

Key Considerations when Evaluating an Enterprise Collaboration Solution



Comparing the Microsoft and Cisco Approaches

Introduction

Collaboration is increasingly becoming recognized as a critical investment for organizations looking for new sources of productivity and innovation. Cost cutting and efficiency measures can achieve only so much; the next breakthrough levels of business performance will come from the ability to tap into the collective knowledge and creativity of your workforce. The challenge lies in creating an environment where people can work effectively together anywhere, anytime, in an engaging manner while accommodating the needs of the new workplace.

Technologies such as smart mobile devices, social media, video, and cloud-based services are significantly affecting the way people interact at work, in much the same way that they have in our personal lives. At the same time the workforce is also undergoing a major demographic shift as the incoming generation expects a more flexible environment that provides choice in how, when, and where they work, as well as the device they use and the way they interact with others.

This makes the evaluation of a collaboration solution more important than ever. A narrow decision based on a single platform or capability—for example, instant messaging (IM) or desktop conferencing—may limit your flexibility later when it comes to supporting other important constituents such as mobile workers, executives, call center agents, and business partners.

Likewise, a solution that has not been designed with the wider needs of the enterprise in mind—such as the efficient handling of voice and video, consistency of service from the cloud or on-premises deployments, or the ability to support a variety of operating systems, devices, and applications—could become a major concern as the workspace continues to evolve.

We believe the answer is to base the solution on a flexible platform that is designed specifically to serve the new post-PC workplace, fits in easily with the existing IT landscape, and can accommodate the most stringent enterprise demands as they arise.

This document highlights six areas that we recommend you consider when evaluating Cisco's and Microsoft's collaboration solution offerings:

- Commitment to BYOD Platforms
- Business-Critical Voice and Video
- Business-Critical Support Services
- Cloud Support for Voice and Video
- Comprehensive Support for Video
- True Cost to Deploy

1. Commitment to BYOD Platforms

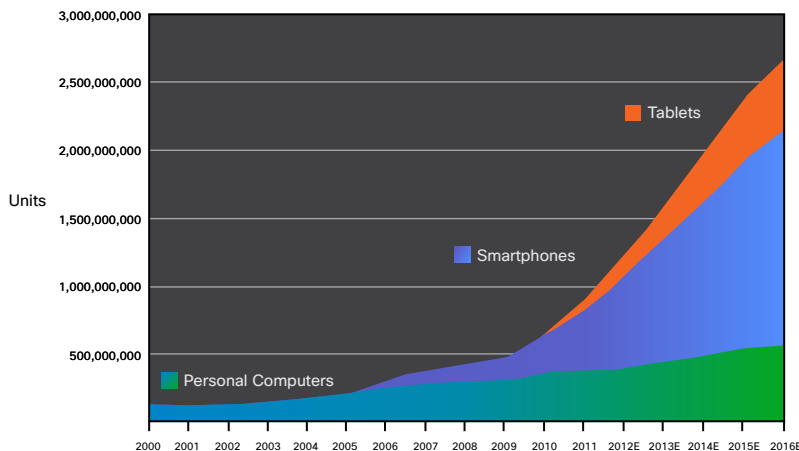
The use of personal mobile devices at work (the bring-your-own-device [BYOD] trend) is here to stay. Of the 350 million smartphones expected to be used in the workplace by 2016, 200 million of them will be user-owned¹, and the iPad, announced just 2 years ago, can already be found in 94 percent of the Fortune 500 companies².

As the graph³ in Figure 1 indicates, sales of smartphones and tablets are fast outpacing sales of Windows devices. And according to IDC, by 2015 more end users will access the Internet through a mobile device than from a PC⁴.

This trend means that any enterprise collaboration solution should support **all the major device platforms equally well**, with a native device experience and full vendor-backed support. And the obvious implication is that the solution vendor must have **strong mutually supportive relationships** with all the OS and device vendors.

However, this is not a universal reality.

Figure 1: Growth of BYOD devices³



Microsoft Competes with Other BYOD Vendors

Microsoft's recent interest in support for iOS and Android does not mean that a strong mutual partnership with Apple and Google exists—especially in light of Microsoft's recent launch of the Surface tablet, which is designed to compete with the Apple iPad and Google Nexus.

