



NTT

**Special edition:
Business continuity survival guide**

Between flu season, transportation strikes, inclement weather, and school closings, employees are working from home more than ever. When dealing with a temporarily dispersed workforce, it's important to maintain security, boost morale and continue to operate at peak performance.



Facilitating remote work and business continuity

How to stay connected when it's business unusual

Plan ahead

Make sure employees have access and know how to remotely connect to business systems.

Stay flexible

Conditions may change quickly and even great plans may require changes. Be willing to adapt on-the-fly.

Focus on security

Employees may be working on insecure networks. Put security protocols in place and insist on VPN usage.

Stay in communication

Share basic communications plans with your staff before any crisis, then regularly update staff with specific to the current disruption.

Plan for backups

Other businesses are likely disrupted as well. Seek out alternate suppliers for critical services and business functions.

Empower your people

Trust remote workers to get their jobs done securely and effectively. Do your utmost to keep morale up while teams are separated.

The selection of the right technologies can help drive your organization's productivity on a day-to-day basis and is key to enabling business continuity plans.

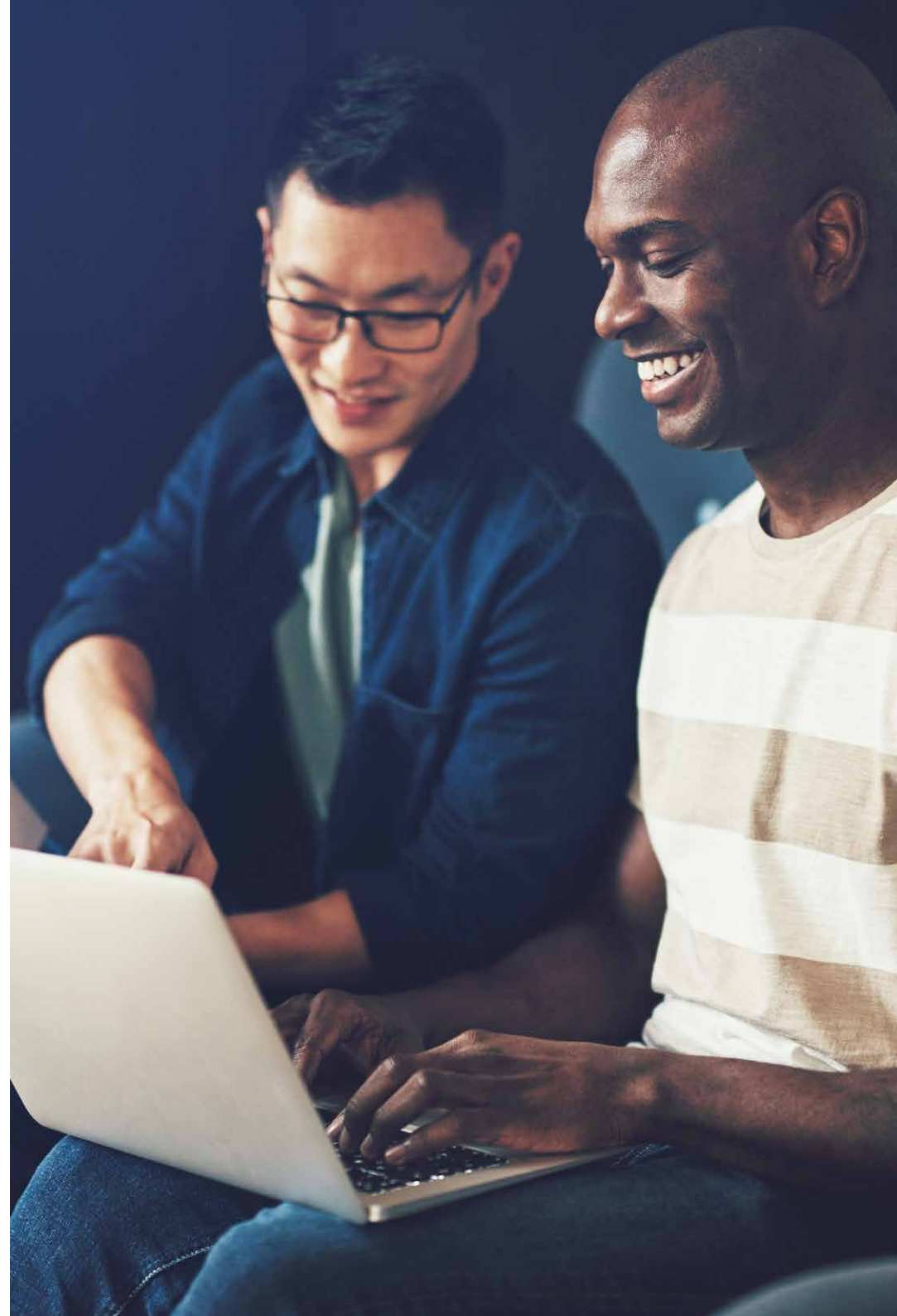


Buyer's guide to choosing the right business continuity solution

Enabling greater flexibility and productivity without the need for large capital investment, the benefits of Cloud Communications enable businesses to free themselves from the limitations of traditional, office-based phone systems.

