The True Cost of Ownership of Unified Communications
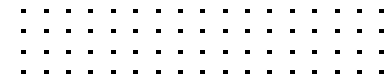
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Executive Summary

Communication between a business and its customers is crucial, and digital innovation today is rapidly changing the ways we communicate. According to IDC, the global unified communications and collaboration (UC&C) market grew 29.4% year over year in 2020.[1] So as IT infrastructures evolve with our changing environment, organizations are finding that legacy voice and phone systems are not only too complex and costly to maintain, but they operate in silos, which causes security issues, among other things. And these systems cannot scale or keep up with shifting employee needs. One recent report shows that 73% of companies will have distributed teams by 2028[2]—making it imperative that organizations implement integrated, secure communications systems to support their remote workforce.
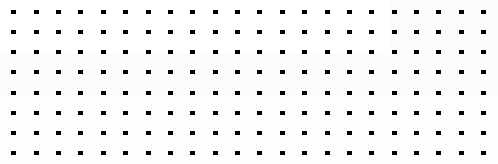
A reliable and quality unified communications (UC) solution can help businesses with more efficient operations, to deliver better customer services, and be more competitive in the market. And today's workers need to be able to communicate how they want, when they want, and wherever they are, simply and easily. There are numerous phone systems available in the market today that provide UC in different deployment options, such as on-site, cloud, or a hybrid model. So when choosing among the many alternatives in a purchasing decision, buyers need to look at the short-term price but also consider the long-term costs of a UC&C solution, which is its total cost of ownership (TCO).

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of companies will have distributed teams by 2028[3]—making it imperative that organizations implement integrated, secure communications systems to support their remote workforce.

As part of the Fortinet security ecosystem, FortiVoice delivers reliable and secure office communications at an affordable price, with all-inclusive features to enable organizations to optimize the value of their investments. Fortinet offers flexible deployment options to meet each organization's unique business needs—on-premises, virtualization, or in the cloud—in a UC platform. Combining with quality FortiFone IP phones and mobile-ready softclients, FortiVoice helps employees stay productive and collaborate regardless of their locations.

Secure communications

Advanced security features safeguard conversations and prevent call interception, unauthorized access, or hacks

Simplified management

Reduce operating overhead and cost with centralized management, configuration, and management across all locations

Better value

All-inclusive voice and conferencing features for everyone without additional hardware or licenses

Enterprise-grade features

Integrated HD voice, conferencing, and fax platform for easy communications and business efficiency

Business continuity

Dual network connections and local survivability support always-on connectivity and automatic system failover

Comprehensive system monitoring

Real-time dashboard and reporting provide a quick glance of system performance, network traffic, call logs, and statistics

Why Unified Communications

Traditional phone systems lack the capabilities and flexibility to support modern communications and trends of increasing teleworkers. According to a 2021 survey from McKinsey & Company, 63% of employees want to work either fully remote or in a hybrid mode,[4] which almost doubles the number before the pandemic. Many organizations are looking for an integrated solution that can support these new changes while ensuring employees stay secure and productive when working remotely.

A reliable UC solution simplifies business communications with integrated voice, conferencing, and more. A unified platform also provides:

- A single vendor for simplified management and broader visibility
- Secure and reliable communications and collaboration across branch offices, distributed teams, and remote employees
- Enhanced user experience and employee productivity
- Quality, flexibility, and reliability for seamless business continuity

Key Considerations When Evaluating a UC System

When considering a UC system, many organizations often focus heavily on the upfront costs of purchasing an IP telephone system. However, the ongoing operating costs can really add up over time, including service subscriptions, maintenance and updates, solution management, and system downtime—not to mention the staff to keep the system up and running.

When choosing a new UC solution, there are several areas to consider:

Requirements and features

A communications system is a critical investment for organizations seeking productivity and innovation. Every organization has its own requirements for UC features: number of users or subscriptions, mobility and softclient needs, conferencing requirements, bandwidth and reliability issues, and more. Once the requirements have been established, organizations should look for a vendor that can provide all of the features they need in a UC system, instead of choosing a different vendor for each function or feature.

Cost

When looking for a new phone system, there are many ongoing or hidden costs to consider beyond just a phone system's initial price. Also, some vendors offer low-priced basic models with add-ons for additional features. It is important to lay out a long-term cost analysis to have a better picture for TCO.

Flexibility

Every organization is unique. A one-size-fits-all solution might not work for every organization. It is important to have the flexibility to customize a UC system that fits business needs now and can scale with the company.

Security

Attacks against UC are some of the fastest-growing and misunderstood threats organizations face today. As more organizations fortify their digital transformation journey with IP voice, conferencing, and chat services to support their global workforces, they need to be aware of the expanding attack surface that it creates. More users amount to more endpoints as remote workers bring their own devices and grow the Internet of Things (IoT). Every touchpoint and app needs to be secured, regardless of where it resides.

