Your Guide to the

WILD
WORLD

Of Unified Communications

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The unified communications industry has a massive amount of technical lingo and acronyms. Trying to learn all the commonly used terms can be daunting and time consuming. That is why we gathered a list of over 100 terms that you may run into while exploring this wild world of unified communications.

The UCaaS Dictionary, like the unified communications field, will be constantly evolving over time. So feel free to check back in periodically to learn more about the industry!

Abandon Rate
The percentage of inbound calls made to a call center that is abandoned by the customer before talking to an agent.

Advanced Routing
The ability to route calls to appropriate, designated agents or endpoints based on logic and new functionality, from time and location to call reasons, promotional campaigns, and even recognition of VIP callers.

API Integrations
Also known as Application programming interface, it is a set of guidelines and protocols that specify how to build software applications. It also determines how software components interact with each other.

Auto Receptionist / IVR / Auto Attendant
Commonly known as a voice menu system, an auto attendant is an automatic system that a caller interacts with to be redirected to the appropriate extension.

Automatic Call Recording
An option that allows for the host of a call to start a local or cloud recording automatically when a meeting begins.

Business Communications
How management and other employees communicate within a business to further business goals. This could include video conferencing, instant messaging, phones, etc.

Call Controls
Functions that can utilized during a call like call transferring, holding, recording, muting, etc.

Call Flows

The way a conversation progresses between a call center agent and inbound caller, often called a script. However, it could also refer to the way a call is routed through a phone system.

Call Groups (Hunt Groups)

A type of call transferring that instead of going to a single person, the call is redirected to a group of people and one person from the group can answer the call.

Call Handling

How both inbound and outbound calls are handled. For example, if a user has their availability status set to "available" the call will go through and their phone will ring. If it is set to "Out of Office" it will either go to voicemail or be redirected to someone else.

Call Park

A feature that allows a person to put a call on hold on one telephone set and then pick up and continue the call on another telephone set.

Call Queues

A call "waiting line" that incoming calls are put in if the agent on the other side is busy with another incoming call.

Call Reports

A record of calls that an agent makes including a range of metrics and data captured by a call center system.

Caller ID

A feature that allows for an incoming call to be screened by allowing the recipient of the call to see the phone number of the call before answering

CCaaS (Contact Center as a Service)

This is another "as a service" product that consists of outsourcing contact center software to reduce your company's IT footprint and cost.

CESID (Caller's Emergency Service Identification)

A specific number assigned to agents to ensure that emergency phone calls are directed to the nearest responders, providing the correct building location information to those responders.

Chatbot

A program that acts as a virtual agent and automates a conversation with a customer based on predefined scripts, options, and machine learning.

CLEC (Competitive Local Exchange Carriers)

A regulatory term for telecommunications providers (or "carriers") that offers services in a specified local region, competing against incumbent local exchange carriers.

Cloud Bloat

Runaway spending for software or services that occurs when a company loses track of competitive cloud-related costs.

Cloud Contact Center

A reference to the software required to bring contact centers to the cloud, without the reliance on extensive hardware.

Cloud Migration

This is the process of transitioning physical IT functions, such as an on-premise phone system, to a cloud-based system.

Cloud-based PBX

Also known as a hosted PBX, this is a call-based solution that is located (hosted) on the provider's servers instead of a local onsite physical server.

Compatibility

The ability for systems or elements of software to operate together on the same computer or network.

Conference Calls

An audio call that supports multiple participants in separate locations to join at the same time via different connections.

CRM Applications

Customer relationship management tools are applications designed to manage how a company interacts with current and potential customers, including but not limited to controlling contact information, managing sales processes, and measuring the customer experience.

Data Centers

A service facility that offers servers and IT equipment used to help companies store, processes, and deliver both data and business-critical applications.

Data Communications

Any electronic transmission of data between two nodes, such as computers, regardless of where they're physically located.

Data Services

Applications or service providers that deliver on-demand data access and management to users and companies.

DAU (Daily Active User)

This is a measurement of the number of users who take a specific action or use a specific service on a daily basis.

Desk phone

A physical phone that traditionally sites on an employee's desk and has a physical, hardwired connection to a phone system.

DID (Direct Inward Dialing)

An offering from a telecommunications provider that allows businesses to lease large blocks of numbers, notably when the number block is larger than the number of phone lines the company has.

Digital Lines

Digital telephone lines, also called digital trunks, are telephone lines that carry voice and information using digital sampling, allowing for greater levels of information to be transferred than traditional phone lines.

Direct Routing

A call routing strategy with dedicated numbers for different departments or groups. Customers call a specific number for sales, customer services, etc.