Given the growth in the market for Cloud Communications, there are now a number of different solution variants available. So when you are ready to choose your solution, you need to be sure it matches your business needs and ways of working – allowing you to take full advantage of all its benefits. It is important to appreciate that not all solutions are equal in terms of functionality, flexibility, management complexity or resilience.

The right solution for you will depend on the size and type of business and your IT strategy going forward.



The different types of solutions available

A number of different types of Cloud Communications solutions are available, although there are no hard and fast dividing lines between them. Often the differences reflect the background and strengths or weaknesses of the different cloud service providers themselves. So the most helpful way to distinguish between solutions is to understand the different types of providers.

Types of providers:

Network service providers

Many traditional telecoms service providers now offer fully-featured Cloud Communications as an integrated part of their offering to business customers. With cloud services and the underlying network delivered by the same company, these providers are able to offer strong end-to-end Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with guaranteed quality of service.

IT-centric cloud app providers

These tend to be software vendors with a background in productivity applications, who have incorporated communications functionality such as messaging or voice calling into their IT suites. As the services they provide are built onto the IT platform, these services are part of the IT suite and not integrated into office telephony systems. Typically such solutions lack many of the features of a traditional phone system and so do not replace your existing phone system. They can only be used alongside it.

Over-the-top (OTT) service providers

These providers offer communications solutions that operate over the Internet. Whilst these solutions initially tended to offer only limited functionality (such as basic telephony features and text chat), the latest versions now often support enhanced capabilities. Although these solutions can be lower cost than traditional services, it is important to understand that they run over the public Internet. This means that they are detached from your data network and in some cases there may be a trade-off between service quality and cost.

Traditional network Centrex providers

The first generation of hosted telephony service providers, delivering PBX-type functionality as a hosted service. Typically they offer basic cloud telephony services that have only limited collaboration and business applications functionality.

Private cloud services providers

These companies provide private cloud services that are deployed in a distinct and secure cloudbased environment, in which only you can operate (essentially you are getting exclusive access to your own private data center via a private network). While private cloud offers you greater control and privacy, the financial cost is significantly higher than other options. In general, private cloud services are only feasible for large enterprise organizations.

Key purchase consideration

Whilst all Cloud Communications solutions tend to perform the same basic functions, they are not all equal in terms of functionality, flexibility, management complexity and resilience. When selecting the solution that's right for your business, you should carefully consider the following issues.

- Core voice functionality
- Ease of management
- Integration capability
- Your mobility requirements
- Scalability and flexibility
- Resilience and service levels