Simplicity

An IT team plays a crucial role in any organization for business continuity. However, many organizations have constrained IT resources and budgets. Managing multiple systems across branches and users can be overwhelming, but a unified solution provides simplified management with centralized visibility to help offload IT's heavy workload and improve overall efficiency.

BYOD and mobility support

In this new age of ubiquitous teleworking, the plethora of IoT and bring-your-own-device (BYOD) workforce applications and devices have exploded and created many new network edges, which has consequently grown the attack surface. Research shows that an estimated 70% of the workforce will be working remotely at least five days a month by 2025.[5] Organizations need a UC solution that supports this remote workforce, with mobile clients and softclients for the work-from-anywhere world.

Measuring Total Cost of Ownership

TCO is the combination of initial investment, operating expenses, maintenance costs, and downtime costs. It provides an estimate of all of the direct and indirect costs involved in acquiring and operating a product or system over its lifetime. FortiVoice drives efficient, cost-effective collaboration with on-premises, private, and public cloud options. With all-inclusive calling features, centralized control for simplified management, and flexible deployment options, FortiVoice can lower TCO by streamlining resources and ease of management without the need for third-party vendors or additional solutions.

Initial investment

The initial investment is the number that appears on the price tag. The least-expensive option is not always the best option, as the ongoing operating expenses could quickly become cost prohibitive after what might seem like an affordable initial investment.

Operating expenses

The costs of ongoing subscription services, installation and testing the system, and training employees are all considered operating expenses. Organizations are often surprised to find additional costs on their subscription services based on usage or features add-ons. An inclusive system provides transparent pricing and allows for simplified management by an admin or IT team instead of an outside vendor.

Maintenance costs

Once the system is installed and up and running, who will keep it humming with regular repairs and updates? Maintenance costs can easily get out of control if a phone system is difficult to use or inflexible to manage. Moreover, the maintenance expenses soar when an organization needs to rely on a third-party vendor's expertise to support their internal UC system.

Downtime costs

When a UC system goes down, it costs the organization time and money. Downtime involves the labor costs of the team or vendor hired to resolve the issue, the lost cost of employees whose work is delayed, indirect labor costs from lost production, and even the loss of customers from the inability to meet their expectations.
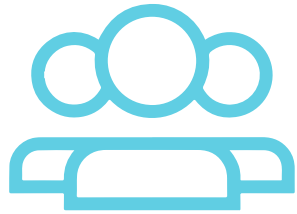
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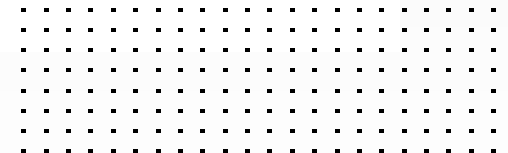
Better TCO From FortiVoice Unified Communications

Replacing an unreliable legacy phone system with an all-inclusive UC solution, like FortiVoice, gives organizations not only the fundamental communications they need but also the security and flexibility to tailor for their unique business needs.

The FortiVoice secure UC system, along with FortiFone IP phones, delivers the ultimate solution for organizations to do more for lower TCO:

- **Better value with an affordable system** that includes integrated voice, conferencing, chat, and fax features for every user, without additional hardware or ongoing subscriptions

- **Secure communications** with the latest security and encryption safeguards organizations to prevent downtime, protect conversations, and block unauthorized access

- **Simplified management** to reduce operating expenses with centralized deployment, configuration, and management across all locations, devices, and users

- **Optimal employee communication efficiency** with enterprise-grade quality of service (QoS) and HD sound

- **Always-on connectivity** for business continuity, with dual network connection and local survivability support

- **Trusted vendor** for security and communications needs

Fortinet is a recognized security leader by Gartner and many other industry analysts. FortiVoice is part of the Fortinet security ecosystem and works seamlessly with FortiGate and SD-WAN. IT can reduce integration complexity and eliminate vendor sprawl, while ensuring better protection and communication for all users and offices.

