterprises have significant choices to meet their needs.

Strengths

- UCC platform
- Cloud and on-premise capabilities
- Overall user experience
- Extensive video portfolio
- Highly reliable telephony and UC
- Partner network and ecosystem

Challenges

- Balancing cloud and on-premise offerings

Cisco

Cisco has continued to enhance its overall UCC portfolio with a significant focus on AI, which it calls cognitive collaboration. One of Cisco's biggest moves this past year was its launch of a unified client that brings Cisco Webex (cloud collaboration) and its on-premise Cisco Unified Communications Manager capabilities together as one common user experience. Cisco's flagship UCC portfolio is led by its Cisco Webex Collaboration cloud, which brings together Webex video meetings, calling, team collaboration, and collaboration devices. Cisco also offers Webex Contact Center—a cloud contact center service integrated with the Webex UCC suite. Cisco offers one of the most complete sets of voice and video conferencing platforms, now fully integrated with Cisco Webex Teams, its cloud-based team collaboration offering.

Cisco added to its cognitive collaboration portfolio when it purchased voice analytics and transcription provider Voicea in 2019. In March 2019, Cisco enhanced Webex with people insights and facial recognition to provide more contextual and relationship intelligence, as well as Webex Assistant to enable natural language interactions with Webex Room and other collaboration devices as part of its new cognitive collaboration capabilities. Cisco has also introduced an enhanced enterprise-class, native cloud calling solution—Webex Calling, now powered by Cisco Webex Cloud and integrated with Cisco Webex Teams and Meetings globally. In addition, the Cisco Jabber client application continues to be a popular choice with enterprises for on-premise deployments, supporting calling, meeting, and messaging. It includes interoperability and common user experience with Webex Teams for organizations with a range of deployment needs. With Cisco's broad UCC portfolio and the Cisco Collaboration Flex Plan, enterprises have a range of options that combine on-premise, hybrid, and public cloud deployments, as well as the flexibility to mix, match, and integrate services and deployment models as the business evolves. The addition of the Cisco hardware-as-a-service plan also provides flexibility in the acquisition of devices in a simple monthly subscription fee.

Strengths

- The Cisco and Webex brands
- High-quality video and voice across devices, including mobile
- Unified and modular user experience and management across applications
- Advanced people insights with Webex for relationship intelligence
- Collaboration video devices for rooms, groups, and personal endpoints—including intelligent headsets
- Flexible cloud, on-premise, and hybrid deployment options
- End-to-end encryption—in transit, at rest, and in-use
- Cisco mobile collaboration capabilities

Challenges

- Balancing focus on hardware and software

Fuze

Fuze reorganized in Q4 and named CFO Brian Day as CEO. It has shifted focus to the enterprise, where it has seen significant success in medium and large accounts. Fuze continues to offer a complete UCC platform that offers a seamless user experience across all UCC modalities. It was one of the first to offer a unified client, which many other vendors are now emulating. This focus has allowed Fuze to continue its growth, particularly in medium and large enterprises. With strengths in a cloud-native platform that includes voice and HD video conferencing, Fuze has also made team collaboration a seamless capability in its unified client. Its video meetings are high-quality and offer robust reliability. Fuze offers a complete collaboration experience that includes business voice, persistent chat, presence, and content sharing in a single app for distributed teams.

Fuze has really made its UCC platform a full digital work hub that is ideal for people on the go. An example of this is its car mode, introduced in 2019, which alone has helped Fuze win deals where the mobile worker needs to have full access to UCC capabilities while in their car or truck. Fuze can enable a mobile, communications work hub experience across voice, video, and messaging in desktop, mobile, and room environments. This has enabled Fuze to go beyond the office into first-line worker scenarios where mobility is key.

Fuze has also enhanced its APIs to allow more connectivity with third parties, including support for AI. Besides its full UCC platform, Fuze has always offered its own contact center offering. While it has partnered with others, the combination of Fuze's UCC offering and a solid and growing install base for contact center positions Fuze well for the growing demand for an integrated UCC and CC suite.