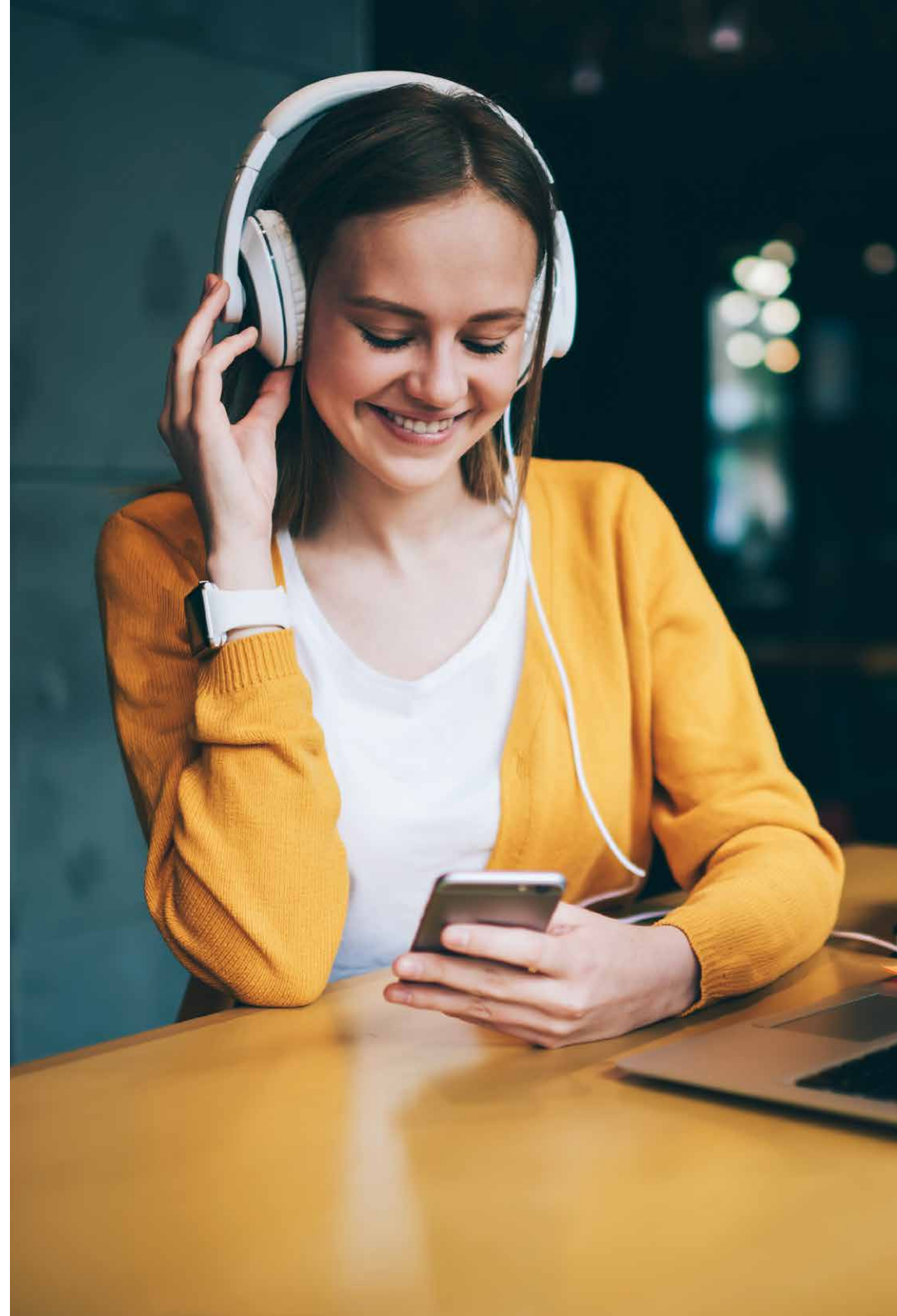
Core voice functionality

A Cloud Communications solution can offer valuable new features, but it's no good if you lose a lot of the functionality that your users currently rely on. Your existing phone system probably provides a lot of features that you take for granted, such as hunt groups and call screening. Those features aren't necessarily supported by all Cloud Communications systems, particularly those provided by traditional IT application providers.

It's vital that your chosen solution has all the functionality required to successfully manage your business day-to-day. Best practice is to audit all of the current communications services actively used by the business, then ensure that your new cloud solution can deliver all of these.

Key questions

- What PBX features do you currently use?
- What are the features that you cannot live without?



Ease of management

How you manage your Cloud Communications solution and what sort of management tools you'll need are crucial considerations. Levels of management simplicity vary dramatically across the range of solutions available.

You also need to consider what management tasks you're happy to do in-house and what you want to outsource. If you're looking for a fully-managed solution, then this will help define the type of service provider you need to work with.

You also need to consider whether it's feasible for you to manage a solution that comprises different elements provided by different providers, or whether you would prefer a 'one-stop shop' solution. If your business has a large IT function, your people may have the time and skills to manage complex solutions, utilizing a variety of services from different over-the-top suppliers across different platforms and networks.

If, however, your business is light on IT skills and your communications solution will be managed by generalists, then a single supplier offering a fully integrated solution would be simpler for your in-house IT team. You'll also need to ensure that the provider offers simple interfaces and intuitive management tools.

Key questions

- Who will be managing the service and how skilled are they in IT and telecoms?
- Which tasks do you want to manage in-house and which do you want to outsource to a third-party provider?
- Do you have the capacity to manage an environment where you use different providers for different services?



Integration capability

As you explore ways to utilize communications to enhance your existing business processes, you're likely to identify requirements to integrate your Cloud Communications solution with both existing business applications and other cloud applications. For example, you might want to integrate with your CRM system in order to improve your customers' experience when calling in, or to improve the productivity of your sales people.

So you need to ensure that you can integrate your Cloud Communications solution with other applications without prohibitive expense. Some solutions offer "out-of-the-box" integration with popular CRM and productivity applications. The more advanced will offer open APIs that enable easy integration with other apps.

Another area to consider is integration with your existing phone systems. If you have multiple sites, you might not want to switch them all over at the same time. This may be because you're still tied into an existing contract or you haven't fully written-down a previous investment, or perhaps because you want to take a cautious approach to implementation to minimize your risks. For any of these considerations, you will need a solution that can support a hybrid model which combines cloud services with existing on-premise technology.

Key questions

- What other business applications do you need your solution to integrate with?
- Do you have the resources to manage bespoke integration projects or do you need something which is 'out-of-the-box'?
- Do you need to run with a hybrid model for a period of time as part of a phased transition?