Microsoft, Apple, and Google are battling for mind and market share in the client operating System (OS) and mobile device space, as headlines such as the following show:

- "Google Buys Motorola Mobility for \$12.5 Billion"⁵
- "Apple Dumps Google Maps with iOS 6"⁶
- "Microsoft introduces the Surface tablet"⁷

Microsoft's own SEC filing also supports the point⁸: "The strategic importance of a vibrant ecosystem increases as we launch the Windows 8 operating system, Surface devices, and associated cloud-based services. We face significant competition from firms that provide competing platforms, applications and services. We will also continue to invest in new software and hardware products, services, and technologies, such as the Surface line of Microsoft-designed and manufactured devices announced in June 2012."

Microsoft Believes in a “First and Best on Windows” Collaboration Strategy

As mentioned previously, although Microsoft has recently stated interest in expanding OS support for its applications to iOS and Android, it is important to place that in the perspective of Microsoft’s overall strategy as a supplier of a competing client operating system.

To quote Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer: “We always want Skype to be first and best on Windows”⁹.

So although the realities of the post-PC era may be registering with Microsoft, it seems that their ideal world is still one where users bring a **Windows** device of their choice (“BYOWD”) to work. And that is not the same thing as offering genuine customer choice of platform and device implied by “BYOD”.

Cisco Does Not Compete with the BYOD Device or OS Vendors

By contrast, there is no such conflict with Cisco’s approach. We neither produce nor sell smartphones or tablets. As a result, fewer competing corporate objectives interfere with our ability to work together with vendors that market these products.

Our development teams have worked closely with Apple to develop a variety of products that integrate transparently with the Apple iOS operating system, including the WebEx[®], Jabber[®] and AnyConnect[®] applications. We share the feedback that we obtain from our mutual customers with Apple in order to help improve both their products and our own.

Additionally, the Cisco WebEx[®] meeting solution was one of the applications highlighted on stage at Apple’s own iPad2 launch event—and CNN-Fortune cited it as a top 5 iPad application for business.

As a result of our strong relationships, we have seen more than 3 million Cisco Collaboration applications (including WebEx, Jabber, and Any Connect) downloaded from Apple, Google, and Blackberry application stores, and we remain committed to an “any device, anytime, anywhere” strategy that fully supports a multiclient BYOD environment, including the Microsoft Windows client platform.

We believe a collaboration vendor’s degree of commitment to other platforms is an important consideration. And given Microsoft’s “Windows First and Best” strategy, what are the assurances of continued up-to-date support for new releases and technical assistance for non-Windows versions?

Recommendation: Ensure your collaboration vendor is committed to supporting all leading BYOD platforms equitably, with no conflicting agendas.

2. Business-Critical Voice and Video

Unified communications has enabled millions of businesses to carry converged traffic for data, voice, and video over their corporate IP networks. However, there is an important distinction between simply delivering that traffic in a local, low-intensity environment (such as an office) and providing an enterprise-wide backbone capable of serving tens of thousands of users at carrier-grade levels of reliability and performance in support of the company’s most critical business needs.

Different Users, Different Needs

In many businesses different functions and user needs could benefit from improved communication and interaction in the workplace; in other words, there is no “one-size-fits-all” use case for collaboration. For example:

- Mobile workers need the same real-time access to collaboration tools and people as their office-based colleagues, but from their smart devices in constantly shifting locations and conditions.

- Executives need secure, high-quality voice and video interaction with customers, partners, and staff across the globe, whether from the office or while traveling.
- Specialized workers such as physicians need a high-quality, confidential voice and video service to conduct remote consultations with patients, locate colleagues, and discuss test results.
- Contact center agents may need to interact with customers using voice, web, chat, video, or social media at the touch of a button, over a virtualized desktop link from home.

Cisco has deployed solutions for customers for all these use cases and many more, in business-critical settings. By comparison, a solution optimized for only the desktop office worker may not be able to serve other users' specific needs adequately, and thus may provide less value to the business.

Microsoft Lync Is Not Widely Used for the Full Range of Business-Critical Communications

Microsoft has optimized Lync toward the desk-based user with a personal computer, and does not offer a suitable solution for the other important use cases listed previously. For example, although many Lync customers use its IM and conferencing capabilities for routine communication, many are opting not to use Lync for enterprise voice and video—where critical conversations have to be conducted without a problem. Instead, they tend instead to keep their private branch exchange (PBX) or deploy another IP phone system.