Strengths

- UCC platform
- Voice and video quality
- Large global enterprise deployments
- Mobility experience
- Video conferencing across desktop, mobile, and rooms

Challenges

- Focus on meetings

Google

Google offers a complete UCC platform that was enhanced in 2019 with the global rollout of Google Voice. With robust email, team collaboration, and meetings capabilities, Google has continued to push the envelope as a work hub-focused UCC offering. Google Meet has continued to push the envelope on ease of meetings—with one-click meetings added to the process of scheduling from calendars. Google Chat is tightly integrated with Google’s flagship cloud office offering, and Google has been beta testing an even more enhanced version that offers enhanced functionality and ease of use. Google Chat and Google Meet scale well and run on mobile and desktop devices. Additionally, Google Meet and Chat offer integration with other Google apps like Gmail and Calendar, allowing users to launch straight into a full video or voice call. Integration with Gmail ensures that Google enterprise users now have a full range of collaboration capabilities, from asynchronous to real-time.

With its G Suite offering that is part of Google Cloud, Google has been pushing the envelope for adding intelligence to its offerings. It has made the composition of emails intelligent with suggestions for finishing sentences that are customized to the writing style of the user. Google also offers Google Meet hardware and whiteboarding via its Jamboard through BenQ, which means Google has a complete portfolio of room options. Its partnership with Pexip enables it to integrate third-party devices into a meeting, including Microsoft, Cisco, or Poly devices. Google integrates all of the management capabilities into the G Suite admin dashboard to allow multiple Jamboard and Google Meet devices to be managed from a console. With G Suite, the ease and speed of shifting from messaging to a full meeting is one of the advantages of Google Meet and Google Chat and fosters enhanced and seamless collaboration between users.

Strengths

- Enterprise penetration with G Suite
- Global cloud infrastructure
- Partner ecosystem
- Team collaboration
- Growing AI capabilities
- Video meetings
- Cloud-native collaboration applications
- Ease of use

Challenges

- Late to market with voice offering

Microsoft

Microsoft has continued to promote Microsoft Teams as its leading UCC offering, which is part of both the Microsoft 365 and the Office 365 bundle. Given its install base on-premise, Microsoft still offers Skype for Business (SfB) 2019 to support many large organizations that have made significant investments in SfB over the last few years. The Microsoft Teams client has become the de facto unified client for Microsoft messaging, meetings, and calls. Microsoft has continued to enhance the Teams client with monthly feature releases in 2019 and 2020. Microsoft has seen success with the 2019 rollout of planning workshops, which it did to assist customers with migrating from SfB to Teams.

Microsoft Office has calling plans for Teams. For it to be a full UCC offering, enterprises must license the E1, E3, or E5 versions of Office 365 to gain the calling features. Microsoft has also made Teams a first-line worker focused offering, so it is ideal for users that don't have a desk and depend on mobile for their communications tools and for other needs such as scheduling. Microsoft has a number of partners that support both phones and video huddle devices. These partners include AudioCodes, Crestron, Hewlett Packard, Logitech, Poly, and Yealink.

Strengths

- Microsoft brand
- Video meetings and webcasts
- Global PSTN conferencing coverage
- HD video quality on point-to-point calls
- Overall collaboration applications
- Global footprint
- Full hybrid scenarios enabling migrating strategies to the cloud

Challenges

- Making all SfB Server capabilities available in Teams

Nextiva

Nextiva has been on a growth trajectory as it focuses on the SMB market demand for cloud-based telephony and complete communications platforms, including contact center. In 2019, Nextiva continued to enhance its NextOS platform and added a number of experienced executives to its leadership team as it prepared for its next round of growth. Its core offerings include its UCaaS-based business phone service, including cloud PBX and SIP trunking, as well as chat and CRM. NextOS also includes its own CRM for sales and service use cases. Additionally, surveys and analytics make Nextiva more of a customer engagement platform than just unified communications. Finally, Nextiva is offering its cloud-based contact center offering with attractive pricing.

In April 2020, Nextiva announced the launch of Nextiva CoSpaces, which adds team collaboration and meetings capabilities as part of NextOS. With the full rollout of NextOS underway, Nextiva has packaged its offers into two key suites: the Business Communication Suite and the Nextiva Customer Relationship Suite. This segmentation of offers will help buyers make a quicker selection. The Nextiva App provides mobile phone service, instant messaging, presence, screen sharing, document sharing, and one-on-one video meetings.

Strengths

- Cloud PBX
- Call center
- Mobile app
- Analytics
- Native CRM capabilities
- NextOS Business Communications Suite

Challenges

- Awareness outside of the U.S.

