



Cloud communications: where do you start?

A straightforward three-step
guide to choosing the right solution

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Want to talk?

Normal changed forever – what now?

Through the pandemic and beyond, organisations have focused on adapting to new ways of working. But it's also equally important to make sure that the customer and employee experiences don't suffer.

Organisations may be returning to the office, but many see the value in home working too. They need an effective, simple approach that supports hybrid working, with long-lasting solutions that support employees and customers.

And let's not forget, a remote workforce can work. It is working.

Half of UK workers say they are more productive at home than in the office, according to [a recent study](#) by Cartridge People.

And they're not just more productive. They're happier.

91% of UK employees would prefer the option to work remotely, according to [a recent study](#) by Eskenzi PR, with 31% saying they would like it to be four or five days a week.

So remote communication is critical to business success, now more than ever. But wanting to enable it is only part of the equation.

If you want to make it an integral part of your organisation, permanently, no matter how you grow or evolve in future, you need the right technology to support that.

You need an approach that can always adapt to new devices and new ways of working, wherever your people happen to be.

By adopting a cloud-based approach, you can achieve that much more easily, seamlessly integrating multiple different communication technologies and controlling them from one secure platform.

But with plenty of options out there, how do you know which solution is right for you and your organisation?

There are three main points to consider when trying to answer that question:

1. **Simplicity**
2. **Integration**
3. **Security**

In this short guide, we're going to explore those three points in more detail, arming you with the knowledge you need to make a decision.

Read on to find out more.

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Step 1

Simplicity

Bring all your communication tools together in one easy place

If you had to pick a word to describe the current state of communication technology in most large organisations, 'simple' wouldn't be it.

Many of you reading this will be all-too-familiar with the following description: a disparate collection of communication tools for email, messaging, conferencing and collaboration, completely disconnected from each other and rarely used in a consistent way across your organisation.

This is a problem for two reasons:

1. **It's difficult to manage, especially when demand suddenly increases**
2. **It's a pain in the proverbial for your employees, and a turn-off for your customers**

People of all walks of life now expect communication technology to be accessible through any device, at any time, wherever they happen to be.

They expect that technology to be intuitive and fast. A few seconds spent trying to work something out or wait for another app to load is a few seconds too many.

And your customers have the same high expectations.

In fact, 82% of organisations say improving the customer experience is a key (or top) priority when improving communication within their organisation, according to [research by Ventana](#), while 47% say the same about improving employee satisfaction.

The two are intrinsically linked, of course.

By improving the tools your employees use to communicate, you improve their overall experience at work. But you also empower them to serve your customers in a better and more consistent way, whether that's through a call centre or a messaging platform.



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Step 1

Simplicity

The one-platform approach

By bringing everything together on one secure cloud-based platform, you can access all of it in one convenient place.

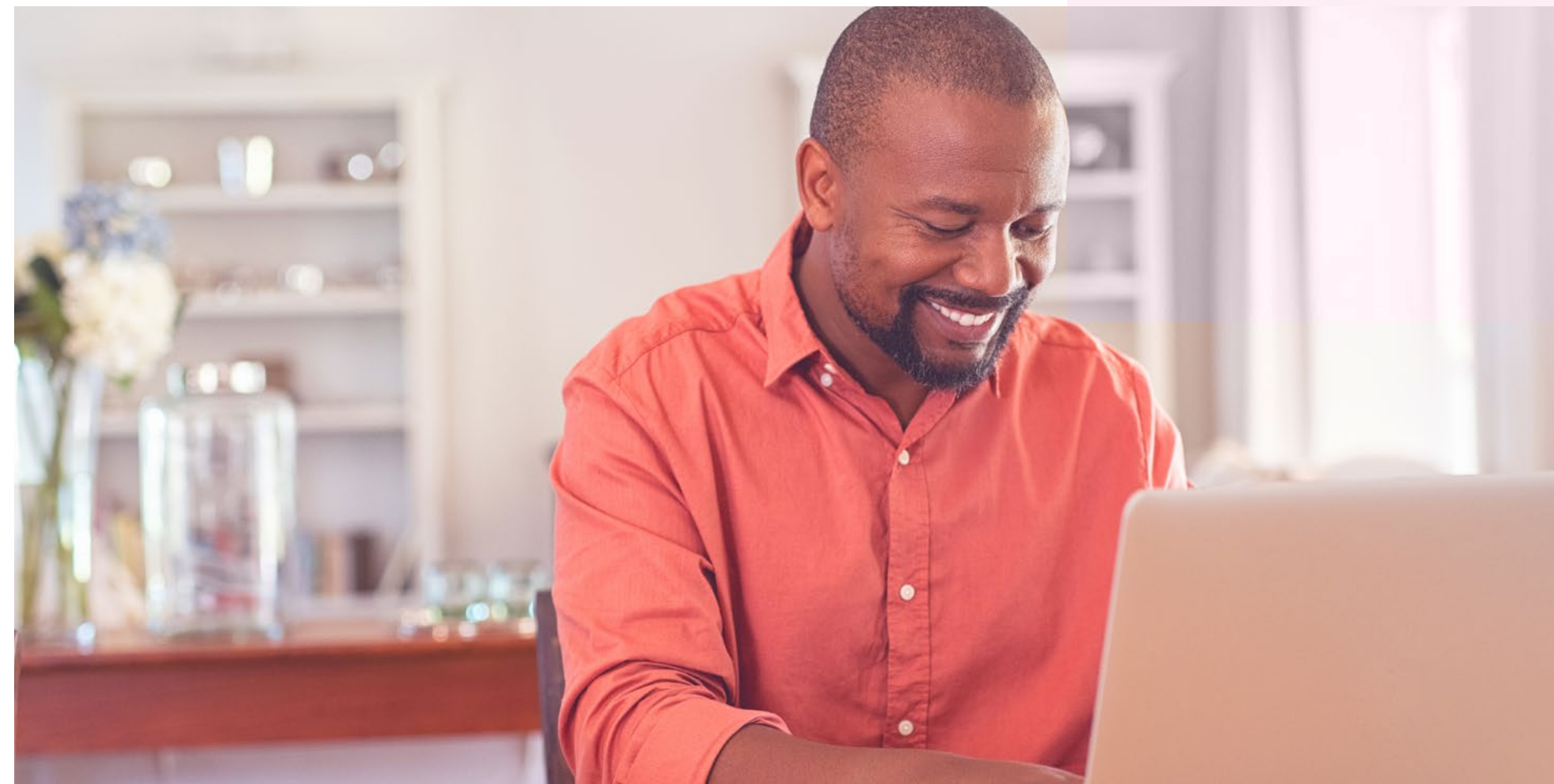
Knowledge workers, supervisors, contact centre staff – all connected to the same central hub via the communication tools they're using.