In a recent survey¹⁰, nearly half of the Lync customers surveyed stated that they do not use Lync for business-critical external communications, while more than three quarters of them (77 percent) still want to maintain a traditional phone system. Only 17 percent of customers surveyed indicated that they “depend on Lync for everything”.

The reality is that Lync customers who wish to roll out collaboration capabilities to all their different business constituents may be forced to buy, deploy, and maintain separate systems for high-quality voice and video, contact centers, desk-less workers, and so on to meet all their business communication needs.

Cisco Has a Proven Performance Record

Cisco began developing IP communications solutions in 1997, and has been in the business longer than any other vendor. Today, more than 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies use Cisco Collaboration, and we have shipped more than 55 million IP phones¹¹.

More than 200,000 customers worldwide rely on Cisco for their business communications every day. Hundreds of them have deployed more than 5,000 IP phones, and 50 have deployments of more than 25,000 endpoints¹². Additionally, our customers have deployed more than 3 million contact center agent seats and 1 million Cisco TelePresence® endpoints, while WebEx meeting solutions host 1.2 billion meeting minutes per month from more than 7 million registered hosts.

Cisco is the Gartner Magic Quadrant market leader in unified communications, as well as several other important categories including IP telephony, conferencing, telepresence, and customer care.

Cisco Offers Leading Media-Handling Technology

Cisco continues to make innovations that facilitate the deployment and management of business-critical voice and video, including:

- Single call control for both voice and video across the full range of endpoints from mobile clients to Cisco TelePresence endpoints removes the need for separate infrastructure silos and considerably simplifying management of the combined system.
- Medianet and Cisco Prime™ network management solutions help to optimize the quality of voice and video traffic across the network, allowing visibility, monitoring, and adjustment of priority or allocated bandwidth as needed by different endpoints.
- Cisco video solutions support the H.264 Advanced Video Coding (AVC) standard, making them interoperable with more than 2 million other video endpoints and infrastructure solutions in the industry.

Summary

The challenge that arises if Lync is not yet fully able to meet the needs of these different user types is that a multivendor solution may be required, increasing the cost of both deployment and ongoing support. Before going in this direction, it is worth evaluating: How many VPs are willing to use a desktop software solution such as Lync to close important sales at the end of the quarter? How many executives are conducting their quarterly earnings briefings using Lync on a Windows PC? Are medical personnel having conversations that could affect someone's life using Lync? If supporting these different scenarios is important for your business, then Lync may not be the best choice.

Recommendation: Ensure your collaboration vendor has a proven ability to support the full range of business users (not just office workers) with high-quality voice and video.

3. Business-Critical Support

When considering an investment on which the business' operation depends, and which may be used by thousands of employees daily, a vendor's ability to provide world-class planning, execution, and support becomes as much of a consideration as the solution itself.

Microsoft's Multivendor Approach Complicates Support

The way in which a collaboration solution is designed can significantly affect its supportability. Microsoft relies heavily on third parties to flesh-out critical elements of a collaboration solution outside of its desktop-centric Lync software.

Although working with third parties is not in itself problematic, issues can arise when a multivendor environment complicates the support model. For example, it may take time to diagnose and isolate a system fault among multiple components, figure out who is responsible for that piece, and ensure the vendor supplies a suitable fix that does not destabilize the system. The multivendor approach can also place a significant burden back on the customer to negotiate and manage multiple service contracts and terms.

An enterprise deployment of Microsoft Lync for collaboration requires technology partners for network switching and routing, wireless networking, voice gateways, branch-office survivability, contact center applications, video endpoints, and telephones.

Microsoft also does not offer direct support for its own Lync software when used for enterprise voice or video—the only option for enterprise voice (call control) and video support is to buy a premium service: Microsoft Premier Support for Lync Partners. Furthermore, only a limited number of Microsoft partners have sales and support agreements with all the technology partners needed for a collaboration deployment based on Lync, so it may be difficult to find a single organization to integrate and support the end-to-end solution.

Clearly, greater complexity and risk are involved in dealing with multiple separate organizations for implementation, deployment, troubleshooting, and maintenance of such a “piece-parts” solution compared to dealing with a single vendor that can take responsibility for its entire system.