RingCentral

RingCentral has continued with its global expansion, which includes growth in direct sales and in partnerships that expand the distribution of RingCentral Office. Its quarterly revenue puts it at over \$1 billion in annual revenue. In October 2019, RingCentral formed a strategic partnership with Avaya that included RingCentral investing \$125 million in Avaya and Avaya becoming a reseller of RingCentral Office. Atos also recently announced that it would also resell RingCentral Office. The RingCentral UCC platform is now available in 41 countries with its full set of capabilities—high-quality voice, video conferencing, mobile messaging, and cloud contact center capabilities.

In 2019, RingCentral updated its mobile app to consolidate all of the functionality for messaging, video, and phone in a single app. RingCentral Glip is its flagship team collaboration app, which continues to evolve. With seamless interactions with the other modalities, it makes RingCentral Office a full communications platform and a digital work hub as well. In March 2019, RingCentral announced RingCentral Persist, which will allow customers to continue communications services, including emergency calling, extension-to-extension dialing, and inbound and outbound calling even during an internet failure. In April 2020, RingCentral announced RingCentral Video, which is a homegrown, high-quality video conferencing solution included in RingCentral Office. RingCentral Video is an alternative to the partner capabilities provided by Zoom. The RingCentral Open Platform is also a growing contributor to its growth—it now supports over 3,000 applications, including Microsoft Teams, Google G Suite, NetSuite, and Salesforce. RingCentral is also fairly easy to deploy, which gives it an advantage over others; though it also offers an expanded services portfolio for full implementation support.

Strengths

- UC cloud capabilities
- RingCentral brand
- Team messaging and collaboration functionality
- Unified client
- Ease of configuration and deployment
- Open platform
- UCC marketplace

Challenges

- Managing its growing set of partner channels

Unify

Unify, which is the division of Atos that offers collaboration solutions, has been adding more partnerships to differentiate its offering. In February 2020, Atos announced that it would partner with RingCentral and distribute RingCentral Office as its cloud offering. The partnership will complement existing Unify OpenScape offerings and the Atos CPaaS orchestration platform. It will be a part of the growing Atos digital workplace portfolio.

Unify's team collaboration offering, Circuit, supports messaging, voice, screen sharing, and video, including integration with OpenScape. Circuit also provides extensive integrations via its PaaS offering. Partner integrations include Box, Google, Microsoft, and Salesforce.

Through Unify, Atos offers mission-critical communications capabilities that include a focus on government and healthcare, which it provides an integrated platform to support. As with others, we expect Unify to leverage the cloud voice capabilities of RingCentral for those enterprises that want cloud-based offerings. This means that Unify now has a stronger portfolio to deliver cloud, on-premise, and hybrid cloud options for communications and collaboration.

Strengths

- UCC expertise with OpenScape
- Partnerships
- Messaging capabilities
- Vertical industry solutions
- PaaS platform with Circuit
- Cloud deployment options

Challenges

- Overall focus on video

Vonage

Vonage has continued to expand its product portfolio and made a major move in 2019 by relaunching its portfolio and branding it as Vonage Business Communications. Through a five-year set of acquisitions, Vonage Business Cloud marks the move towards a completely organic product that is cloud-based at a time when others are deciding not to invest in cloud by making acquisitions. Vonage has seen strong growth powered by its UCaaS, CCaaS, and CPaaS technology. Besides Vonage Business Communications, Vonage offers a complete contact center (Vonage Contact Center, formerly branded NewVoiceMedia), and a complete API platform in one portfolio, on a single stack. Because of its deep heritage in CPaaS and APIs, Vonage offers enterprises more flexibility in blending its offerings with existing business applications.

Vonage Meetings is the provider's new video conferencing offering, and it replaces the partnership with Amazon Chime. Vonage's integrated team collaboration solution offers team messaging, file sharing, SMS, voice, and video across any device. Vonage also offers a cloud-contact center solution, Vonage Contact Center, integrated with its Vonage Business Communications cloud UCC solution. In addition, Vonage now offers Smart Numbers, which enables any Vonage phone number to be programmatically routed to a host of API-driven capabilities, as well as integrations with Google G Suite, Microsoft Office 365, Slack, and CRM applications from Oracle, Salesforce, Zendesk, and many more through the Vonage App Center. With its full UCC platform and a growing international presence, Vonage is well-positioned in the UCC landscape.

