VCG Knowledge

Rethink your
Unified Communications
and Collaboration strategy

How to make Microsoft and Cisco work for you

What does your business need?

As organisations move up the communications value chain, from traditional and IP based telephony to more advanced Unified Communications and Collaboration (UC&C) systems, there are some essential business requirements they need to consider, including;

- What are the essential operational needs that a technology roadmap must support, both now and into the future?

- What functional requirements does the UC&C fulfil and how can calling and collaboration merge seamlessly?

- Should we continue to use both Cisco and Microsoft UC&C services or select a single platform?

- What guidance and support should a Managed Services partner provide?

Our technical know-how in both Cisco and Microsoft solutions reassures IT leaders that business and technology challenges can be simple. We help businesses optimise communication and collaboration services throughout the digital transformation journey and re-shape customer experience across their entire organisation.

With a sunset date of 2025 for traditional PSTN and ISDN services, organisations should be making plans now to ensure they are fully prepared for the big switch off.

To find out more about what this means, click to read our 'Switch Off E-guide'

Can Microsoft and Cisco UC&C work together?

It's common for many organisations to successfully blend UC&C services from both Cisco and Microsoft, particularly when one considers the origins of their businesses. Many organisations want to keep unified communications workloads separate from other business systems, whilst others prefer to run everything through a single application and vendor platform.

Securely blending UC&C services with datacentre, private and public cloud options is commonplace in our 'Hybrid' world, and we help organisations deploy the most appropriate and preferred systems for their operations, whether that's solely or predominantly based on Microsoft or Cisco – including and integrated blend of two, utilising the best of both worlds.

Migrating your telephony services

Organisations can confidently migrate all voice services to Cisco Webex or Microsoft Teams in the knowledge that advanced functionality, support, and security are all taken care of.

Consideration needs to be given to the type of services required, office locations, and any existing commercial arrangements with existing telephony providers.

With the pending traditional telephony services switch-off in 2025, we are helping organisations plan and build collaboration infrastructures that replicate and enhance established levels of voice functionality.

Five essentials you need to consider

Understanding your current services

As internal services evolve not everything has always been detailed or documented and people may have moved on, it's often difficult to fully understand the existing set-up. Legacy systems may exist and still be used - analogue fax, analogue to IP adaptors, DECT or Tannoys. We help you define your baseline through auditing and discovery services, to then shape your exact UC requirements and build them into a project plan.

Timing is everything

By understanding and clarifying your current hardware and software systems and maintenance contracts, we can help you plan and manage existing and new commercial arrangements, migrations, and contract terminations in line with new requirements.

Define workforce user personas

In the new world of hybrid working, it's important to understand the types of services required by certain job types, and how they differ across the organisation. Understanding roles, locations, workstyles and operational needsfor functionality, equipment and system access drives employee productivity. It also helps with licensing requirements and imperative tasks.

Bandwidth

Any new infrastructure services demand a review of bandwidth and connectivity requirements, whether on-premise, cloud-based or a blend of both. This ensures investment gives a consistently excellent experience through the right network, connectivity, bandwidth and quality of service. We help customers enhance voice quality by lowering latency and packet loss - and addressing other points of potential failure.

Reception and the Attendant Console

This is an often-overlooked area, and one of the most important elements of your organisation's customer service. Where necessary, we build into our project plans detailed user training if the systems are likely to present employees with a different initial experience.

Our training and workshops extend to the reception and facilities teams, with demonstrations and 'go live' support to ensure everyone embraces and adopts the change.