Cisco Offers World-Class Solution Support

Cisco offers award-winning global support services that take responsibility for the success of the entire system, using in-house expertise that has continued to evolve over 15 years supporting our unified communications business, and 25 years supporting mission-critical networks. Our support services offer:

- **Single-point accountability:** A distinction of Cisco's approach is that a single point of contact takes ownership for a customer's entire support needs. Cisco not only supports the full breadth of our own collaboration solution—from the software applications to the endpoints, switches, gateways, wireless networking, security, and compute hardware—it can also support third-party technology components if required in a multivendor scenario, or extend the same level of support through implementation partners that it offers to direct customers.

This service model extends around the world, and in many areas support is available in local languages.

- **Best-in-class support:** Our support operation has won numerous awards for excellence, including the prestigious JD Powers award six times¹³ for Excellence in Certified Technology Service and Support. Our support certification program is one of the most rigorous in the industry, and we have more than 4000 dedicated collaboration specialists in the Cisco Services organization who can assist customers through the entire lifecycle from planning to deployment to ongoing management.
- **Single bill of materials:** In addition to single-point accountability for support, we also provide a single bill of materials for all our support services, clearly documenting the terms and procedures and considerably simplifying administration compared with a multivendor approach.

Deployment Partner Expertise

Cisco also has a strong history of working with service providers and other partners around the world with deep knowledge of our collaboration solutions as well as the network and its ability to handle voice, video, and data traffic in large-scale deployments. Rigorous standards of certification help ensure that these partners are experts in their field and can assist with deployment, optimization, value-add solutions, or any other aspect of the system.

We also help strengthen the partner's role as a trusted advisor through the Cisco Services Partner Program, whereby partners can sell and deliver our range of smart services themselves (backed by Cisco as a Collaborative Service), or have Cisco deliver them directly. In addition, partners have access to a wide range of enablement tools and methodologies, further enhancing their ability to plan, build, and manage successful deployments.

Monitoring and Reporting

In addition to Cisco support services, administrators can also help maintain the system in running order themselves, with a comprehensive range of real-time monitoring, diagnostics, and reporting tools that are designed to provide a thorough check of the end-to-end collaboration system.

Summary

A collaboration platform is simply too important an investment to delegate responsibility for critical components of the solution to third parties.

What if the system goes down during an important CEO conference call? What if you have a major outage in another country that affects an important project? What service-level agreement assurances do you have if there is a problem with one of the third-party components? We believe that these and other questions should be considered before you choose Microsoft as your collaboration partner.

Recommendation: Ensure your collaboration vendor can take support responsibility for the entire system without relying on third parties for critical component support.

4. Cloud-Based Voice and Video

There is a growing interest in flexible hosting options for business applications, including collaboration, with more than 70 percent of enterprises already using some form of cloud technology¹⁴. However, the reality is that we live in a "world of many clouds", so IT teams may need a range of options from software-as-a service (SaaS) to a private cloud to a managed system as required.

It follows, then, that any credible collaboration solution should be able to offer its services under any of these hosting models, without loss of functionality, service levels, or scalability. A critical element of such a service is the ability to deliver enterprise-class voice and video equally well from both cloud-based and on-premises installations.

Microsoft's Cloud Offerings Do Not Support Enterprise-Class Voice or Video

Microsoft's cloud-based Office 365 does not directly support public-switched-telephone-network (PSTN) connectivity, meaning you cannot use the cloud service to make a voice call directly from an office telephone without the use of a partner organization. Also, mixed cloud and on-premises call routing is not supported with Office 365 and Office 2010 either, so even the (more complex and costly) option of using an additional on-premises deployment of Lync to handle calls locally and pass them through the cloud service is not viable. While this "gateway" capability may arrive with Office 2013, direct cloud access for voice calls may still be unavailable.

To quote ComputerWorld: "And voice, a key value point of Lync, is still unavailable for Office 365 a year after the service's launch."¹⁵

Microsoft has recently introduced a partner offering that provides a PC-to-PSTN connection—but it has limited capabilities for calling from a desk telephone and limited PBX-like features. Moreover, it adds yet more "piece-parts" complexity to an already complicated picture for integration and support.

Microsoft offers another cloud-based voice and video solution with Skype, which originated from the consumer end of the quality spectrum with "good-enough" quality for casual conversations over the Internet. However, enterprise IT has resisted using it as a business-class tool:

"Skype has been clamouring to alter its public image as a strictly consumer player and gain a foothold in the enterprise, but unified communications (UC) pros have hesitated to lay out the welcome mat. Enterprise UC pros consistently cite concerns about quality, reliability, security and support as reasons to avoid enterprise Skype adoption."¹⁶

Quite apart from concerns about quality and reliability, deploying this option would introduce yet another new component into the solution "patchwork"—one that was not designed for Lync compatibility, with radically differing service-quality levels and contractual terms.