Your mobility requirements

The ability to support mobile workers is one of the key advantages of Cloud Communications compared with traditional PBX solutions. You need to consider how important mobility is for your business and what functionality you need to support mobile workers.

Some Cloud Communications solutions offer a completely seamless app-based experience for the mobile user, with access – from any device – to all the tools and functionality that an office-based user has. Some solutions also enable mobile users to be fully integrated within your business's phone network, with seamless moving of calls between fixed and mobile devices, and access to features such as the company directory.

Whether your people are at their desks or on the road is invisible to external callers; location becomes irrelevant. More advanced offerings include the ability for services to be delivered over a combination of fixed, wireless (Wi-Fi) and mobile/cellular networks, with automatic switching to the most cost-effective and highest quality network available as users change location. Fixed mobile convergence can also enable users to have a single number across fixed and mobile devices without the need for a mobile app.

Key questions

- What communications and collaboration tools do your mobile workers need to be effective when away from the office?
- How important is it that your mobile workers are fully integrated with your business' communications network?
- What devices and platforms (such as Android and iOS) do you need your solution to support?



Scalability and flexibility

Different Cloud Communications solutions have different limitations when it comes to scalability and flexibility. Some can easily scale up to handle many thousands of users, and allow you to flex up or down as your business requirements change. Others are more restrictive, either because of technology constraints or because of the way that the service is priced.

This can be particularly important for advanced applications such as call recording or CRM integration, which can become prohibitively expensive if you need to purchase additional server capacity. So you could be making an expensive mistake if you opt for a solution that doesn't offer the flexibility you need. For example, if your business has high seasonality of demand, it is essential to go for a solution that allows you to scale up and down without a cost penalty.

You'll also want to ensure that adding and removing users is a straightforward task, and isn't going to add a significant admin overhead to your costs. Given the rapid pace of change in many markets, it's also important to prepare for the unexpected. Ensure that whatever solution you choose is able to scale to support anticipated business growth over the medium to long term.

Key questions

- How 'peaky' is demand in your business?
- How much flexibility do you need to quickly scale up or down?
- Do you have a need to regularly add and remove users (such as large numbers of short-term contractors)?
- How much growth should you allow for if you achieve your business goals?



Resilience and service levels

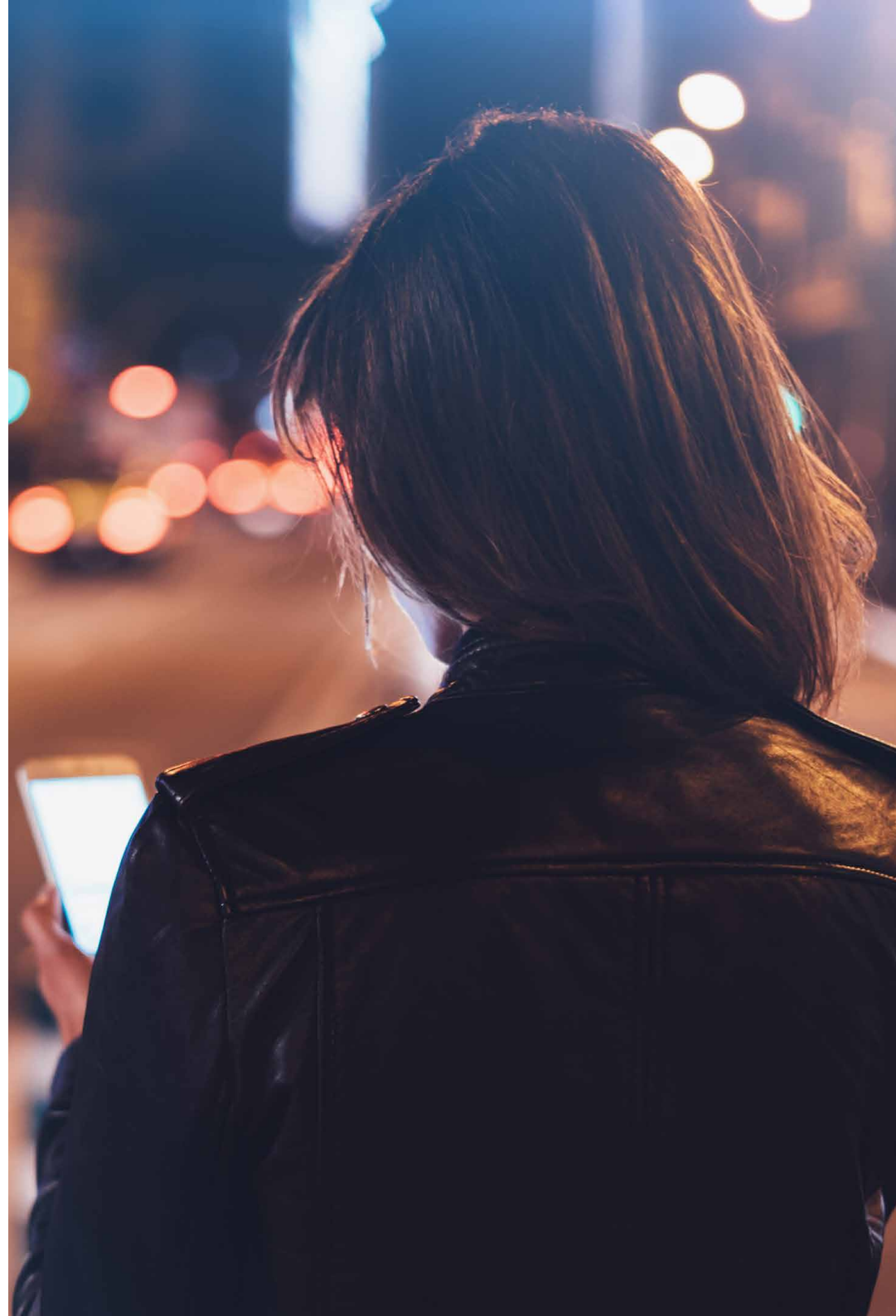
Cloud takes away from your own business premises some of the direct burden of business continuity and disaster support, but it is important to understand the measures that the cloud services provider has in place to ensure that you and your data are fully protected and always available.

