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# POSITION PAPER

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## Bridging the Unified Communications Gap



### Executive Summary

The phone used to be the primary way to do business. Now an increasingly mobile workforce relies on email, instant messaging, multimedia web conferencing and other technologies to stay in touch. But phone calls still play an important role—especially when parties need to make quick decisions or discuss the nuances of a transaction or collaboration. Unified Communications (UC) promises to combine the immediacy and lifelike quality of voice communications with the advantages of these new data-driven communications tools.

Unfortunately, the principal data platform in most enterprises—the personal computer—was not designed for voice communications. For organizations that are looking to gain the productivity benefits of UC, this limitation can present barriers to adoption by workers and potentially put a burden on help desk resources, as well as other cost and operational risks.

Plantronics UC headsets and audio devices bridge this communications gap by providing superior audio quality across a range of device platforms and networks—with the flexibility, comfort, reliability and global support required for enterprise deployments.

### Delivering on UC

Recognizing how unifying voice and data communications can make workers more productive and more agile, applications vendors and major software companies have been busy building telephony—as well as instant messaging (IM), email, and other data features—into a growing number of applications. As a result, today's workers can collaborate by voice while simultaneously using IM, sharing files, or viewing rich multimedia.

Nonetheless, it's hard for someone to type notes, respond to a message, or scroll through a presentation when they are holding a cell phone or landline phone to their ear. It's also frustrating when the data aspects of UC collaboration work fine but the voice component is low quality—static, cutting in or out, dropped audio, tinny sound, or digitized voice.

Although the personal computer is the main enabler of UC, it isn't a particularly voice-friendly platform. The typical PC lacks high-quality input/output for voice—except perhaps for simple built-in speakers and a no-frills microphone. Most headsets available for voice over IP (VoIP) on a PC are also not designed to deliver carrier-class voice quality or all-day wearing comfort.

Plantronics headsets enhance the PC as a voice platform. They offer the superior audio quality, reliability and range of choices that can help to overcome barriers to adopting UC. They can help to alleviate ambient noise and overcome the less-than-optimal input and output quality of PCs. Plantronics headsets also leave users' hands free for typing and other activities critical to true UC collaboration.

### The Clear Leader in Voice

Plantronics combines 40 years of industry experience and strong relationships with phone manufacturers, PC software makers (including IBM and Microsoft), and leaders in the latest VoIP and Internet multimedia technologies (including Cisco, Avaya, Microsoft Polycom, and Nortel) to optimize its headsets. Plantronics UC headsets are compatible with all UC devices and platforms and provide the clear audio quality that only Plantronics delivers.

Plantronics headsets are designed to deliver crystal-clear voice communications. Additionally, Plantronics technology provides a number of benefits that enhance UC, including advanced echo management that overcomes delays in phone lines and IP connections, and outbound noise reduction that goes beyond the capabilities of a typical noise-canceling headset to further reduce noise when the user is not talking.

### The Science of Comfort

Many knowledge workers spend a good part of their day in front of a PC, and using a poorly designed or poor quality headset can make that day feel quite long. Trying to carry on conversations while carrying a heavy headset, or feeling the pressure of an ill-fitting headset, can severely limit overall satisfaction with a UC deployment.

Recognizing the fact that not all ears are created equal, Plantronics engineers have conducted the industry's most extensive research into variations of the human ear. By analyzing thousands of samples, Plantronics has built a large statistical database of human ear shapes. It is comprised of men and women of different ages from ethnicities representative of the entire world's population.

The result is the lightest possible headset design that fits 97 percent of all ears comfortably—not too tightly, not too loosely, and with a good line of sound to the ear canal.

### Range of Options

Moreover, only Plantronics offers a comprehensive range of styles and price points to make UC practical at all levels of the organization. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, Plantronics allows IT organizations to customize a deployment cost effectively.

For example, in global communications, a wideband solution—that allows for twice the bandwidth of standard telephony to make conversations more natural sounding—with a high-quality wired Plantronics headset can provide optimal voice fidelity to overcome the difficulty of trying to understand different accents, especially with international IP telephony.



Plantronics designers create the perfect headset for every ear. A proprietary statistical database comprised of measurements made on the ears of thousands of individuals—of both genders and different ages and ethnicities representative of the world population—aids in the design of comfortable, ergonomic headsets.

Sales reps can be issued high-quality noise-canceling headsets so that they can join UC collaborations without the fear of background noise disturbing the group or making their participation hard to understand.

Wireless Plantronics headsets offer excellent mobility within the office without sacrificing audio clarity, while knowledge workers who work mostly at a desk in a cubicle may be served well by a wired direct connect headset that gives very high-quality audio at a very reasonable price point. A Plantronics speakerphone for UC can also give workers the flexibility to set up impromptu conference calls without the need for expensive conference type phones.

### Superior Reliability, World-class Service and Support

Plantronics headsets, speakerphones, and other audio devices pack an amazing array of technology in small packages that must cope with tough daily use in enterprise UC deployments. We strive to ensure trouble-free service by building on a 40-year reputation for reliability, by maintaining the highest manufacturing standards and conducting the industry's most comprehensive product testing.

However, even the best product design and the highest manufacturing standards can't prevent a few problems in the field. That's why Plantronics maintains the industry's most extensive and experienced global support team. Additionally, if Plantronics support cannot resolve a problem and any Plantronics product fails to perform to the highest standard, a replacement will be shipped within 48 hours. The rapid replacement process allows IT managers to reduce costs by eliminating the need for a big backup supply of headsets.

### Conclusion

When contemplating a UC deployment a key consideration is the need to compensate for the lack of a versatile, high-quality voice component in PC platforms. Knowledge workers who cannot hear become frustrated with remote collaboration, and those who cannot be heard frustrate the other team members.

Plantronics bridges this gap with a comprehensive offering of high-quality UC headsets—as well a recently introduced UC speakerphone. All these products work seamlessly across device platforms and networks. They also offer the mobility and comfort for all-day business use, and are designed to fit a wide range of human ears. And they are backed by built-in reliability plus renowned Plantronics global support.

By deploying headsets that improve the quality of PC audio, organizations can reap the benefits of UC without the risk of unsatisfied users burdening help desk support. The wide range of headsets available also allows administrators to cost-effectively tailor a deployment, giving each worker just the right solution.