Cisco Offers Choice Without Penalty

By contrast, Cisco designed our collaboration architecture from the beginning for flexible deployment, supporting a variety of cloud-based models, on-premises deployment, and hybrids of the two. In this way we can offer our solutions consistently and securely regardless of the hosting model, and IT is free to choose the deployment option that works best for the business (that is, there is no "penalty" for choosing one over another).

For example, Cisco's industry-leading web conferencing solution is available in both SaaS and on-premises forms, and is sold through partners and directly from Cisco—and in all cases the functions are identical. Likewise, Cisco TelePresence conferencing is available in on-premises form or as a service.

Voice, Video, and Data from the Cloud

Rich media, such as voice and video, present a challenge to a cloud-based delivery model because they require synchronized delivery of large unpredictable packet streams over large distances to avoid audio "dropouts" or unclear images being displayed to recipients. This challenge constitutes one of the reasons why consumer-grade Internet-based services are not always considered robust enough for enterprise use: the Internet is notoriously unreliable and difficult to control, and is frequently subject to congestion and dropped packets.

Cisco has developed industry-leading expertise in how to optimize network traffic to ensure delivery of high-quality voice, video, and data to thousands of users simultaneously across the globe—something not easily replicated by other vendors. Our SaaS conferencing service supports nearly 2 billion meeting minutes per month among 33 million participants in 230 countries, making it the third largest business SaaS operation in the world.

Rapidly Growing Partner Ecosystem

Cisco also enjoys strong partnerships with more than 30 leading service providers, systems integrators, and wholesalers¹⁷ (growing at 100 percent per year), who are free to create their own value-add cloud collaboration solutions based on the same industry-leading portfolio as that offered to our direct customers.

The Cisco Hosted Collaboration Solution (HCS) provides the full functionality of the Cisco portfolio including voice, video, IM, voicemail, conferencing, and contact center from the cloud, while also facilitating powerful new options such as fixed mobile convergence between on-premises and fourth-generation (4G) Long-Term Evolution (LTE) mobile devices.

Summary

Microsoft offers a less complete cloud-based offering than Cisco, and does not support enterprise voice and video to the same degree and quality. Skype does support voice and video, but at a “best-effort” service quality that most enterprise customers do not take seriously for business use. As result, customers are once again forced into assembling a multiarchitecture solution to deploy collaboration with Microsoft, with attendant risks, costs, and complexity.

Recommendation: Ensure your collaboration vendor has proven ability to deliver high-quality voice and video directly from the cloud at enterprise scale and reliability.

5. Complete Solution for Video

Video continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of Internet usage. By 2016, 3 trillion minutes (6 million years) of video content will cross the Internet globally each month, and video will exceed 92 percent of global Internet traffic¹⁸.

The adoption of video by business is also accelerating as a result of increased globalization and the need to build and maintain face-to-face relationships with partners, suppliers, and vendors at a distance. The ability for video to enable a more compelling interaction than other forms of collaboration has also found appeal with executives: 54 percent of business leaders consider visual cues, such as expressions and body language, among the most important parts of communication.¹⁹

The benefits of video extend far beyond the desktop. Immersive video rooms are taking the place of business travel, customer care is being transformed with virtual “in-person” experiences, in-store surveillance cameras can detect long-wait lines, and the factory shop floor can access video capture and streaming capabilities to monitor line status or security problems.

So it is important to assess whether your collaboration solution can provide video for the **whole** enterprise.

Microsoft Offers Limited Video Support Beyond the Desktop

Lync video is primarily desktop PC video. Consequently, if Microsoft customers want to use video in other areas of the business or with a variety of different devices, they have to work with third-party partners. As previously noted, a “piece-parts” approach that relies on partners to complete feature gaps makes it significantly harder to integrate and support the solution, and in the case of video can negatively affect the user experience because of potential inconsistencies in the media handling and user interface design.

Even if the use case is limited to office-based desktops, high definition (HD) video with Lync requires the use of expensive quad-core processor PCs, which not every employee will have access to. Since HD video gives users a much more realistic and engaging experience, once again the business value of a Microsoft collaboration solution is compromised.

