

Unified Communications

In September, Global Knowledge ran a Unified Communications (UC) Briefing at Microsoft's Thames Valley Park for over 40 of our major clients from the IT and Telecommunications sector.

The event was hosted by Tony King, Global Knowledge's Product Manager for Microsoft in the UK, who made the opening introduction and welcomed our guest speakers who were Anna Britnor Guest, Director of Training Services from Unified Communications specialists 5i and Mark Deakin, Unified Communications Manager for Microsoft UK.

Anna's presentation focused on the "Paradigm Shift in Communications" in terms of how technology will be bought, used and measured in the future. We invited Anna to tell us more about the paradigm shift brought about by the changes in the unified communications arena. (See page 11).

Mark Deakin looked in more detail on how Microsoft Office Communications Server can be used within an organisation. For example with Office Communicator you can get an immediate, visual representation of their "presence" which makes it easy to reach the person you need. By simply looking at a contact name, you can see whether a person is available, in a meeting, or out of the office and determine the best way to communicate with them. If a contact you need is not available, you can tag them to receive notification when their status changes.

He gave live demonstrations of how Office Communicator works and linked up to a colleague who was carrying out a similar presentation to an audience in the Guernsey. He also carried out a video conference call between both of them and another colleague who was working from home.

Mark gave practical demonstrations of other products such as RoundTable using members of the audience to show how RoundTable provides a 360-degree view of the conference room using wideband audio and video that tracks the flow of conversation between multiple speakers.

Out of the 40 delegates, they all rated the seminar either "good" or "excellent". Global Knowledge also ran successful Windows Server 2008 and Forefront seminars earlier in the year at Thames Valley Park and from our Wakefield office. We will continue to run more events on the latest Microsoft technology topics such as virtualisation and Windows Server 2008 from our locations across the UK and Ireland.



Breakfast before the briefing.



A cup of tea and some time to mingle.



Mark Deakin
Unified Communications Manager, Microsoft UK

He is responsible for marketing and awareness of Microsoft's Unified Communications.

Mark has worked for Microsoft for 6 years and has been involved in the industry from the early days of Exchange IM to the full featured Office Communication Server 2007 we see today.

He is also a regular speaker at channel events and IT conferences around the world.

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The Paradigm Shift

in Communications

By Anna Guest, Director of Training Services, 5i

It's widely accepted that the benefits of unified communications are reduced costs, productivity gains and business transformation. It's about developing an integrated and seamless 'real-time' supply chain in which the appropriate knowledge workers are contactable and empowered and in which all information and communications are integrated. If we accept this premise, then we have to recognise that this leads to a fundamental paradigm shift in terms of how technology will be bought, used and measured in the future.

The paradigm shift is not simply a technology matter but comprises:

- Technology paradigm shift
- Buying paradigm shift
- Selling paradigm shift
- Working practices paradigm shift

Technology managers have had the last decade or so to get used to increased pressure to deliver business and financial cases to justify spend, but unified communications elevates this to the next level. Technology and business managers will have to learn to work more closely together to align technology directly to business goals and unleash the potential that unified communications offers. This is no small task as the improvements offered by UC may require process review, financial remodelling and organisational culture change.

For those selling unified communications, the opportunity is to support customers to identify the potential for unified communications within the business and to develop a clear, simple roadmap, reflective of the customer's goals and culture, to achieve this potential. Applications lead the way, and it is the integration and interoperability between these communications and back office applications which will deliver business improvement and transformation for the customer.

In 'Extreme Competition: Innovation and the great 21st century business reformation', Peter Fingar highlights that the 'new breed of 21st century business competitor has fused its business operations and technology...this new breed of company uses [technology] as the digital nervous system to make deep structural changes in their core business processes'. This is the basis for managing the complete value-delivery system.

For both end-users and resellers alike, the game has changed. Companies looking to deploy unified communications need to understand both the technology components and how to derive business benefit from such an implementation whilst salespeople need to step above the product to explore and articulate how unified communications can help their customers compete and thrive in their market.



Introduction by Tony King, Global Knowledge's Microsoft Product Manager.



Delegates participating in the presentation.



From Left: Mark Deakin, Anna Guest & Tony King

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