Fortinet delivers better TCO than the competition. Following are examples of five-year TCO comparisons between Fortinet and other UC vendors in different numbers of users.
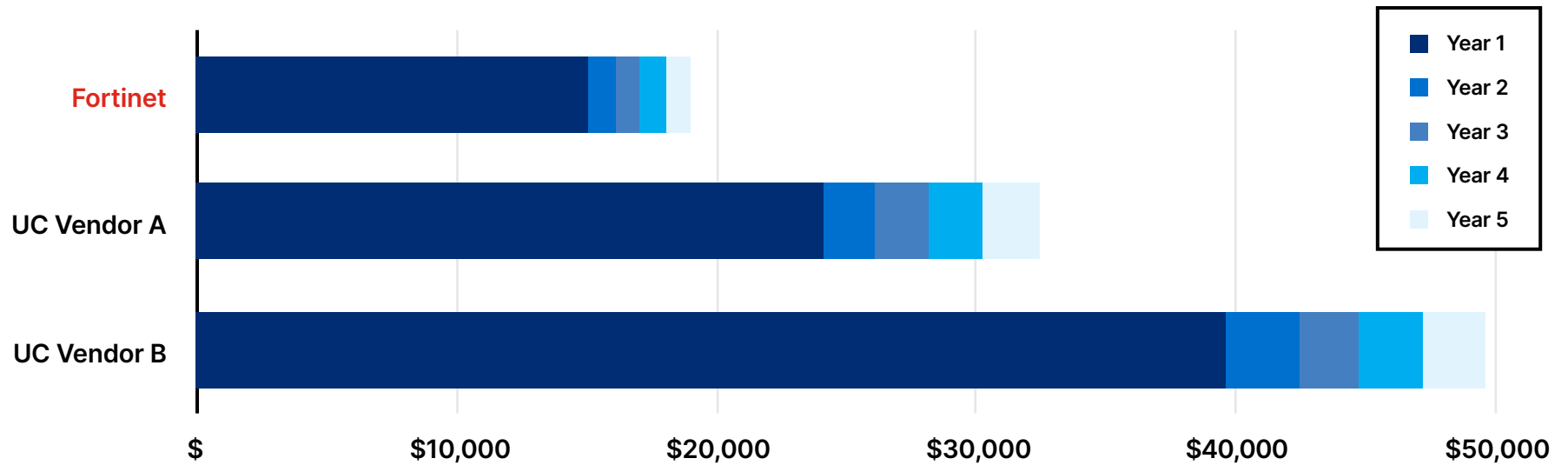
TCO Comparison: 100 Users

Figure 1: TCO comparison for 100 users, including hardware, phones, and maintenance and upgrade cost.

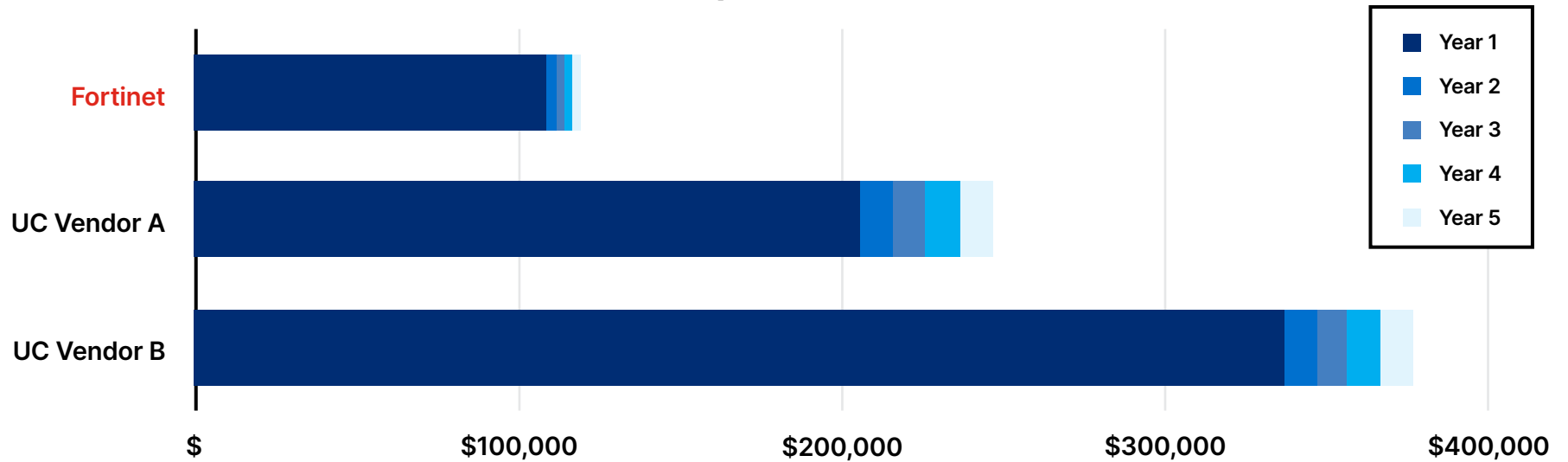## TCO Comparison: 500 Users

Figure 2: TCO comparison for 500 users, including hardware, phones, and maintenance and upgrade cost.

Conclusion

Today's business world is always connected and constantly communicating. Quality communications do not have to be cost prohibitive. A smart UC solution includes calling, chat, fax, conferencing, and mobile support in an integrated platform, so companies spend less and get more.

[1] "Worldwide Unified Communications & Collaboration (UC&C) Market Soars in 2020, According to IDC," IDC, March 29, 2021.

[2] "Third Annual 'Future Workforce Report' Sheds Light on How Younger Generations are Reshaping the Future of Work," Upwork, March 5, 2019.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Aaron De Smet, et al., "It's time for leaders to get real about hybrid," McKinsey Reimagine Work: Employee Survey, July 9, 2021.

[5] Caroline Castrillon, "This Is the Future Of Remote Work In 2021," Forbes, December 27, 2020.

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