Microsoft’s Support for Video Standards Is Inconsistent

Microsoft uses a proprietary video codec (RTVideo) with Lync 2010, so in order to provide interoperability with the millions of installed video endpoints that use standards-based H.264 video, expensive third-party infrastructure (gateways and multipoint control units [MCUs]) are required, with the associated complexity and cost.

Microsoft is now planning to adopt an extension to the H.264 standard named Scalable Video Coding (SVC). Although this is “more standards-based” than the proprietary RTVideo, H.264 SVC is a new video standard with very little

market adoption and an inconsistent implementation—and it is incompatible with the majority of installed standard H.264 Advanced Video Coding (AVC) investments. Thus it will take time for the new SVC-based solutions to be adopted, and the millions of installed H.264 AVC endpoints will not work with Microsoft's H.264 SVC without a gateway.

Cisco Provides Interoperable, High-Quality Video

Cisco offers a complete line of standards-based, integrated, and interoperable video solutions, including endpoints targeted at every user type—such as IP phones, desktop and mobile software, personal video devices, and telepresence. These endpoints all share the same Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)-based call control for voice and video, so placing calls between different users with different endpoints is as easy as pointing and clicking or dialling a phone.

Cisco Protects Video Investments

Cisco makes a great effort to ensure our collaboration solution is interoperable with the existing IT landscape to preserve investment. Cisco video solutions are standards-based (supporting the most widely adopted H.264 AVC standard), so they are interoperable with the more than 2 million videoconferencing endpoints and infrastructure solutions deployed in the market today on that standard.

Our multiplatform collaboration client, the Cisco Jabber™ client, provides better video quality than similar applications on the same devices, because its video capabilities are optimized for video on both Intel and Advanced RISC Machine (ARM)-based processor platforms. This optimization lets Jabber clients provide HD video on dual-core Windows PCs and at 480p on Apple iPads.

Cisco Enables Video at Enterprise Scale

Cisco also provides sophisticated management tools to let you manage video at scale. Medianet and Cisco Prime Collaboration Manager allow you to manage video-based implementations more easily by visualizing and monitoring video collaboration usage in real time, allowing you to identify, isolate, and correct problems. This proposition is much harder when critical components of the solution supplied by third parties may not be able to participate in end-to-end optimization.

Summary

Microsoft offers no simple end-to-end video solution, and it will take some time to create the same degree of video interoperability with Microsoft that customers enjoy every day with Cisco. Worse, there is a risk that Microsoft is marooning the investment that its customers have made in RTVideo endpoints and infrastructure.

Recommendation: Ensure your collaboration vendor can deliver high-quality, interoperable video to the full range of business users and endpoints at enterprise scale.

6. True Cost to Deploy

As with any strategic investment, it is important to assess the true cost of deploying a collaboration solution at the beginning, and to compare alternative solutions on an equitable “apples-vs.-apples” basis.

This true cost may not be immediately apparent with Lync, because of complex licensing and bundling rules, and dependency on extra components that are required to complete a working system. For example, there is a common misconception that “Lync is free to deploy”, since it is “already paid for” as part of Microsoft's Enterprise Client Access Licence (eCAL) for Office.

Client Licenses Are the “Tip of the Iceberg”

The fact is that Lync software licenses are just a fraction of the cost required to deploy a complete solution, which needs to include hardware, endpoints, support, and deployment services.

According to one analyst: “Unlike Cisco, Microsoft went to market with free Lync licenses, even though users end up paying for the hardware to run it on, including Lync servers, IP phones and gateways to legacy systems and PSTN lines. If you’re not using the latest version of Exchange, Microsoft will force you to upgrade, unlike Cisco.”²⁰

“Companies can get Lync onto a desktop for no money and use it for chat and presence. Then slowly over time, why not use it for mobile voice or desktop voice? **But there are a ton of hidden costs. It’s like death by 1,000 cuts.**”²¹

Further hidden costs lie in building and operating a working system. Microsoft disclosed at its recent Worldwide Partner Conference that for every \$1 in Lync software license costs the customer has to spend between \$6 and \$8 in professional services costs alone to deploy the product—and that does not include endpoints from Polycom or voice gateways.