Limitless options, unlimited possibilities

We can help you build the best setup for outstanding customer care
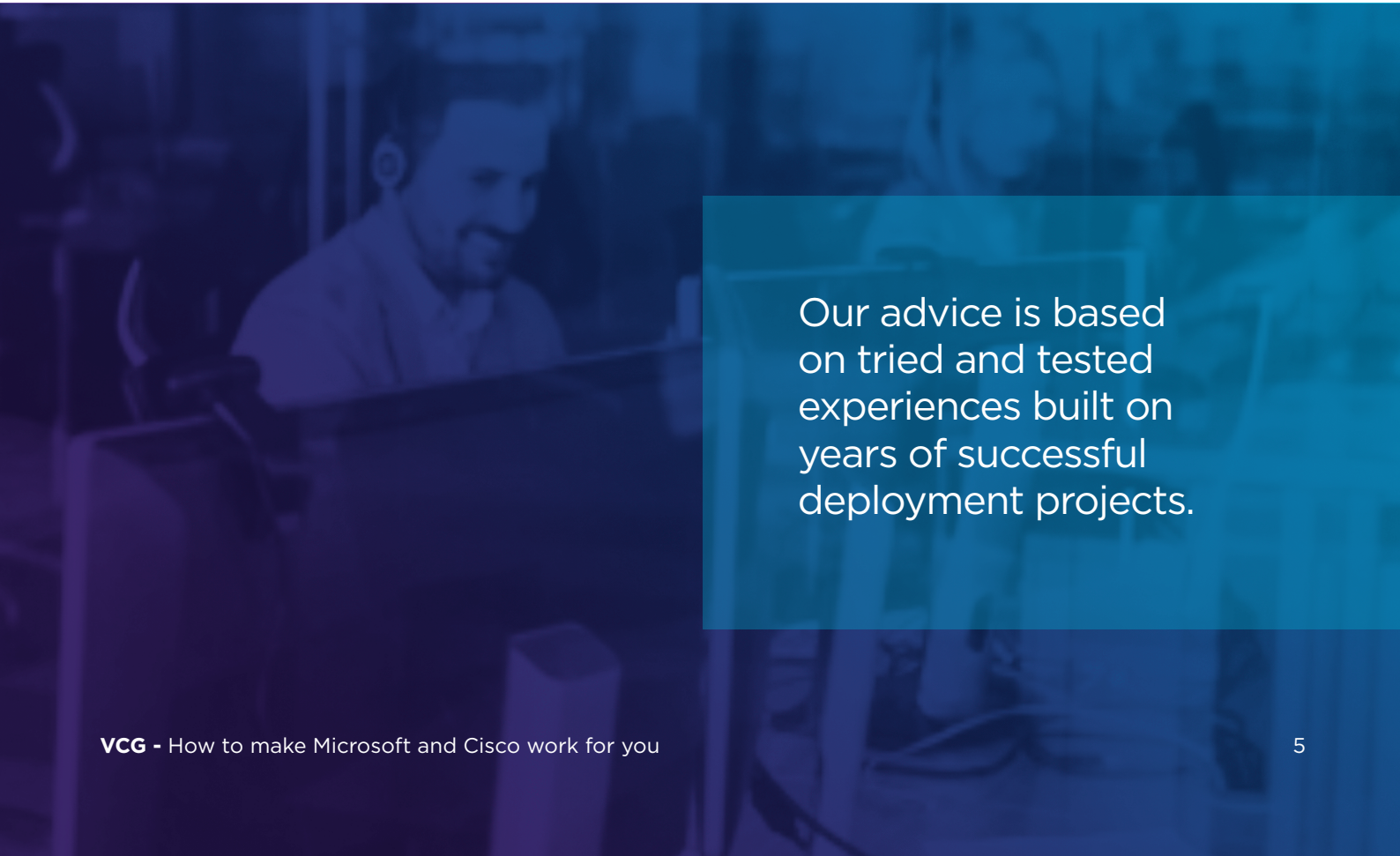
Contact centres

Microsoft Teams provides a level of in-built customer care options including Auto Attendant and Hunt Groups.

For organisations requiring fully featured contact centres with the latest omni-channel integration, VCG works with an eco-system of certified cloud contact centre partners specifically designed to work with Microsoft's UC&C solutions. In common with the Cisco propositions for contact centre, we have agreed, certified partnerships with the leading global players.

Voice and video endpoints

All organisations and workplaces are different and collaborative requirement, from simple voice services right through to immersive video experiences vary enormously. Having the right phones, softphones, headsets and video devices, rooms to suit individuals or meetings at home or office is an art in itself.

Understanding native and third-party devices for Teams interoperability for voice and video experiences is vital. There are many options to choose from and it's very much a 'horses for courses' situation based on need, use cases and budget.

Our advice is based on tried and tested experiences built on years of successful deployment projects.

Licensing

Maximising your investment in Microsoft Licensing is a challenging area, and we can help steering companies through this complex and intricate world to optimise investment in Microsoft. Ensuring you have sufficient phone system resources, user accounts, and virtual user licenses from the start ensures you take advantage of all the features you require. There is no need to over-provision licensing for services that are not required, and blending of licenses with add-on options will ensure maximum value from your investment.

Analogue Device Integration

For many organisations fax, franking machines,third-party DECT systems and other so called legacy services are still used, and they can be easily integrated into a UC&C deployment. Additionally, we can help customers enhance many of these traditional services with new cloud-based alternatives.

If you'd like to know more about optimising licensing, click here to read our Optimising your Microsoft Services Eguide

Last, but not least

Support from a good Managed Services partner

Understanding infrastructure and system options along with ways to lower operating costs and improve functionality and resilience are fundamental services that your Managed Services partner should be providing.

VCG has an established heritage in providing telephony and UC&C solutions to customers of all sizes.

We have our own carrier grade, resilient and geographically independent direct call routing solution that allows us to provide low-touch, fully managed services, and least costs routing options with competitive call rates and automated reporting.

Additional VCG services include:

- Network and infrastructure VoIP with SIP trunking support, direct routing and Session Border Control (SBC) to interconnect and operate between providers nationally and internationally.

- Calling plan and direct dial contact options with the option to maintain existing contracts and direct dial number ranges with service providers.

- Interoperability solutions with both on-premise PBXs and cloud-based call handling options.

- Existing number porting and new number provisioning.

- Integration of essential analogue devices and services.

Are you ready?

We'll help you define exactly what you need regardless of what collaboration platform you are using or moving to, and we'll advise on the smartest way to run your licensing arrangements to ensure best value.

Hybrid working is here to stay. Balancing the needs of workforce efficiency with dynamic services and applications backed by robust security measures across the widening attack vector is a business essential.

VCG is a solutions and managed services provider helping organisations design, implement, and run IT Services infrastructures across UC&C, networking, connectivity, cloud, datacentre, and cyber-security.

For more information

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