Strengths

- UCC platform
- UCaaS offering
- CCaaS offering
- Brand recognition
- API portfolio (voice, SMS, messages, video, 2FA)
- Integrations
- CPaaS API flexibility

Challenges

- Building awareness for its full portfolio

Contenders

LogMeIn

LogMeIn, which is in the process of being taken private in a \$4.3 billion deal by Francisco Partners and Evergreen Coast Capital Corporation, has quietly become a complete UCC provider following the 2018 acquisition of UCaaS provider Jive Communications. LogMeIn's GoToConnect was launched in 2019 and is a complete UCC platform with Jive's cloud-based Voice PBX, Video Conferencing powered by GoToMeeting, Messaging, and more. LogMeIn also offers GoToRoom, its room system that connects via GoToMeeting. LogMeIn partners with Dolby, Logitech, and Poly for its room-based meeting solutions.

LogMeIn also announced a new integration marketplace in January 2020 that includes its GoToConnect product family. Jive Communications is the platform that powers GoToConnect, enabling LogMeIn to now offer a complete cloud PBX to sell to its large install base. Jive itself had a solid install base in the SMB market. Many GoTo customers will find it easy to add on the GoToConnect option. The battle for UCC in the mid-market continues to show significant growth and LogMeIn is well-positioned as a full platform provider.

Strengths

- UCaaS offering
- Brand awareness
- Web and video conferencing install base
- Integrations
- Analytics

Challenges

- Integrating multiple brands

Mitel

Mitel, which has been private since 2018, named Mary McDowell as its new CEO. Mitel continues to lead with voice and is transitioning to a cloud-first focus in the U.S. with PBX as its primary solution story elsewhere. Mitel offers a complete UCC portfolio for both its cloud and on-premise voice offerings, including contact center and endpoints. MiCloud Connect and Mitel Flex are Mitel's flagship cloud-based UCC offerings, and both are hosted on Google Cloud. It works with MiTeam Meetings, its web and video conferencing offering, and MiTeam, its team collaboration tool.

Mitel also has a partnership with Google that leverages Google AI to enhance Mitel's contact center offering, and recently expanded the relationship to leverage Google Cloud Platform for its public and private cloud solutions.

Mitel's growing set of solutions and applications that are targeted at the mid-market allow Mitel and its partners to offer a more tailored set of solutions. Mitel CloudLink is its cloud-enabling technology, allowing on-site enterprises to access cloud-based APIs that should be a key catalyst for enterprises that want to leverage hybrid cloud deployments.

Strengths

- Cloud and on-premise voice support
- Global cloud infrastructure
- Hybrid cloud API marketplace accessible to on-site customers
- Endpoints
- Global partner ecosystem

Challenges

- Overall focus on video (its recently released AWS-developed video application is a step in the right direction)

NEC

NEC is a large multi-national provider of IT infrastructure and communications offerings. NEC offers both traditional on-premise PBX, as well as its UNIVERGE BLUE UCC platform. UNIVERGE BLUE offers a full set of capabilities, including cloud communications (UCaaS), messaging, meetings, and contact center. With historical strengths in voice, NEC now offers a full set of voice and video offerings that support the needs of small and large enterprises. For the firms that still need on-premise capabilities, NEC offers its UNIVERGE SV9100 BLUE and SV9500 BLUE PBX. Its UNIVERGE BLUE Video is powered by Vidyo and works well on both mobile and desktop platforms. UNIVERGE BLUE team collaboration is still gaining traction in the market and NEC continues to leverage Video for its video meetings offering.

NEC has also invested in its Smart WorkSpace offering that provides a digital work hub, which allows users to access all of their work-related projects and communications. Smart WorkSpace is powered by the UNIVERGE integration platform and can bring applications and devices together in a seamless fashion. Besides its UCC platform, NEC continues to offer a full set of handsets for large and small enterprises. More importantly, NEC has been investing in analytics and its NeoFace analytics offers two applications for facial recognition: NeoFace Welcome and NeoFace Watch. Combined with UNIVERGE, these offerings will help NEC expand its solution portfolio into certain vertical markets, especially those markets concerned with safety and security.

Strengths

- Cloud and on-premise voice support
- Global cloud infrastructure
- Industry solutions focus
- Video analytics
- Endpoints

Challenges

- Overall focus on video meetings

8x8

8x8, based in San Jose, offers its 8x8 X Series, which is a UCC platform. The X Series was enhanced in 2019 with the launch of a new meeting service—8x8 Video Meetings—that now has a freemium offer to attract new clients. 8x8 Video Meetings is integrated with the X Series, which integrates all of its capabilities for voice, video, team collaboration, and contact center into one platform. 8x8 has continued to grow its core UCaaS offering with X Series, and now it has more of a complete offering, which includes the 8x8 Team Messaging solution. This offering is integrated with the X Series desktop and mobile app, providing voice, meetings, and messaging in a single experience.

