ONVERGED
TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS
voipswami.com

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF A TRUSTED COMMUNICATIONS PARTNER

The Changing Landscape of Communications

Over the past decade, communications technology has evolved at a blistering pace. Companies have worked hard to keep up with innovation from the tried-and-true method of POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) to complete inbound and outbound calls over the public internet.

Today, it's clear that the latest evolution is moving onsite PBX environments to hosted cloud solutions called UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) and CCaaS (Contact Center as a Service). Need proof? Just look to the breakneck speed of acquisitions like the recent one between Mitel and RingCentral, where Mitel will continue to support their on-prem environments, but they'll no longer actively offer cloud-based products such as MiCloud Connect and Mitel MiVoice Connect for new customers. It doesn't take much to read between the lines— aging on-prem hardware and equipment simply can't take the same route a modern, cloud-based platform can.

Initially, UCaaS and CCaaS platforms catered to the SMB markets, but as demand for enterprise-ready functionality increased, vendors took notice. They now offer true enterprise-level cloud solutions that include video, chat, and phone service in an all-in-one platform.

IT teams are finding themselves in a position to manage migration initiatives independently, either due to a decision from internal executive leadership or by their own choice. However, it is important to realize that your existing IT department does not have extensive knowledge on emerging UCaaS and CCaaS technologies, how they integrate with your current tech stack or the nuances involved with planning, migrating and maintaining the platform.

Making the wrong choice can have devastating long-term consequences for your organization, which we'll explain throughout this eBook. That's the true value of a trusted partner- having an expert in your corner to protect you from what you don't know, while ensuring that you'll receive excellent value while meeting all of your long-term communications goals.

If you have a reliable IT team, why wouldn't you just handle the entire project internally? After all, contracting with a support partner is no longer a mandated budget expense. We have found that this is frequently the initial position that many companies hold when choosing to move away from their previously supported onsite PBX to the cloud.

Your IT team may be great at keeping your current phone system operational along with providing support and managing the network. However, they often don't have the time or resources to vet every potential communications platform to see how it fits into your organization's bigger picture. In fact, your IT team may not even fully understand what that larger picture is. This often happens when poor internal communication occurs and there is no fluid method of addressing these issues.

Every department has different priorities on what will deliver long-term value for improved employee productivity and communication efficiencies, both internally and externally. As a result, the internal team tasked with researching vendors may not fully understand the complex needs of every department within the company.

For instance, is your IT leadership interviewing your contact center managers and supervisors to understand the role of omnichannel functionality? Will they know which vendor has full omnichannel capabilities, including advanced reporting? These and hundreds of other critical questions must be answered to find an ideal solution for your company's communications.

"At Converged Technology Professionals, our clients think of us as an advisory panel that can step in, evaluate complex challenges and recommend a variety of paths forward. Our expertise and extensive industry experiences enable us to understand your organization's needs across all departments and deliver a comprehensive executable plan with the best-suited provider."

The Role of Your IT Department is Rapidly Changing

IT teams typically are not strategists or consultants. In most situations, they don't communicate with executives about their specific needs and goals for each department. Yet, these conversations are critical to make the proper decisions about your technologies. Because when projects aren't completed according to plan or fail to deliver on the promises made, it's the IT leaders that take the heat.

If the loss is severe enough, it can cost them their jobs.

Many corporate leadership teams often don't realize that moving to a hosted PBX solution still requires extensive planning. They still need to consider issues related to company infrastructure and security protocols just as before. Firewall configurations, 3rd party integrations, remote work environments, mobility, and network reliability do not simply become moot points because the vendor hosts a company's communication platform.

Missing cutover deadlines, incorrect user configurations, improperly tested integrations, and inadequate end-user training can have devasting long-term consequences for you and the business. That's where a dedicated project management team comes into play- they handle these complex aspects to ensure a successful implementation and deployment.

Having a trustworthy and capable IT department is only the first step in getting from point A to B. Personalized guidance from an unbiased industry expert is no longer just a benefit; it's a necessity in navigating these options and making sure projects are completed with minimal disruption.

"Personalized guidance from an industry expert is a huge benefit in navigating these options."

Do You Know Who Best Represents Your Best Interests?