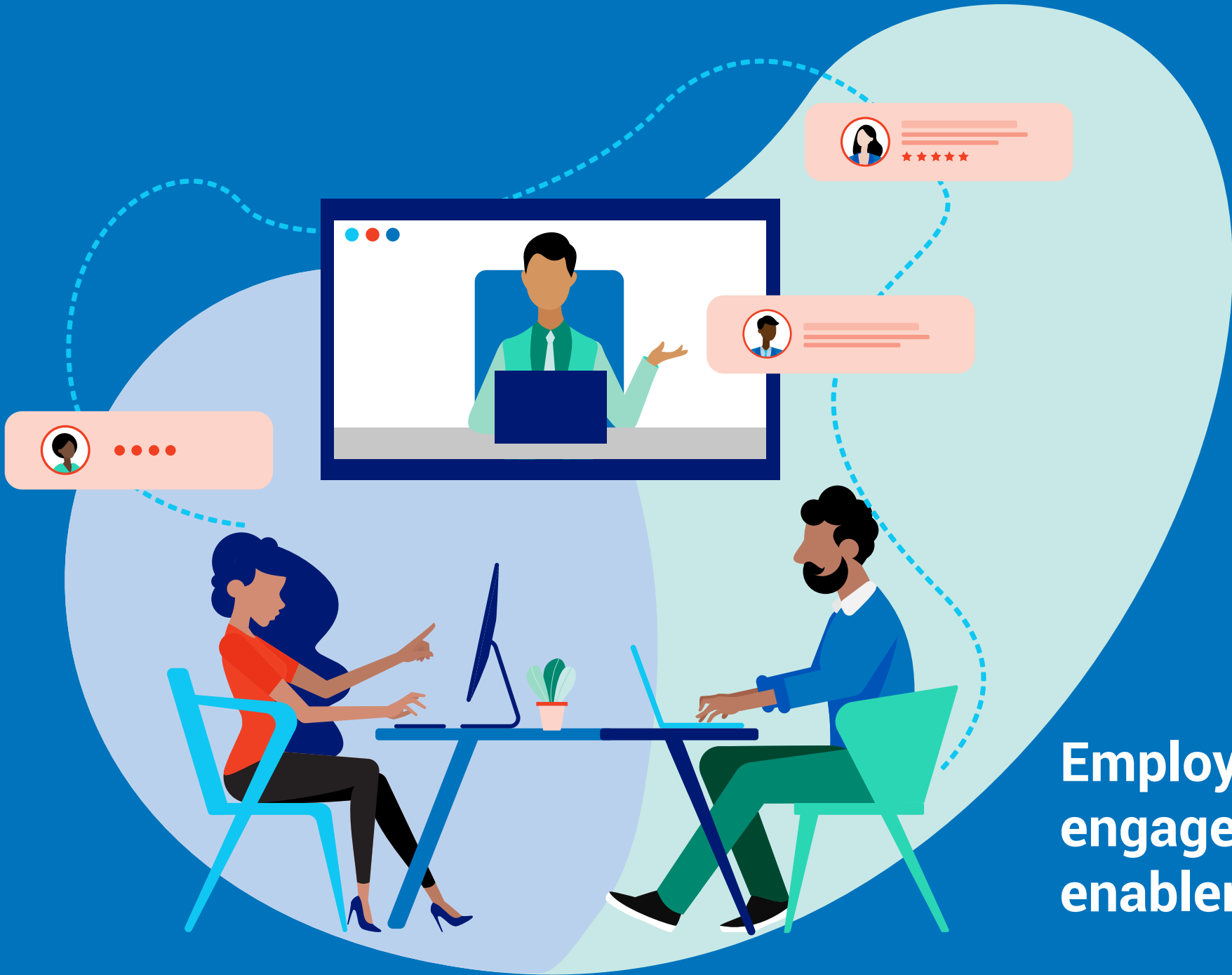
If the ability to maintain communications and access information is vital to the running of your business, then business continuity measures will be a high priority. For example, automatic redirection to a mobile if a desk phone is unreachable could help ensure your customers can still reach you in the event of a fire, flood or network failure. You should also consider what minimum level of service quality you need. For example, if high quality, real-time voice and video (for example, for customer communications) is critical, then opting for a combined Cloud Communications and network solution from a single provider is likely to be most suitable as the service provider will be best placed to ensure constant quality of service.