As part of 8x8's push into web and video conferencing, 8x8 also announced a room solution, which features partner solutions, including Crestron, Logitech, and Poly. 8x8 X Series also includes an integration framework that allows 8x8 users to have more seamless connectivity with over 35 partner apps, including Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce, and Slack. 8x8 also announced 8x8 Speech Analytics for its contact center application. 8x8 has a growing global cloud footprint that includes data centers in North America, the UK, Amsterdam, APAC, and Brazil.

Strengths

- Cloud-based PBX
- Video meetings
- Contact center
- Partner integrations
- CRM integration

Challenges

- Overall focus on video

Innovators

Dialpad

Dialpad has continued to develop its Dialpad Talk platform while it expands into markets such as contact center and sales. Dialpad Talk offers cloud-PBX that leverages voice by using AI and NLP, audio conferencing meetings, HD video, and enterprise messaging. Dialpad Talk has evolved into a digital work hub due to its ability to allow users to take notes and capture reminders after a call. Dialpad voice intelligence allows for real-time transcription and recommendations as well. Dialpad Talk also integrates with Microsoft and Google. Dialpad UberConference is its web and voice conferencing offering, which started as a voice conferencing service and now has added video meetings.

Dialpad has differentiated its product by making its AI-based voice analytics a standard part of the offering. It offers Dialpad Support, a contact center offering targeted at small and midsize contact centers. Dialpad Sell offers a sales communications offering for sales teams that makes use of advanced analytics. Dialpad also integrates with Salesforce, Slack, and Zendesk to ensure a seamless communications experience.

Strengths

- Cloud-based, real-time syncing across devices
- Contact center
- Real-time AI-based voice analytics
- CRM integration
- Sales use case

Challenges

- Focus on video and team collaboration

Intermedia

Intermedia, based in Mountain View, California, and led by CEO Michael Gold, offers Intermedia Unite, its full UCC platform. Intermedia Unite offers cloud-based telephony, messaging, and meetings. Intermedia has been shifting its focus from email to both voice PBX and web and video conferencing via its AnyMeeting service. Intermedia also continues to sell exchange-based email hosting, as well as its cloud backup service.

In 2019, Intermedia acquired contact center provider Telax, which will now allow Intermedia to offer both UCC and CCaaS solutions. In 2019, Intermedia added a new auto attendant to its Unite platform. Intermedia sells Unite and AnyMeeting via resellers, some of whom white label the offering with their brand. With its UCC, contact center, and other collaboration offerings, Intermedia is well-positioned for the SMB market.

Strengths

- Cloud PBX
- Call center
- Mobile app
- Native CRM capabilities
- NextOS business communications suite

Challenges

- Market awareness

UCC—Don't Wait to Get Started

With an urgent need for remote work support around the globe today, one of the best ways enterprises can enable their remote teams is through the communication modalities of a UCC platform. While enterprises have historically had best-of-breed capabilities from multiple vendors, because of the work interruptions experienced when switching tools, Aragon suggests looking at the integrated approach offered by the UCC providers evaluated in this report.

The needs of specific business units and the need for redundancy may mean that one provider does not meet all of the requirements of every buyer. In some industries, some providers will be a better fit due to their expertise and unique requirements. At the same time, buyers need to realize that not every UCC suite can deliver a perfect people-centric collaboration experience, but most are well on their way.

Aragon Advisory

- Enterprises need to establish a common platform for enterprise-wide communications and collaboration.
- Enterprises should evaluate UCC providers for their current and their extended roadmap, looking at both national and global capabilities.
- Enterprises should look to enable team collaboration across the enterprise.
- The shift to digital work hubs means that some UCC providers may be better suited to a specific set of solutions for a particular industry.

Bottom Line

The people-centric collaboration experience is about offering truly integrated and seamless communications and collaboration capabilities. In an era of increased remote work, UCC providers can enable an improved work experience, better customer interactions, and higher productivity. Enterprises should look to standardize around 1-2 key UCC providers to ensure both redundancy and global availability.