Whether you vet UCaaS and CCaaS technologies internally or work with an outside source, there are three ways to secure a new communications solution:

1. Work directly with one or more of the hundreds of potential vendors

2. Work with a sales agent that's part of a larger master agent network

3. Work with an unbiased communications technology partner

Pursuing a Direct Vendor Relationship

Your IT department likely receives emails and sales messages from major UCaaS and CCaaS vendors almost every day promoting their services and solutions. The vendor's goal is to start a conversation, briefly evaluate your needs, and then explain how their product is perfect for your organization.

The problem with dealing with technology vendors directly is that they're trained to highlight their strengths while minimizing their weaknesses. For instance, the vendor will be more than glad to show your team a demo of their platform in action, but the demos are most likely the exact

presentation they show everyone else too. It's not customized to your specific needs and challenges because the demo is geared towards sales.

To address all your questions in a demo requires proper consultation and knowing what to ask. But let's face it, not every sales agent is into the consulting/advisory business. It's no fault of their own, they've been trained to sell their own product, and that's what they'll do.

Did You Know CTP Provides Custom Demos Specific to your Concerns?

Your team could spend months evaluating a single platform and still not have all the appropriate questions answered, simply because they don't know what questions to ask, or the sales rep didn't mention certain aspects that will really matter long-term.

There are also additional considerations to account for such as security and privacy compliance, industry regulations, hardware configurations, SLA's, contract terms, and ongoing post-sale support. Keep that in mind as the sales rep may not be experienced or knowledgeable enough to provide a completely comprehensive, objective overview of all the moving parts that lie within your organization's internal business processes and infrastructure.

Since vendor sales reps and account managers are motivated by their own interests of closing deals and meeting quotas, you may feel pressured into a contract that may or may not fit all of your requirements.

Is it harsh to state that "it's a slippery slope" when choosing to work with vendors directly? We don't think so.

Here are some questions to ask potential vendors:

1. How does your solution solve our organizational challenges?

2. What types of service-level agreements do you offer?

3. Do you provide discounted pricing for organizations like ours?

4. How does your offering integrate with Microsoft Teams or Salesforce?

5. What is your implementation process & how long does it take?

6. Will you be provided a dedicated resource during and post the implementation?

What about working with a technology agent that represents many vendors, yet has no direct relationship themselves?

These individuals might have a fancy title like 'Senior Technology Agent' or 'Enterprise Sales Specialist' and they work as a part of a much larger 'master agent network' serving hundreds of potential vendors. If that sounds a little bit confusing, it's by choice, so you won't realize the type of relationship these agents actually have with the brands they represent.

We've written extensively on the dangers of working with a master agent network, but here's a quick rundown on how they work.

A person or business enters into a contract to represent a technology brand, and the vendors designate them a 'master agent' since the relationship is solely around bulk sales. That entity then builds out sales teams and partners with other master agents, who also have sales agents of their own, to create a massive network of brands they represent and people selling them.

The only problem is, the person you're ultimately speaking with is several steps removed from the vendor. Since they're representing so many different things at once, their overall knowledge on each solution is often minimal.

We strongly recommend checking out our online resources on this topic:

Uncovering the Hidden Dangers of Working with Master Agents
https://hubs.la/H0STbrr0

The Real Problem With Master Agents
https://hubs.la/H0ST9JJ0

The technology industry's relationship with master agent networks is notorious for offering massive short-term incentives, and it can drastically influence an agent's loyalty to a particular brand. In fact, if you look closely, you'll probably realize that these types of agents are bragging on LinkedIn or Facebook about receiving exotic sports cars or briefcases full of cash for closing numerous deals within the quarter.

These bonuses are provided at your expense- both at the sale and well into the future.

To be fair, the agent will conduct some preliminary research on your behalf. However, similar to a vendor's rep, their primary goal is to keep the sales process moving so they can move onto the next client, all the while maximizing their own profits with the greatest incentive. Your agent will also completely disappear after the sale, handing you off to the vendor for ongoing support or consultation.

Suppose any complications arise during or after the implementation. In that case, you're left at the mercy of vendors not familiar with you, your organization, or any conversations you had previously with the agent. Depending on the scenario, this can leave you in a vulnerable position where your best interests are clearly not protected.

