



PRESS RELEASE

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Communications gets an agility facelift

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Businesses require an agile and visible workforce regardless of location. They also need to deliver a full range of communication tools to their users wherever they are and at times chosen by the user.

This is according to Tom Perry, director of marketing for ShoreTel, EMEA, who will be speaking at ITWeb's Unified Communications Conference on 15 March at The Forum in Bryanston. He says unified communications (UC) is the enabler of this.

"UC entails the bringing together of many disparate communication formats into one easy to use and easy to manage system, utilising a single interface for all your communications."

UC, Perry says, should be available to any size of business and not be cost-prohibitive at the smaller end.

"Vendors and their partners should deliver enterprise class functionality to any size of business and should be creative in financing and support models to enable this to happen."

Also, he notes, SMEs should invest in systems that will grow with them and are easily scalable as the SME expands across multiple locations and adds more users.

South African businesses are more aware of the benefits of UC, Perry states, adding that there is still some misconception around voice-over-Internet protocol and that the main benefit is cost saving on phone call or basic least cost routing.

"The bottom line is that you do not need UC to derive [least cost routing] benefits," adds Bennie Langenhoven, managing executive of Tellumat Communication Solutions, the local distributor of ShoreTel.

However, he maintains, business is starting to understand the benefits and is also starting to make decisions based on total cost of ownership rather than up-front cost."

The costs associated with upgrading to UC and usually around upgrading the network, installing new hardware and software to allow the end users access to applications that enable UC, Perry notes.

"Any UC project should be accompanied by a full total cost of ownership case and the costs should be viewed over the lifetime of the system and include all service elements."

Perry laments that far too often, end-users examine just the initial capital outlay of a system that usually accounts for around only 25% to 30% of the total cost.

One of the main pitfalls for end-users is to avoid buying an enterprise class UC system that has just been reduced in functionality to fit a certain price point, Perry warns.

"Ideally, you should be looking to install a best of breed solution that is specified for your exact size of business and one that will grow or shrink with you as businesses grow or contract. It should also have the ability to be re-deployed around your network at little or no cost."