ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Michels is a Principal Analyst at TalkingPointz. His unique perspective on unified communications comes from a career involving telecommunications...

Dave Michels | *September 20, 2017* | 🗨 **Make a Comment**

Looking Beyond UC Apps for Transformation

Communications automation can help companies digitize efficiently and realize gains in responsiveness, time, and agility.

Nearly every major UC vendor now touts digital transformation as a product benefit. It's a reasonable claim, as software-based solutions that improve communications and collaboration are key components of a transformative digital strategy. But, a UC application alone is not enough.

UC and contact center solutions, even the latest and greatest of them, can be an IT albatross of complexity. Relative to what's required for other IT systems, UC and contact center administration is often overly complex and manually intensive.

After implementing a state-of-the-art UC or contact center solution, enterprises should look to third-party automation tools to unlock its potential. Automation solutions from companies such as **Starfish Associates**, **Kurmi Software**, and **Voss** can improve an IT organization's responsiveness and agility as well as extend system capabilities.

Digital transformation is not something you just do once and complete. It's much more of a journey than a destination. It involves integrating new technologies into existing workflows, and then updating or even radically changing those workflows in order to better leverage the capabilities of those new technologies. Since workflows and technologies are continuously changing, digital transformation should be viewed as an iterative process.

Possibly because communications systems evolved from stand-alone solutions, they still use relatively isolated administrative processes. Third-party automation tools integrate communications with other business systems. In this world, when someone in HR triggers the hiring process, a phone extension is automatically provisioned. This is just a starting point.

Things get really interesting when these third-party tools expand the capabilities in ways that an individual vendor cannot. **Robert Hankin**, Starfish co-founder and partner, shared with me how one of its customers integrated with ServiceNow to resolve and close common service requests automatically on UC platforms from three different vendors.

The Starfish platform allows for deep integration into the customer's existing business processes and applications, Hankin explained. For this customer, the tight integration coupled with an automated migration element resulted in the automation of more than 3,200 manual transactions each and every month. Transactions that averaged three to five days were reduced to near real-time resolution. The ROI for these types of engagements is usually around six to eight months, he noted.

An added bonus of UC and contact center automation is consistent practices. Too often enterprises get bogged down by inconsistent policies and practices, and inconsistencies create speed bumps on the digital transformation journey. Consistent practices reduce the need for manual exception processing.

UC and contact center automation tools fill the gaps in vendor solutions. Some basic administrative screens can provide a layer of abstraction that simplifies administrator training requirements. This is particularly useful when migrating from one UC system to another, running a mixed environment, or when moving a user to a new system. Without third-party administrative solutions, IT staff would require administrative rights and know-how on each of the impacted systems.
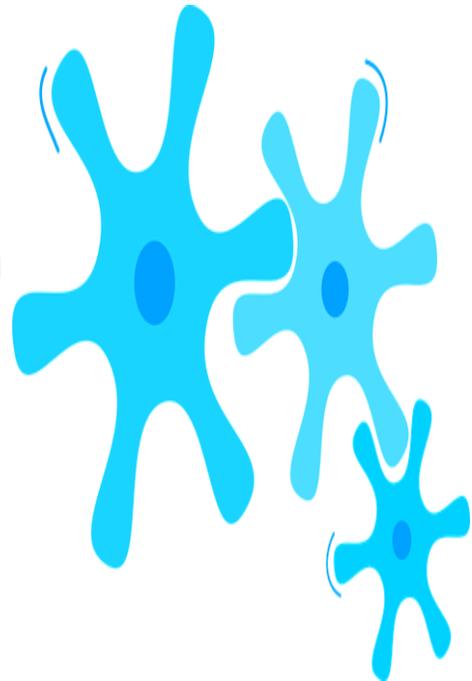
When evaluating any of the several vendors in this space, enterprises should:

- Make sure the automation tool works with the installed UC solution, obviously, but also consider integrations with potential UC applications and/or contact center solutions
- Consider integrations with key enterprise systems, including IT service management systems and directory systems (such as Active Directory), as well as CRM
- Examine the platform's development tools, as automation solutions will certainly require some customization
- Check customer references; these tools are used in medium-to-large enterprises, so customer lists should have some familiar names

Digital transformation is an ongoing process. Powerful, software-based applications are just the starting point. The competitive advantage, the transformation part, comes from the tools and processes that surround the applications. Communications automation can help companies digitize efficiently and realize gains in responsiveness, time, and agility.

*Dave Michels is a contributing editor and analyst at **[TalkingPointz](#)**.*

Follow Dave Michels on Twitter!

[@DaveMichels](#)