Here are some questions to ask your agent:

1. Are you working with a master agent network?

2. What discounts are available for a company of our size?

3. What is your relationship like with the vendors you are representing?

4. Who handles the professional services aspect of the implementation?

5. Will you continue to provide support for our organization after the sale?

6. Do you have a legal team that reviews the contract before signing?

How is a Trusted Communications Partner Different that Agents or Vendors

At Converged Technology Professionals, we take the word partner seriously. It's how we view our relationships with each of our customers- it's a true partnership where your best interests are always the top priority in everything we do. Our role is to work with your leadership team to address your communications challenges through a holistic, consultative, and hands-on approach.

We also have strategic relationships with Gartner Magic Quadrant UCaaS and CCaaS leaders to provide a completely personalized buying experience. Each vendor we work with has been vetted to meet our high quality and customer service standards, and our intimate knowledge of each platform enables us to find the best options based on your specific needs.

Our team doesn't shy away from showing you each solution's strengths and weaknesses either.

We can save your team months or years vetting multiple vendors by giving you a high-level view of the exact features and benefits your organization requires. You can also count on our team to ask the difficult questions that vendors don't necessarily want to answer.

We'll do the research and project management on your behalf, for each of your specific departments, and deliver fully transparent findings.

Here are some questions to ask your communications partner:

1. Are you working with a master agent network?

2. What discounts are available for a company of our size?

3. What is your relationship like with the vendors you are representing?

4. Who handles the professional services aspect of the implementation?

5. Will you continue to provide support for our organization after the sale?

6. Do you have a legal team that reviews the contract before signing?

What Additional Value Can a True Partner Provide?

Our business structure is unique in the telecommunications industry since we fill the roles of a consultant, a broker and an IT leader with extensive professional services experience for both on-premise and cloud communications.

Converged Technology Professionals serves on the board of directors for multiple UCaaS and CCaaS Gartner Magic Quadrant leaders. We work directly with each of our vendors' executive leadership teams to ensure your voice is heard.

Every one of our vendor-customer contracts goes through a legal review to make certain your best interests are accounted for, both now and in the future. Our team also has a deep understanding of SLA's and other contracts to protect your best interests.

Additionally, we provide a highly experienced project management team to serve as a trusted point of contact throughout the customer relationship. We are always just a phone call away whenever you have questions or need additional guidance.

Brunswick Corporation

Brunswick, a leading innovator in recreational boating, fitness and sporting goods, sought to upgrade to ShoreTel at more than 200 sites in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Converged was instrumental in planning and executing the global migration to a single unified platform.

- Global deployment to 200+ sites & over 8,000 users
- Eliminated redundant systems at multiple locations
- Drastically reduced international calling costs

Milwaukee Brewers

In 2018, the Milwaukee Brewers reached out to Converged for our expertise in flexible PBX deployments. We successfully deployed a hybrid Mitel cloud system with Miller Park's existing stadium hard phones to give the Brewers optimal stability & flexibility for their MLB franchise.

- Brought in to consult on upgrading Miller Park's legacy PBX
- Integrated Mitel MiVoice Connect w/ legacy hard phones
- Excellent stability with benefits throughout the organization

Jefferson County Public Schools

JCPS is the one of the largest school districts in the nation with 167 schools and over 14,000 teachers, faculty and staff members. Converged stepped in when JCPS was looking for a Mitel change of partner in 2019 and later helped implement a hybrid PBX deployment with call center functionality.

- Took a consultative role in reviewing upgrade options
- Deployed a RingCentral Office hybrid w/ 14k Mitel lines
- Will implement call centers for community outreach

Whether you're looking to upgrade your current PBX environment, move to the cloud, explore contact center technologies or simply searching for a reliable support partner, our process is generally the same.

We start by signing an NDA and scheduling a brief conversation to learn about your brand and some of your more pressing challenges. In some instances, we might also have one of our engineers review your current technology to locate any potential problems that need to be addressed immediately. After meeting with key stakeholders, we will present our findings with you and make recommendations on potential options to achieve your goals.

From there, we will have a kickoff call to introduce our team and take a deeper look at your long-term communications goals. We can provide an industry insider's view of potential solutions for your organization, plus vet any technologies you're unsure about. Our holistic approach ensures you'll receive extensive guidance and honest opinions throughout the process.