If however, your business is able to accept occasional drops in service quality (for example, your communications are mostly internal), then it might not be worth paying for a higher-grade service.

Key questions

- What level of resilience does your business require?
- What's your tolerance to occasional downtime?
- How essential is consistent, guaranteed quality of service for applications such as voice and video?





Employee engagement and enablement

Keeping remote employees engaged and efficient

As working from home becomes the norm, virtual townhalls and all-hands meetings are important elements to help establish effective virtual collaboration amongst remote teams.

Virtual townhall meetings play an important role for remote employees who don't get much face time with company leadership and can foster a greater sense of community within an organisation. However, this comes with a number of unique challenges, particularly in picking the right tools to facilitate large-scale communication across multiple locations.

Virtual enterprise town hall meetings allow you to reach large remote audiences in a scalable way.

Town hall meetings

These assignments are typically given to the corporate communications team, which is responsible for creating the meeting content and implementing event logistics. What happens next is a complex series of decisions, including the decision to have a live in-person meeting, a large-scale teleconference, an online virtual meeting or a "hybrid" event that combines elements of them all.

Given the need to reach large groups in multiple locations simultaneously and the desire for rich media content (streaming video), virtual online meetings are rapidly becoming the favored method for holding a town hall. Technology, in the form of virtual environments and webcasting, has alleviated the necessity of traditional in-person meetings and can save organizations time and money.

Assuming that the choice is made to go with a virtual meeting or a hybrid meeting – usually a live meeting held at corporate headquarters that is transmitted virtually to field and international offices – the challenges can be numerous. Technical and operational issues abound when deciding to conduct an online town hall, and all merit careful consideration.

How to reach large global audiences in a scalable way

Many organizations have a large and geographically dispersed employee base, and reaching them with a town hall address requires an online meeting platform that can scale to many thousands of users simultaneously.

Many web conferencing tools will "break" when scaled past 500 users, and they aren't designed specifically to deliver rich media content – so organizations need a platform and set of tools that can scale and reach the audience efficiently, as well as provide audience metrics and viewership data. Make the event easy for meeting planners and end users.

Many corporate communications departments don't have expertise in implementing online events; as a result, they need project planning and management assistance when developing their online town hall. Similarly, virtual town hall meetings need to be easy for end users to register for and attend, and end users should be able to access meetings on a variety of devices, including mobile devices and tablets, such as the iPad.



Offering rich media and moderated interactive services We live in a video age, and the expectation of CEOs is that they will be able to reach their audience with a video broadcast – something that engages their audience and promotes a connection between parties. Audio-only conference calls don't offer the level of engagement that immersive online experiences provide, and moderated interactive services such as polling, Q&A, chat and screen sharing are helpful ways to personalise and enhance the online town hall experience.