Disaster Recovery Plan

A plan that tells your system how to route calls differently during emergencies and natural disasters, maintaining call center support and related functionality.

ECC (Enhanced Contact Center)

A call center product that enables a variety of unified communications tools that expand outside of traditional voice chat. These additional tools could be SMS, video, etc.

E-Faxing

Using the Internet or Internet protocols to send a fax instead of a standard telephone line, where the recipient can be a digital system (like email) or a traditional fax machine.

End User

The consumer that a product or service is specifically designed for.

End User Call Routing

Call routing that is controlled by employees for their inbound phone calls, such as automatically sending calls to a voicemailbox when in a meeting.

Endpoints

Any computing device that sends data back and forth in your network, such as a user's phone.

Enterprise Cloud Communications

Internet-based data and voice communications tools designed for the size and complexity of enterprise organizations, managed by a third party and requiring Internet access to utilize.

Extensions

A short numerical code assigned to individuals or groups that can entered by a caller interacting with a phone system after the caller dials a company's main phone number.

External Communications

Any delivery of information between your business and any outside party.

FOC (Firm Order Commitment)

The term covers both the date your telecommunications service provider sets to install your new Internet service (such as a T1 line) physically provisioned and ready for use, as well as number porting between service providers.

Hosted Voice

A private VoIP phone system managed and hosted by a vendor or solutions provider that allows a business to make, receive, and route calls. Also called a virtual PBX.

IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service)

A type of cloud computing that gives a business access to data storage, networking, and computing services.

ILEC (Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers)

ILECs are telephone companies that were offering local services when the U.S. enacted the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

IM (Instant Messaging)

A technology platform that allows people to send text in real-time over an intranet or the Internet.

Network Infrastructure

The resources that go into a business's IT systems such as their communications, internet connectivity, and other network resources.

Infrastructure Limitations

Physical restrictions that prevent a company from taking a specific action, generally applied to growth or expansion of services or employees.

IRN (Invoice Reference Number)

A specific phone number where all inbound calls are directed to for an organization or group.

Integration

The connection of multiple systems for the purposes of sharing data, applications, devices, or other elements across your network.

Internal Communications

Sharing of information for business purposes among people within an organization.

IP Phone System or IPPBX

A telephone system that uses VoIP technology or Internet telephony to send and accept phone calls over the Internet using Internet Protocol addresses instead of traditional PSTN options.

ISP (Internet Service Provider)

A company that provides Internet access for a business or residence.

IVR (Interactive Voice Response)

Automated telephony systems and tools that interact with callers to acquire information and route calls appropriately. Traditionally done with touch-tones (DTMF), many modern systems can accept voice inputs.

LAN (Local Area Network)

A computer and device network that has a limited geographic reach, typically within an office building or smaller location.

LEC (Local Exchange Carrier)

A U.S. regulatory term designating a local telephone company for a region, operating under specific guidelines and duties for service and access.

Legacy Equipment

Typically a reference to outdated or obsolete equipment within a network, potentially that's no longer supported by the manufacturer.

Legacy Solution

An application or piece of software that still fulfills some needs but is generally outdated and may have outlasted the service dates from the original provider.

Legacy System

Fundamental hardware and software on a network that has outlived its service and support dates. Can include the physical hardware of a computer as well as the version of the operating system it runs, for example.

LNP (Local Number Portability)

Also called "number porting," LNP is an offering that allows you to keep your telephone numbers when switching service providers.

LOA (Letter of Authorization)

A legal document that allows one party to take a specific action on behalf of another party. In terms of communications and call centers, LOAs are often used for porting phone numbers.

Merging Calls

Connected two or more calls into a single call, allowing all participants to hear and speak with one another.

Mobility

The range of ways someone may interact with a system, such as using a soft phone or computer to place business calls, or the ability to move interactions between multiple hardware and software elements.

MPOE (Main Point of Entry, previously Minimum Point of Entry)

The demarcation point where a business's on-premise phone system or wiring is connected to the start of a public switched telephone network. Modern MPOEs often have a network device installed at this point.

MSA

A master service agreement (MSA) is a contract negotiated between two parties that sets the terms they agree to use to govern future transactions and agreements.

Multi-channel

A service or strategy that enables interaction in multiple ways (channels) but generally treats each channel as a separate entity.

Number Porting

Taking an existing phone number and transferring it to another phone provider without service interruption.

Omnichannel

A strategy to normalize communications across a variety of different communication channels.

On-prem PBX

A PBX system deployed on servers and hardware that the business owns and manages, installed physically at locations that the business controls.

Queue Time

The amount of time that an inbound caller waits before being attended to.