This also helps avoid any communication silos – in other words: the left hand not talking to the right hand – that come from a lack of integration.

And by ensuring you've got analytics embedded into that single platform too, you can get all the information you need about employee and customer communication in one easily accessible place, paving the way for much easier decision-making.

This approach is especially powerful because your employees no longer have to keep switching between different apps depending on how they need to communicate.

That streamlined way of working enables them to be much more productive and efficient in the way they serve your customers, which in turn will have a positive impact on your overall customer experience.



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Step 2

Integration

Connect with existing applications and infrastructure

The speed of workplace change since the Covid-19 crisis began has been incredible.

In many cases, however, organisations have been frantically adopting new communication tools just to meet the minimum demands of their employees and customers, without the time or resource to think about how all the different pieces could fit together in a more streamlined way.

Truly successful remote working only happens when you remove barriers to communication, and therefore collaboration.

It might not seem a big deal on the surface: having to flick between different applications depending on how you need to communicate.

But when you multiply all those little inconveniences across your entire workforce, that's a lot of frustration and wasted productivity over the course of a working day.

What if you could have all those different communication tools in one easy place instead – even channels like SMS and social media?

And what if you could get a single view of analytics and reporting from every communication touch point, right from that same platform?

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, you can. And you absolutely should.

Integration in action

Let's look at Microsoft Teams as an example of why integration matters.

The app has seen its users grow to **75 million** since the beginning of lockdown – a 70% increase.

Clearly it's a powerful tool. But when you integrate some of your other communication technology – your contact centre solution, for example – into that Microsoft Teams platform, it becomes a whole lot more powerful and useful to your employees.

Imagine if your contact centre staff could make calls right from the Microsoft Teams app.

Only an open, modern communication platform can enable that, allowing you to connect to Teams in a totally seamless way and providing that consistent communication experience for everyone in the organisation.

You're giving every employee access to all the tools and information they need from one single location, without having to switch between applications, and the ability to integrate not just Microsoft Teams but your email client, Slack, G-suite and CRM systems like Salesforce.

Again, this improves the experience your employees have and empowers them to serve your customers better.



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Security

Keep your people talking while keeping your customers' data safe

By 2022, one-third of organisations will choose a communications platform as a service (CPaaS) that is open and secure on any device or channel, according to [Ventana](#).

This is a promising stat, and telling.

As business communication spreads across more and more touch points, and those touch points become more integrated, securing your communications end-to-end is going to be more important (and more challenging) than ever.

Especially when you consider the **238% rise in cyberattacks** since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the average cost of a UK data breach being **somewhere in the region of £3 million**, security should be a major factor in deciding which communication platform to use.

What should you look for?

Every cloud communication provider is going to say they provide security. The key is to avoid any that only talk in vague terms.

Any credible provider should be more than happy to talk about these three things:

- **Encryption**
- **Regulatory adherence**
- **3rd-party verifications**

Let's start with encryption and secure collaboration. If your cloud system's application program interface (API) is poorly written, it could expose your organisation to cyber criminals thanks to weak identity access management.