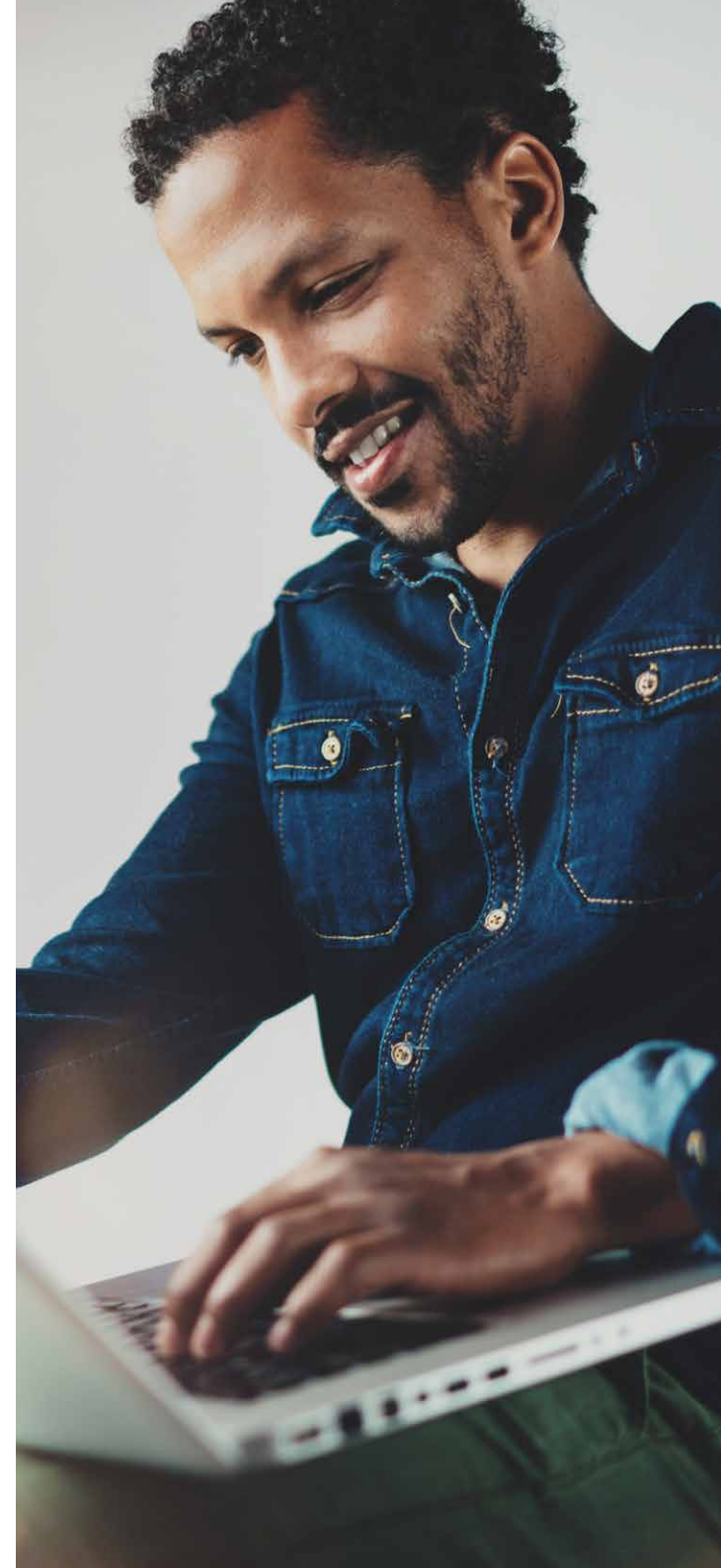
Given the correct platform, virtual town hall meetings can also include online breakout sessions, provide chat rooms hosted by "experts" and enable participant brainstorming/feedback sessions. Working with corporate IT and managing cyber security When a virtual town hall meeting is being planned, one of the first steps is working with the IT department to determine if streaming video is achievable on the company's network. In many cases, in-house networks cannot support streaming video, and the IT department cannot dedicate the staff or resources to implement webcasting.

So, planners of town hall meetings must look to outsource and find solutions that won't constrain network resources and provide secure access to the meeting, preventing unauthorised viewers from seeing the broadcast. Delivering a consistent message Consistency in delivering a message via a scripted town hall needs to be achieved in two ways – first, by creating a corporate look and feel that is supported by thoughtful content, and, second, by delivering that content in a way that means all users have access to high-quality audio and video. Providing global reach and related services Not only is a reliable platform needed, but the platform must also have "follow the sun" capabilities to support multiple time zones. Additional considerations include the need for

a localised user interface and country/region-specific language and pre-event communication. Scale to reach large global audiences Look for an enterprise-class platform that can deliver rich media content to thousands of users simultaneously, with a redundant architecture that is specifically designed to deliver formal, polished events in a reliable manner. It is a necessity for town hall meetings to reach the entire employee base.

Make the event easy for meeting planners and users Seek a partner that understands online events and has experience in producing town hall meetings. An expert partner should help your organisation at every stage, from planning to implementation and operations, providing an essentially turnkey infrastructure for delivery of meeting content. Reporting on attendance and other metrics should be available as well. Meetings should be easy for end users to register for and attend, no matter what sort of device (desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone) they are using to view the town hall.

Platforms that don't require software installation will increase end user participation and eliminate the burden on IT. Offer rich media services Leading virtual solutions help deliver professional and polished events that showcase the speaker's content. Look for a service that offers multiple levels of video integration, including signal capture from existing corporate TV studios and telepresence locations, as well as the ability to broadcast from multiple presenter webcams.