Once we've narrowed down potential vendors, we provide detailed executive reviews and coordinate vendor demonstrations based on the features and functionality relevant to your business goals. Our team works with key decision-makers throughout your company to ensure everyone's voice is heard and every expectation is met- whether you're a growing organization or a massive enterprise.
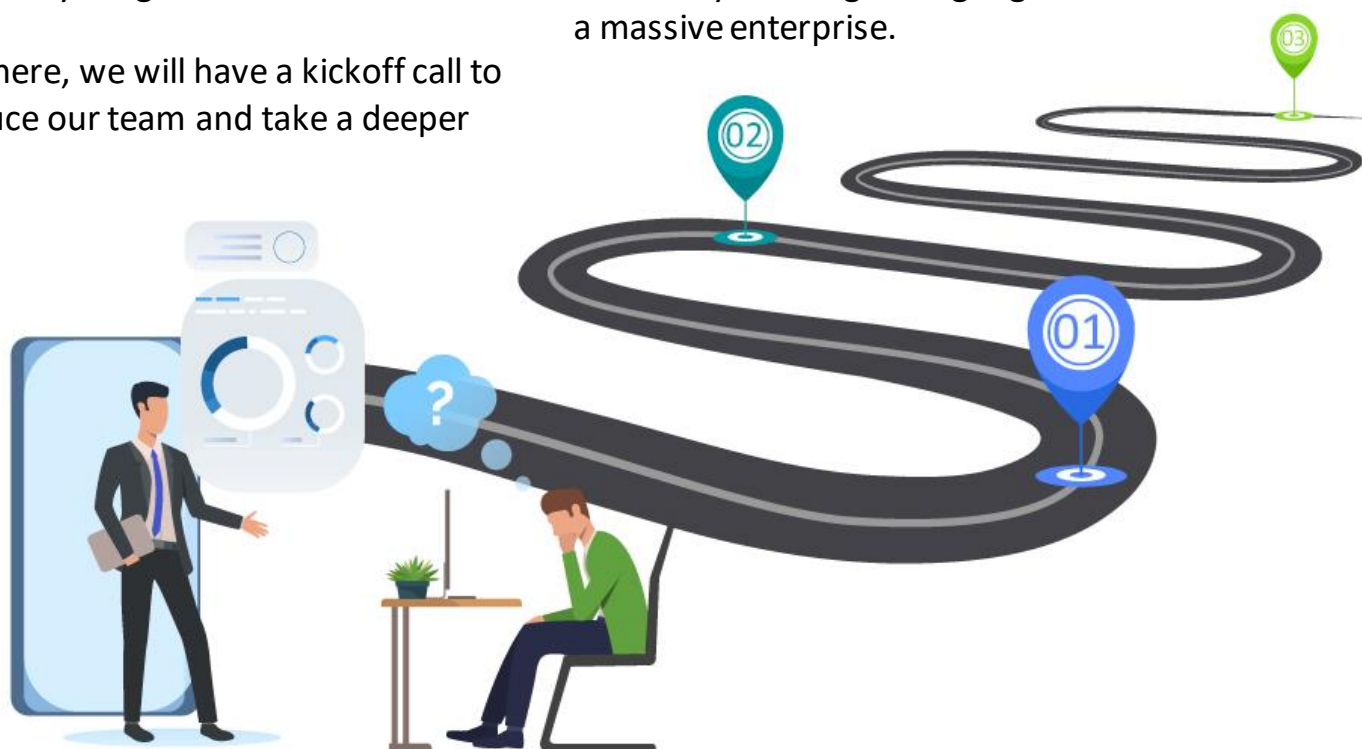
What's the Real Value in a Trusted Technology Partner?

The value of partnering with Converged Technology Professionals can be summarized in four simple words - **complete peace of mind.**

We never stop working on your behalf because that's simply what a true partner does. Even after you purchase a new PBX platform, our team will continue to support your communications efforts from both an IT and an advisement perspective, keeping your stakeholders happy and finding new ways to make your team members more productive. We will stand by your side 24/7/365 because we are fully invested in our partner relationships.

To learn more about Converged Technology Professionals, please reach out to your Senior Account Executive today to start a conversation. We genuinely look forward to getting to know you and learning about your communications challenges.

voipswami.com

info@voipswami.com

877.328.7767