

Cisco Spark: Meet, Collaborate, and Communicate Wherever, Whenever

Do you want to improve employee productivity from any location, device, or network? Do you wish to consolidate your company's communication tools and better integrate its business applications with its communication solutions?



If you answered yes to these questions, you are in good company. The same reasons were given by participants of a small and medium-sized business (SMB) survey¹ when asked why they would invest in unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) solutions.

UC&C is a term used in technology that refers to the integration of all modes of business communication into a single solution. Voice, chat, web conferencing, conference calls, video, file sharing, and even virtual whiteboarding. Whether for a one-on-one conversation or a team meeting, all your employees have a central solution to make great decisions quickly and easily. At Cisco, we just call it "UC."

The SMB research findings are reflected across other key market indicators as well. A 2015 IDG Enterprise report² predicted that adoption of unified communications technology would surge in the next three years, with 56 percent of enterprises and 66 percent of SMBs planning to implement or upgrade their communications solutions.

It's clear that the market can see the business case for investing in a UC strategy, but why is this, and what are business leaders looking to achieve? Put quite simply, the way we work has transformed very rapidly over the last few years. The proliferation of mobile technology and the connectivity of people means that success is no longer measured by time in an office; it is measured by productive output, irrespective of the location. From small and emerging companies to MNCs, companies can now stay connected to their workforce with just the click of a button.

Many companies, especially the small and emerging organizations, may find it daunting to start investing in their UC platform. This should not be the case, as it is an investment in your business's ability to grow, scale, and gain competitive advantage.

Here are a few tips from Cisco³ for you to consider.

An effective unified communications experience is all about simplicity. You want all your teams' favorite modes of communication unified in a single platform, a single point for all the magic to happen. Virtual and one-on-one meetings, group chats, and video conferencing should all be seamlessly connected. Talk to your teams and see what they find are the best ways to communicate, and ensure that you have those covered.

Think big picture: First address the needs of your whole organization. Consider how your investment will free all employees to work wherever they are and however they choose. Think how your spending will increase productivity, encourage idea sharing and risk taking, and lead to innovation.

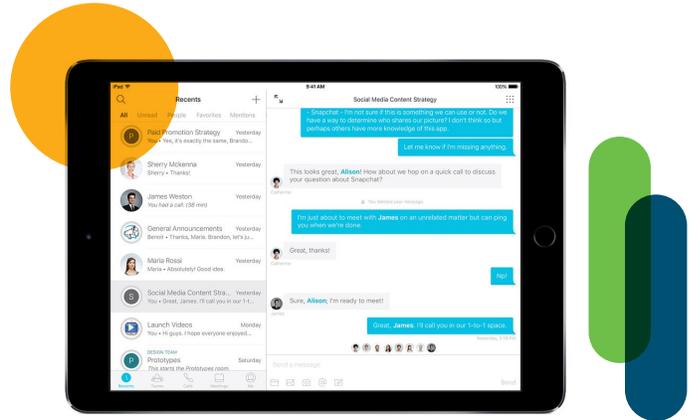
Your UC platform must be intuitive to use, with a consistent user experience (UX) across all platforms, applications, and devices. It must be secure for internal and external use.

It must be easy to manage with just a single set of integrated tools.

Beyond the general guidelines, start your search by checking out two of Cisco's most popular UC solutions for SMBs: Cisco Spark™ and Cisco WebEx®.

Cisco Spark

Cisco Spark is an app-centric, cloud-based service with a complete collaboration suite for teams and individuals to work seamlessly, whether they're together physically or virtually. Spark was created to help SMBs increase productivity, build stronger teamwork and relationships, encourage creativity and idea exchange, and get more effectiveness.



Here are some reasons why many SMBs start with Spark when they shop for a UC platform:

1. **Simple:** Delivered entirely from the Cisco® Collaboration Cloud, with a simple and intuitive user experience (UX), Spark is easy to set up, use, and manage. The service is subscription based, so you only pay for add-ons as your SMB grows.
2. **Secure:** Spark is secure and reliable, thanks to Cisco's extensive experience in securing the world's largest networks.
3. **Complete:** You get all of Cisco's market-leading collaboration services, with all Spark services regularly updated.
4. **Open:** Spark's self-enabled integrations, bots, and easy-to-use APIs can be customized to your existing processes and work streams. Spark also works well with third-party integrations such as Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive, ServiceNow, Salesforce, and Slack.

Drilling down, Spark's core capabilities empower your SMB to be more productive and to collaborate and innovate better.

Meetings: Bring people together seamlessly to create, communicate, and collaborate before, during, and after meeting through any mobile or video device. Invite others to join meetings from their desk, a branch office, home, or on the road. Add-on devices include the Spark Board, a touch-based device for wireless presentation, digital whiteboarding, and video conference. Such devices can easily integrate with your existing equipment and can be set up in minutes.

Messaging: Exchange messages and share files with an individual or a team. Message anyone internally or externally. Just enter an email address and start messaging anyone (e.g., customers and partners).

WebEx



Spark is an always-on, virtual collaboration platform. WebEx®, on the other hand, complements your SMB's unified communication needs as an online meeting tool to virtually meet with other people without leaving your home or office.

You need Internet access and a separate phone line to log into a WebEx meeting, where you can see the caller's computer screen. Or, if you dial in to join via the conference phone number provided, you will be able to hear the presenter and other participants.

WebEx requires no up-front investment and has a clear costing and licensing model because it is delivered through cloud.

You save on hardware, software, and maintenance costs, and you can quickly deploy WebEx globally for users whether they are in or outside your company's firewalls.

Cisco WebEx web and video conferencing services allow people to meet, collaborate, and stay productive with anyone, anywhere, on any mobile device or on their own video system. You can enable your customers to collaborate and communicate more cost-effectively when and where it's most convenient for them.

Cisco meeting services will help:

- Make video-enabled conferencing available to every user.
- Simplify the meeting experience with consistent user interfaces and features.
- Reach suppliers, partners, and customers no matter where they're located.
- Bring everyone together with any mobile device or their own video system.

There you have it—all the essential features and functionalities of a good UC platform encapsulated in Cisco Spark and WebEx, both designed as online collaboration solutions for companies of any size, including your SMB.

Best of all, Spark and WebEx come with “budget-friendly” packages that are tailored to your SMB’s needs. Take the next step today and talk to our Cisco Start experts about how our suite of UC solutions can meet your business needs, match your budget, and get your SMB on the road to better collaboration and teamwork, greater innovation, and improved productivity.



1. “SMB Adoption of Unified Communication and Collaboration (UCC) On the Rise,” Laurie McCabe’s Blog, Oct. 11, 2016. <https://lauriemccabe.com/2016/10/11/smb-adoption-of-unified-communication-and-collaboration-ucc-on-the-rise/>

2. “Unified Communications & Collaboration Study 2015,” IDG Enterprise, June 16, 2015. <https://www.idgenterprise.com/resource/research/2015-unified-communications-collaboration-study/>

3. Key Considerations Before Investing in a Collaboration Solution, Cisco, 2015. [collaboration-core-infrastructure-infographic.pdf](#)