

INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES PAVLENYI

Eric Green: Hello and welcome to a new podcast series from IBM software that explores the challenges IT managers and business professionals are facing today. I'm Eric Green and I'll be talking with a range of experts to discover new perspectives, approaches and examples that can help meet these challenges and introduce you to the capabilities of smarter software from IBM. So let's get started. Today, we'll be discussing unified communications and collaboration with Jacques Pavlenyi, who is Market Segment Manager for IBM Collaboration Solutions. Jacques, thanks for joining us today.

Jacques Pavlenyi: Thank you very much.

Eric Green: So to start with, can you describe what you consider to be unified communication in your mind, for our listeners in order to frame our discussion today? Within that description, I think it would be helpful to kind of bullet point a list that you consider to be part of what you are calling unified communications.

Jacques Pavlenyi: Sure, happy to. So unified communications is really not a single technology but really a family of related technologies and unfortunately, depending on who you talk to in the industry, there are some slight differences in what might constitute unified communications depending where you're coming from. But in general, the industry has sort of coalesced around a few key capabilities that encompass unified communications. So things from a rich presence awareness to unified messaging, which often refers to a single e-mail or voice mail inbox for voice mail messages and messaging, things like online meetings, e-meetings, right through rich text chat, audio chat, video chat and more deeply recently into telephony integration and IT integration. So beyond just the capabilities themselves, unified communications also refers to how to unify those capabilities within existing IT environments and existing telephony environments, your PBX environments, for example. So that really is the latest thinking around what encompasses unified communications, so it's a pretty broad set of capabilities and integrations.

Eric Green: So it sounds to me like a certain number of those pieces of unified communications have been around for some time and then a good number of them are showing up over the last six months to maybe a year and a half, and organizations like yours and others have sort

of been able to figure out how to pull them together, to really integrate them. Is that kind of a fair statement?

Jacques Pavlenyi: Yeah, I think we've seen in the industry some of the capabilities have been around for quite some time. Enterprise instant messaging is nothing new, that's been around for at least a decade or longer, and online meetings has been around for a good five years or more as well. So I think you have these different capabilities that have grown up in different silos over time. What's happening is open architectures, open APIs, and programming models have really begun to pull all these different pieces together. I think that's the thing that you're seeing that's different in the past two years or so is this move towards this true unification or unifying element of unified communications and bringing these different siloed – what used to be siloed applications – an instant messaging application or your telephone or your e-mail, for example, or even currently, your social networking tools and bringing them into a single environment.

Eric Green: Fair enough. So perhaps now that we see how far reaching unified communications is, we can discuss how much of a business enabler for collaboration and the true benefit to the business side of organizations. You think you could start there?

Jacques Pavlenyi: Sure. So the benefits for unified communication really are very multifold. There's the hard benefits that you see from things like cost savings, for example, from reduced travel costs, reduced telephony costs by integrating new capabilities in your existing PBX or telephony environments. You don't have to rip and replace your telephone systems just to get the latest capabilities, so you're saving investment dollars. You're saving costs because you can use different infrastructures depending on what's the most cost effective at that moment. So for example, a business traveler might use a cell phone or in the past actually used a hotel room telephone to make outbound calls and we all know how expensive hotel room phones can be. So many workers have switched over to their mobile phones, but if you're traveling, that still could be a significant expense if you're connecting through a WiFi and have the software on your desktop, you can save even more dollars by not having to use a cell network to make business calls.

So there are the hard metrics, the hard savings that you get for example, and there's also the many, many soft, softer benefits that you get through improved productivity, enhanced capabilities, workers are more productive and they're happier because they are using the

tools that they like to use. If they want to use a cell phone at that moment, they're not restricted to using a desktop phone. If they want to use instant messaging or video chat to talk with somebody, they can do that as well. So there's more flexibility for the worker to work in the ways that are important to them, and just to get the job done. So you have a lot of those productivity enhancements that are great benefits that may not necessarily be as easy to measure but are absolutely you know, important and critical to making a unified communications decision.

Eric Green: Very interesting stuff. So can we sort of hone in a little bit on those examples that you've brought up. Perhaps given, you know, the broad amount of customers and the like that you have with IBM, you could give us maybe specifically how this has benefited one or two of your customers on the business side?

Jacques Pavlenyi: Yeah sure. So one example just recently is we recently completed an engagement with the Finnish defense forces and they've instituted IBM Lotus at the same time as a core component of a new unified communications strategy. You can imagine that in a command control environment like a defense force, that having mission critical communications happen very quickly, very effectively, and very securely, and Finnish defense forces has been working with IBM for quite some time to pull that all together into a much more effective communications system that they have for their command center.

Another example is an insurance company called Selina. They have been a smaller insurance company that are regionally based in the Midwest of the United States and in order to compete against much larger rivals, they've had to find ways to be far more productive and responsive to their independent brokers than they have been in the past. They used to have very paper based systems and communications systems based on fax and e-mail and what they did is they instituted a system to communicate with their independent brokers through unified communications and it resulted in significant reductions in turnaround times for new policy writing, 40% reductions in certain cost center costs and a much more rapid responsiveness to customer requirements and broker requirements. So just by instituting this new communications system with their brokers, they were able to be far more effective at competing with some much larger rivals in their industry. So that's just two examples of how unified communications can help enterprises, public sector organizations,

governments, etc., really improve productivity and reduce costs through unified communications.

Eric Green: Excellent. Well than you for that. Our listeners definitely love to hear sort of real case examples, because it can show them, you know, very specifically how this can benefit their business. So that's the business side. So I thought it would be very useful to focus a little bit on the technical side of the organization and how unified communications if properly embraced by IT can help with things like organizational efficiency, the whole idea of employees being able to move between modes of communication, perhaps improve the help organizations, governance, security, all of these kind of things I would imagine unified communications on the technical side would be of benefit, yes?