PBX

A Private Branch Exchange (PBX) is a private telephone network a company uses to communicate internally and externally and can use traditional phone lines as well as VoIP and other technologies.

Phishing

A type of cybercrime where the attacker sends messages via phone, email, or text and poses as a legitimate business, contact, or official in an attempt to obtain sensitive information.

POC (Point of Contact)

The point where an inbound contact or communication starts, such as phone numbers, email addresses, and chat channels.

POTS

"Plain old telephone service," or POTS, is a standard public switched telephone network service that does not use newer telephony technology such as ISDN or VoIP.

PRI (Primary Rate Interface)

A telecommunications standard that lets a company send up to 23 separate data, video, and voice communications, typically used in ISDN settings.

PS-ALI

Private Switch Automatic Location Information is a signifier that allows 911 and other emergency services to know the specific location of an emergency call, such as the company building, floor, and suite number.

PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network)

The standard, circuit-switched telephone network across the world, connecting a broad range of systems and technologies to enable voice calling and other connections on the planet.

SaaS (Software as a Service)

A subscription model for software and apps instead of a direct purchase.

Scaling/Scalability

These terms refer to your ability to change in size – either grow or shrink – based on current infrastructure and service agreements, allowing you to continue operations as demands change.

Service Providers

Any company that provides access to a specific service or software. An Internet Service Provider, for example, is any company that provides access to the Internet. A UcaaS provider provides access to a unified communications solution in the cloud.

SIP (Session Initiation Protocol)

This is a signaling protocol that can be used for real-time communication session management, including starting, maintaining, or terminating a session. SIP covers voice, video, and multimedia messaging, Internet telephony, and even mobile calling over LTE networks.

SIP Trunk

A SIP Trunk is a communication channel from an Internet Telephony Service Provider and connects to a PBX or other system to support phone and data communications.

SMS (Short Message Service)

Another name for text messages, SMS are supported by most telephone, Internet, and mobile devices.

Softphone

Software that replaces a traditional phone device and allows the user to make telephone calls over the Internet, typically by laptop, computer, or smartphone.

Software-Defined Storage

SDS is a storage architecture that separates the hardware running the software and the location where the software stores information, often relying on virtual storage.

Solution Architecture

The practice of designing and managing an engineering solution to solve specific business challenges.

Team Collaboration Apps

Any program that allows multiple people to communicate and work together, usually in real-time and can include file sharing functionality.

Telephony

The overall field covering the use of communications technologies and the development or deployment of telecommunications services, covering voice, video, data, fax, and more.

Toll Fraud

When fraudsters make an extremely high number of international calls using expensive lines, such as international premium rate numbers, then splitting the revenue generated by these calls with the number providers.

Transfer

The relocation of an existing phone call or communication to another channel or user, typically to another agent or service department.

UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service)

Unified communications services hosted and serviced via a cloud-based platform, eliminating the requirement for onsite equipment and servers.

Unified Communications

A business service designed to integrate many different real-time and asynchronous communication channels into a single platform. Each channel (voice,

audio, chat, instant messaging, etc.) may be its own product or all could be offered under a sole product.

VLAN (Virtual Local Area Network)

A small sub-network that allows IT administrators to group together a set of devices on a LAN, creating partitions for security and traffic management purposes.

Voice Channel

A communications channel that includes enough bandwidth to carry human voices and keep them intelligible, often for conversations.

VOX (Voice-operated exchanges)

Switches that operate when sound over a certain volume is detected, such as turning on when someone speaks.

Voicemail transcription

A service often from phone line providers that automatically translates what is spoken in a voicemail into text, then delivered via email or through a specific app.

VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)

A technology that allows people to make phone calls over an Internet connection instead of a standard analog phone line. It has expanded to include other multimedia interactions and sessions as well.

Wide Area Network (WAN)

Allows for users to utilize a variety of Local Area Networks (LANs) from locations outside of where they are hosted.

Web Chat

A system that allows customers or visitors to communicate directly with company employees in real time, typically on a company's website or its online customer service locations.

WFA (Work from Anywhere)

Allowing employees to perform their tasks from any location, typically requiring an Internet connection and computer as well as access to cloud-based company systems.

WFH (Work from Home)

The practice of allowing employees to perform many or all workday tasks from their homes, where a company restricts WFA to a specific location.

Workgroup

A group of computers that are on the same local area network (LAN) and pull from the same resources and fulfill a similar responsibility.

XaaS (Anything as a Service)

Describes any system or group of systems that support a task completed via cloud technologies and remote access instead of being installed at a fixed location.

We hope you found the *UCaaS Dictionary* to be a valuable resource and were able to find the terms you were looking for. If you didn't find what you were looking for, please let us know so we can update the dictionary!

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