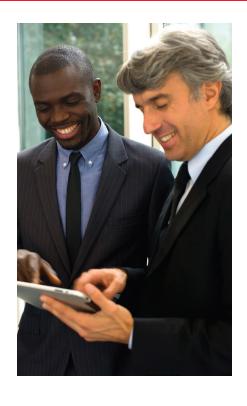# Seven communications trends for 2013

Communications advances are touching every individual and every industry. Healthcare providers are connecting with patients in innovative ways to improve care and outcomes. Remote banking is making it easier to conduct transactions and advise clients. Government agencies are reducing costs and enhancing citizen services. Distance learning is carrying educational opportunities to every corner of the country, and the world.

Each year brings breakthroughs in how people and organizations connect. So what's in store in 2013? For the fourth consecutive year, Avaya has turned to some of its leading thinkers for their views on what may happen in the months ahead. The half-dozen bright minds who have weighed in see some major themes continuing to evolve, as well as building momentum behind emerging developments. We believe their insights into Seven Communications Trends for 2013 can provide helpful, interesting context for communications planning by business and technology leaders across industries. And we encourage you to let us know what you think of their prognosticating efforts.

#1: Simplified complexity drives the agenda. Business leaders have widely welcomed the transition from proprietary to open systems as an avenue to reduced costs, streamlined technology environments and exciting new communications capabilities. But simplification hasn't been such a simple matter for IT departments, which have the job of integrating advanced applications into existing systems. Their task becomes even harder as devices and access points proliferate and video usage expands across the enterprise. To help overcome these challenges, businesses will increasingly seek solutions that are pre-integrated — set up to run in the cloud and other hosted settings — as well as evaluate which existing systems are candidates for such deployment. Many organizations have complex infrastructures that include telephony, voice mail, contact center, workforce management and other systems that cannot be abruptly changed. Therefore, it will be important to conduct an inventory of assets to understand their utilization and cost profiles and determine which can be "de-linked" from the infrastructure and migrated to a hosted environment.

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#2: Video changes business and customer expectations. Video is everywhere, from conference rooms to desktops to smartphones. And with each generation of users more exposed to and comfortable with video than the previous one, it is destined to be increasingly integral to daily life. This transition is presenting huge opportunities for businesses to interact with customers, partners and employees in rich new ways. It also presents challenges for the people who design solutions and the IT organizations that implement and support them. They will need to assess and define their needs, then address an array of technological and policy considerations in delivering video solutions to both customers and employees. What technologies should be used behind the scenes? What quality of service will be guaranteed for which parties? What will be transmitted in high definition? How much bandwidth will be required to accommodate a large conference with hundreds of people in it? What will it take to serve two rooms talking to each other and a dozen people connecting to those rooms via their tablets and smartphones from other locations? Answering such questions upfront will potentially affect the operational and financial impacts of selected video solutions.

#3: Real-time analytics help fine-tune the customer experience. Even companies with relatively small contact centers can generate millions of events a day, while larger centers can generate billions. Businesses are increasing their investments to tap into this big data. Speech analytics technologies enable data mining of customer conversations in real time or near-real time to understand trends and determine the effectiveness of customer service teams and marketing campaigns. Social media is allowing businesses to observe real-time shifts in sentiment toward them and their competitors as consumers read and respond to posts and commentary. Ultimately, businesses will be able to use this information to manage, monitor and measure the customer experience across all media, creating a holistic picture of interactions that can help them fine-tune campaigns, boost their net promoter score and deliver more effectively on their brand promise to customers.

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#4: Businesses face the private-or-public cloud decision. Cloud computing adoption continues to grow among companies seeking reduced upfront costs, greater flexibility and scalability in applications and infrastructure, and lower support costs. A key question such organizations will consider as they evaluate the potential of the cloud is what type of cloud offering best meets their needs — a public cloud, where they share resources with other enterprises; a private cloud solution, which resides within the corporate firewall; or a virtual private cloud, which is a dedicated portion of a public cloud. A public cloud is typically the lowest-cost option. However, because it is shared with multiple organizations, there is limited ability to customize a public cloud to a business's specific needs and questions of security and privacy. Conversely, a private cloud is more expensive, but also more secure, private and customizable, thus offering greater flexibility. In general, small and mid-sized organizations will likely gravitate to public clouds, while large enterprises will capitalize on the flexibility and features of private and virtual private solutions.

#5: Communications support goes proactive. Businesses that invest in communications solutions and underlying support services are more interested in avoiding problems than having them solved. Yet for a variety of reasons, reactive problem solving has been the industry's support model over time — until now. Encouragingly, the tools to deliver proactive, problem-preventing support are available and robust today. Capitalizing on them will require a shift in mindset by both service providers and their clients. Service providers will work harder to understand clients' environments and engage with them and service-delivery partners to improve performance and reliability. Clients will overcome security concerns and open up their environments to provide vendors with real-time access. As machine-to-machine communications increasingly replace human interactions to maintain uptime and resolve problems, businesses will evaluate the nature of their in-house IT support organizations and explore ways to reduce unnecessary activities and costs.

#6: Managed services hit an inflection point. Business conditions are changing at a breathtaking pace in many industries and, consequently, so are the require-ments on organizations' communications infrastructures. In the same way they are turning to the cloud for flexibility and cost savings, businesses increasingly will forego the expense of in-house IT staff for support purposes, instead turning to managed services providers for those capabilities. In this way, businesses will be able to quickly and cost-effectively add and contract communications

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support resources while redeploying their internal support personnel to other value-added IT activities. This move also allows business leaders to focus their attention on the strategic needs, decisions and directions associated with their communications infrastructure rather than the operational requirements of running it.

#7: Mobile muscles in. Not that long ago the ability to forward a call from someone's corporate phone line to a mobile phone was considered a major breakthrough. That capability may be old hat today, but it hasn't solved the problem of phone tag between people. Calls still end up in voice mail. The next productivity boost will come through the integration of unified communications capabilities with mobility to enhance employee collaboration and customer support in new and innovative ways. The use of cloud services will help address the complexity of such a transition, including leveraging the corporate directory and employing "contextual awareness" technologies.

A year from now, will simplification, video, the cloud and mobile solutions still be top of mind? Or will there be fresh buzz around new topics, some of which we can't even imagine today? The answer: probably a bit of both. In the meantime, 2013 is certain to validate some of what we think we know, and remind us we still have much to learn.

The trend spotters

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About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, networking and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information, contact your Avaya Account Manager or Authorized Partner or visit us at **www.avaya.com**.

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