Jacques Pavlenyi: Oh absolutely. I think one of the key trends that we're seeing that's impacting IT and the telephony organization is this trend called consumerization of IT where you see workers are used to using certain IT tools and certain communication tools within their personal lives and they want to bring those tools to work, and they're not terribly interested in necessarily the restrictions in the past that IT or the telephony groups have put into managing and sustaining their IT environments by using a lot of command control and they say no, you can't use that.

What's happening is that a lot of workers are saying well I'm going to use it anyway, and they wind up doing it. You know, one example that I heard of recently was a chemical plant floor, a set of workers had a very limited set of collaboration tools that they could use. They were very limited in the desktop functions that they could use on the plant floor. So what they did is they just on their own decided to start using mobile phone devices with push to talk capability. So kind of like walkie talkies. And this is not sanctioned by IT but they did it anyway and they improved their whole productivity and IT was left trying to play catch up to what workers were already trying to do. So you have plenty of examples like that happening throughout many industries.

So what IT and what telephony organizations are starting to realize is that they have to become more like service organizations where they look at different capabilities that people are looking for within the enterprise, and find different ways to serve those capabilities without necessarily giving up the security that they need, the governance issues that they have to deal with every day, and the cost issues that they have to do to manage these complex

environments. So with tools like unified communications, where, particularly unified communications that are built upon open standard spaced protocols, open APIs, make it a lot easier to integrate new capabilities within the existing frameworks that they already have. So they're not necessarily having to do massive changes to their telephony or IT environments, they can do very rapid iterations and innovations by adding new capabilities with a lot less effort than they would have needed to in the past.

Eric Green:

That's very helpful and some examples were embedded right in there which I think is fantastic. So sort of twisting this a little sideways, you know, I think there's huge benefit and a lot of organizations tend to not mix the business and the technical side so much, right? The business doesn't necessarily talk to enough or hear and understand the technical's needs and the technical side, the business's needs. But it seems to me, ironically enough, using the word unified, with unified communications comes this platform where it almost naturally – both sides of the organization will only benefit, or will benefit the most if they do work together. Do you see that happening in organizations that are sort of implementing programs like this?

Jacques Pavlenyi:

Oh absolutely. I think what we've been seeing for at least a couple of years now is a much more increased cross-teaming between IT, telephony and the line of business organization leaders. So your Chief Operating Officer for example, or your HR executive or your marketing executive who are coming to the table with a series of requirements now and it's not just about saying, well we need to this and IT go do it. And IT says no we can't do that because it costs X dollars. That's not the case anymore. You're seeing these much more integrated decision-making bodies that are coming together to really pull together the right strategy from the very beginning and not create a sort of spaghetti mass of systems that they have to then figure out how to integrate afterwards or if they provided the right capabilities or worse yet, developed a set of capabilities that aren't being adopted by end users because end users didn't have a say in how those capabilities were developed.

So I definitely think you're seeing a lot more teaming between the IT telephony and the line of business teams. It's happening very much not just in large enterprises but in mid-size enterprises as well. And as I mentioned before, that service model is becoming very important to where IT and telephony are looking to really team with the business leaders to drive real business value. It's not just about providing a certain set of capabilities and services and

leave it at that. IT and the CIO's office are very much wanting to be parts of the strategic conversation that are happening in the business and that means real business metrics and real business outcomes have to be part of the conversation. Am I really improving customer service levels? Am I really improving customer retention? Am I really improving employee productivity with these capabilities? And that's why IT I think is absolutely part of the conversation.

Eric Green: Great stuff, so before we sort of run out of time here, I thought it would be interesting to hear from you your thoughts on how organizations can get started doing this. I mean, you know, a lot of organizations like to kind of get their feet wet before they go and jump into things. And in a sense, a lot of them already have their feet wet because they're doing parts of unified communications, they're just not unified. How would you explain to our listeners the thought process around – how do you move towards this? How do you push your organization, both business and IT, to start embracing unified communications?

Jacques Pavlenyi: That's a great question, and I think it comes down to something very simple – and it's not about the tools. It's about the capabilities and the strategy that are important for your business. Unified communications isn't a destination, it's a journey, because these technologies are constantly being updated and refined and changed over time, you can't really say at any one point in time, well I have a "unified" communications solution, right? What you do want to make sure you do is look at what are your strategic imperatives as an organization, as a company, as a government body, what's important to you strategically? And then based on that specific strategy is my specific strategy, which is very much about, for example, trying to bridge an organization structure that spans multiple geographies and time zones and that we need to create a stronger teaming culture across those time zones.

If that's the strategic imperative for you, then that very much determines the types of tools you're going to focus on first, because the capabilities that you're looking for are very specific to that business problem. So things like having easy desktop collaboration that spans time zones, for example, E-meetings, or rich chat or video chat that consumes low bandwidth, for example. Those tools discussions and those capabilities discussions then naturally flow out of that strategic conversation. So again it's not about the tools, it's about what your strategy is and the tools and the capabilities flow from there. And there's lots of entry points

into unified communications to begin your journey, so depending on what your strategy is, there's many, many different ways that you can begin that journey that will be impactful for you. You can generate very fast results and build upon that success, and take it to the next level.

Eric Green: Excellent! Well I think that's all the time we have for today's podcast, but thanks so much for joining us today, Jacques.

Jacques: You're very welcome. Thank you.

Eric Green: Thanks for listening. Please do visit [IBM.com/software](https://www.ibm.com/software) to connect with our experts, continue the conversation, and learn more about smarter software from IBM. Let's build a smarter planet.