Exploring alternatives for physical events

Major events around the world have been cancelled due to growing concerns of a health crisis. Such disruptions can potentially have a huge commercial impact to your organisation. This is where virtual alternatives come in to allow events to continue to be held and give participants the next best thing to being there.

The beauty of digital events is that you can reach audiences wherever they are in the world, and plan and execute with confidence in uncertain times. Find out which solution type is best suited for your event requirements with this 101 Guide to virtual events type

Audio conference

Best for

- Small calls (50 lines or less)
- Last-minute or Emergency call
- Daily Updates
- Crisis Management
- Known Audience

Video conference

Best for

- Small calls (10 lines/sites or less)
- Connecting multiple venues where investors or presenters are already present
- Team meeting or presenting
- Bringing remote presenters into the venue / webcast

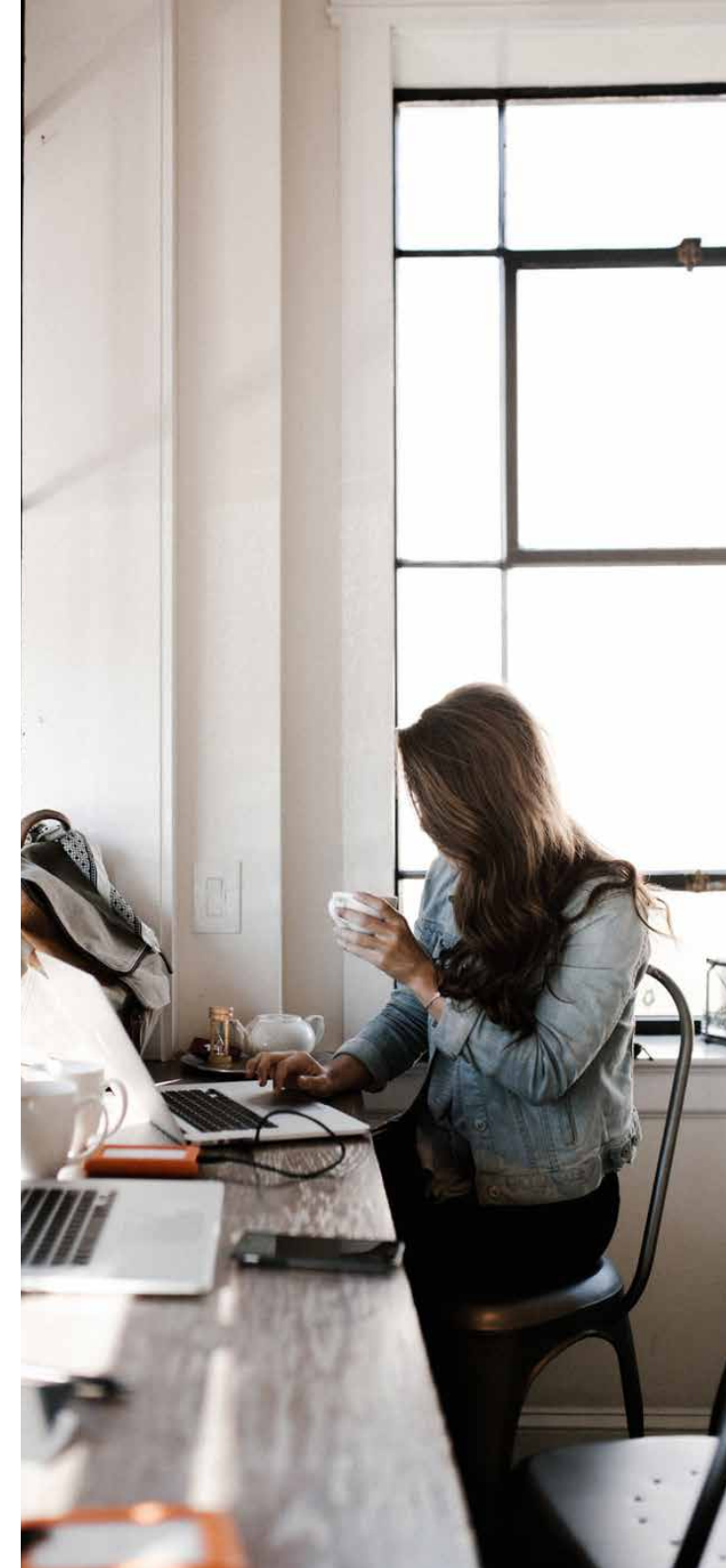
Audio or video webcast

Best for

- Large calls (over 100) and Unknown attendance numbers
- New Investor engagement
- International Investor engagement
- Branding and Image promotion
- Sharing content with investors
- Promoting “modern” company values
- Replay and Post-event playback / website archiving
- Easy alternate to Audio Conference (Audio only webcast)

Contact us to find out more about how we can help you overcome your communication challenges in times of uncertainty

[Contact us now](#)





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