Cisco Offers Clear, Simplified Software Licensing

Cisco requires that you purchase only three licenses to gain full functions, including technical support and updates—an approach that considerably simplifies contract maintenance and visibility of what you are paying for. Cisco Unified Workspace Licensing provides the most popular bundles of Cisco Collaboration applications and services in a cost-effective, simple package, including soft clients, applications server software, and licensing on a per-user basis. Two additional services provide major software upgrades, maintenance updates, and award-winning 24-hour Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC) support.

By comparison, Microsoft’s licensing can be more complex, needing to cover multiple server and client software components²², with additional charges for upgrades, premier support, extra hardware, and third-party items.

Single-Vendor Savings

The introduction of third-party components into a collaboration solution can increase complexity and cost for both initial deployment and ongoing support, when compared to an equivalent solution that a single vendor can supply and support. Incompatibilities can easily arise from the many different permutations of interface, configuration, management, and software revisions between critical elements of the solution, adding integration and support burdens.

By comparison, Cisco offers “one-stop shopping” for much more of the solution footprint, including an infrastructure purposefully designed for real-time collaboration (not general-purpose office tools), and a wide choice of compatible endpoints for voice and video, gateways, security, and networking that can reduce the cost of integration, troubleshooting, and maintenance.

Recommendation: Assess the true cost to deploy and support your collaboration solution—bundled client licenses do not mean the solution is “free”.

Summary

We view collaboration as a strategic business asset, not simply as a desktop tool for messaging and document sharing. The ability to harness the collective knowledge and expertise that lies within your workforce is a powerful competitive advantage and source of innovation for your business.

You can amplify this advantage by embracing recent shifts in technology (such as smart mobile devices, video, social, and cloud-based applications) and broadening access from office-based workers to all employees (including customer care agents, executives, and mobile and desk-less workers).

It is from this perspective that we highlight the six areas in this document, pointing out important differences in approach from Microsoft and Cisco toward meeting enterprise-class collaboration requirements.

We believe that a solution that has been developed primarily from a desktop PC software perspective is inherently less equipped to meet the new workplace requirements (such as BYOD, video, and flexible hosting) than one that has been designed from the beginning as an integrated system optimized for real-time communications.

Microsoft's approach leaves several important elements of the solution to others to supply and support—such as voice and video services, gateways, networking, and cloud PSTN connections—a model that can introduce unnecessary risk, complexity, and cost compared to a pre-integrated solution with these important infrastructure services built in.

By contrast, the Cisco Collaboration offering includes support for all leading BYOD devices, enterprise-class voice and video from both on-premises and cloud-based deployments, cost-effective telephone and video endpoints, single-point support, and simplified licensing and support service options.

We believe that successful delivery of the next-generation collaboration experience is not just a matter of desktop software, or the latest social network or smartphone. It requires a “full-stack” approach with the flexibility to adapt to multiple different environments and use cases, with the built-in infrastructure that can provide a compelling user experience and deliver the superior reliability, scalability, and value expected of a true business solution.

We hope you find this information of value in your collaboration solution evaluation efforts.

For More Information

For more information please contact your local representative or visit <http://www.cisco.com>

¹ Forrester Research, February 14, 2012

² Apple Event, September 12, 2012

³ Business Intelligence 2012

⁴ IDC cross-sector research, October 2012

⁵ TechCrunch, August 15, 2012

⁶ WebPro News, June 11, 2012

⁷ Forbes.com, October 25, 2012

⁸ Microsoft 10k SEC filing July 26, 2012

⁹ New York Times, May 28, 2012

¹⁰ Survey of Lync customers, Redshift.com January 2013

¹¹ Cisco news release April 2012

¹² Cisco news release April 2012

¹³ [Cisco Recognized for Excellence in Certified Technology Service and Support Program](#)

¹⁴ *CIO Magazine 2011*

¹⁵ Computerworld august 28, 2012

¹⁶ [Microsoft/Skype: Once skeptical UC pros reassessing enterprise Skype](#)

¹⁷ Cisco HCS new release October 2012

¹⁸ *Cisco Visual Networking Index (VNI) 2012*

¹⁹ *Cisco Visual Networking Index (VNI) 2012*

²⁰ Zeus Kerravala, "How Microsoft disrupts the unified communications market", 2012



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

Cisco and the Cisco logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Cisco and/or its affiliates in the U.S. and other countries. To view a list of Cisco trademarks, go to this URL: www.cisco.com/go/trademarks. Third party trademarks mentioned are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (1110R)