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Step 3

Security

Make sure encryption is included as standard. And make sure that encryption applies to both data at rest (i.e. data that is stored and most likely protected by a firewall or antivirus software) and data in transit (i.e. the data you use on a day-to-day basis, accessed through applications or programmes).

Regulatory adherence is fairly cut and dry. Simply ask your provider to show evidence that they're able to comply with key security standards like GDPR, MCSS, ISO/IEC, CSA/CCM or any other standards relevant to your organisation.

Finally, look for 3rd-party verification. Make sure your cloud communication provider doesn't rely only on in-house security verification – ask to see evidence of 3rd-party certificates to give you more confidence in that provider's security credentials.

As the widespread increase in remote working seems to be here to stay, it's also worth noting that individual actions still play a huge role in effective workplace security – just like they do in the office.

There are simple steps you can take: making sure every employee has a company laptop, providing multi-factor login authentication, ensuring systems are always updated and always connecting to company systems and data through a VPN.

But the best thing you can do is find a provider that's able to handle all these complex elements for you.

Not only does that take the pressure off your internal IT teams – it might just help you sleep a bit better as well.



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The collaborative contact centre: what is it, and how can it help?

Improve the customer experience while bringing your costs down

Like most organisations, you have probably already equipped employees to work from home. Now it's time to embed the changes by making them future-proof and putting strategic collaboration tools in place for all your departments. These tools should integrate with the solutions you have already adopted, from your back office teams to your front line, customer-facing contact centre colleagues.

By choosing the right cloud technology you can make sure you meet the four golden objectives every contact centre should be aiming for.

Reduce costs

If an agent has all the information about a customer to hand, at every touchpoint, they can resolve issues quickly. With first contact resolution, lower handling times and no need for CapEx-driven projects, you can bring costs down.

Increase revenue

With all the tools they need at their fingertips, agents can make informed decisions. Selling is easier and faster as they can offer customers products and services that are relevant to them. A cloud-based platform can also enable tailored coaching or incentive schemes.

Improve the customer experience

With all the information they need on one screen, agents can easily call up information about a customer, so they can offer a personalised service. You'll also be able to roll out quality management programmes to monitor performance, and seek customer feedback.

Meet regulatory requirements

Dealing with customer data you have to be sure that the contact centre is always secure and compliant. Capturing and storing every interaction securely, it automatically ensures you adhere to the regulatory requirements.



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Cloud Communications from 8x8

Do you want to achieve a seamless, integrated, secure work place like we've talked about in this guide?

In partnership with award-winning cloud communications provider 8x8, we can provide you with a full suite of voice, video and chat solutions hosted in the cloud.

Empowering your front and back-office staff to communicate wherever they are, whenever they want, whatever device they're using.

- **Collaborate better with external partners**
- **Give your staff the tools needed to be productive anywhere**
- **Offer customers multiple ways to contact you**
- **Manage your communications with real-time data**

8x8 Contact Centre

You can also add contact centre solutions to your 8x8 platform, which come seamlessly integrated with your collaboration solution.

The omni-channel contact centre solution combines voice, chat, email and social along with workforce management, enabling you to respond quickly to customer enquiries and make the customer experience consistent at every touchpoint.

You'll be able to unify all your enterprise's communication needs on one single platform, which introduces cost savings and makes the admin a lot easier too.



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Cloud Communications from 8x8

The service you can expect from us

Supported and delivered by our team of in-house cloud specialists, our service wrap helps eliminate any risk, so you can get all the benefits of cloud communication without disrupting your day-to-day.



Our expertise in the market

With 20 years' experience, 1000+ industry experts and our own network of engineers offering everything from first line to third line support.

1. We discover

We get to know your network to maximise technology performance using technical surveys like WAN/LAN audits and an end-to-end Telecoms Audit, and we analyse your physical assets and expenditure.

2. We advise

Our expertise helps you design the right solution. We use a consultative approach to understand your needs, outcomes and objectives, and find a solution based on your different user types, with a proof of concept to ensure all goes as planned.

Our focus on business continuity

We've invested £13bn in our network, enhanced with our direct links with leading cloud providers.

3. We transform

We support your implementation from end to end. Our dedicated professionals help to build, integrate, transition and test. We offer a choice of deployment options, with training and support to get you up to speed as quickly as possible.

4. We optimise

With end-to-end management and in-life support, we mitigate risk and ensure we meet objectives. Our online training and more help drive end-user engagement, and we perform a thorough health check 90 days after implementation to optimise performance.

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Next steps

If you want to understand more about the cloud communications that are open to you and your organisation, visit our [8x8 page](#) to learn more, or give us a call to chat through your options.



Visit our [Cloud Communications from 8x8 page](#) to learn more.

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Want to talk?

Call 0800 953 0180

 **BUSINESS**