

## Unified Communications Applications: Empower Employees by Simplifying Collaboration

When agencies first adopt unified communications, the usual goal is to connect to each other and to citizens with voice and voicemail. But that's just the beginning. "Once the framework is in place, agencies can add different unified communications applications one by one – like presence, multimedia collaboration, TelePresence, and accessibility – to empower the workforce," says Kathy Ditto, federal unified communications marketing manager, Cisco®. "For agencies striving to meet their mission objectives with fewer resources, unified communications applications can bridge the gap by helping individual employees become more productive and effective."

The value of unified communications applications in government is threefold:

- Enabling richer forms of collaboration
- Giving agencies the flexibility to respond quickly to changing mission needs
- Taking advantage of the agency's existing information-security policies

### **Collaboration: Connect Those Who Know with Those Who Need to Know**

Unified communications applications facilitate collaboration by connecting those who know with those who need to know. Consider a citizen who calls with a question about a student loan. Today, if the employee who takes the call doesn't know the answer, the citizen either faces a lengthy wait on hold or the employee has to call back later. A unified communications application called presence improves the experience for the citizen as well as the employee. Ditto explains, "Employees can view an online directory on the IP phone or computer screen to see which experts are currently available, and then just click to call, send an instant message, or establish a conference call."

As another example of enhanced collaboration, emergency response improves when workers in different locations can participate in voice, video, and Web collaboration sessions without leaving the field. Case in point: During the 2004 hurricane season, the National Guard and Florida State Emergency Operations Center used a Cisco Unified MeetingPlace® system to coordinate with 65 counties after the storms. National Guard personnel saved time by remaining in the field and presenting their findings in voice and Web conferences that included sharing spreadsheets and databases.

### **Flexibility: Add Applications Whenever Needed**

Agencies can add new unified communications applications at any time and in any order as mission objectives change. For example, an agency that wants to improve service levels in its contact center might start by offering caller self-service based on interactive voice response (IVR). Soon after, the agency might add presence information and instant messaging to speed up resolution for calls requiring a human agent. Later, the agency might adopt video collaboration and Cisco TelePresence so that government employees and citizens in different locations can meet "face-to-face."

## Security: Use Existing Policies

Agencies have already invested in access controls and threat protection for their IP networks, and unified communications applications take advantage of those same controls. Agencies can have confidence that sensitive information is only shared on a need-to-know basis, and that protection is in place for their voice, video, and data collaboration tools.

## Results that Exceed Expectations

How effective are unified communications applications for empowering the government workforce? “It’s very telling that real-life benefits actually exceed expectations,” says Ditto. In a 2006 study by Sage Research, 63 percent reported that unified communications had enhanced collaboration, compared to 43 percent that had expected this benefit. Similarly, 82 percent said that employees had become more productive, compared to 64 percent that had anticipated increased productivity. “Agencies that are looking to empower their workforce to be more efficient and effective are accomplishing their goals with unified communications applications,” Ditto concludes.

To read more about unified communications applications in government, visit:

[www.cisco.com/go/fedunified](http://www.cisco.com/go/fedunified).



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