

The Need for Team

Executive Summary

Long-term competitive advantage and business success are no longer based simply on great products or services. Rather, companies win when they have the ability to respond effectively and correctly to customers' needs and changing demands. To do so, organizations must harness the collective knowledge of everyone across the modern, extended enterprise, including internal employees, remote workers, partners, suppliers, and even customers. Workstream Messaging is a new Unified Communications (UC) offering that can solve these challenges.

The need to collaborate better has been one of the drivers of UC over the past 10 years. UC enables individuals to communicate and collaborate across different locations and devices. However, UC has focused largely on individual-centric tools – yet collaboration is all about teams.



Email and telephony are designed for people – that is, individuals. People can be put into groups, but teams are different. Teams consist of two or more people, and those individuals can be on multiple teams, or come and go from teams. Despite our intuitive understanding of teams, no one has effectively addressed their unique requirements in the workplace.

For example, teams commonly comprise people from different companies – but the instant messaging application within a UC suite is generally limited to internal participants. Video conferencing tools usually support guest access, but only at designated meeting times – a guest can't come back ad hoc to contribute. The lack of effective tools for collaboration causes either ineffective and slow collaboration or scattered adoption of consumer applications. In turn, these challenges raise concerns about data privacy, control and compliance. These are nontrivial problems in an era of digital business.

Workstream Messaging solutions offer a promising new approach to effective enterprise collaboration. These services promote ongoing dialogue by providing a forum for conversations. Workstream Messaging services combine people, content, and communications – both asynchronous (messaging) and real-time (voice and video) – into a single dashboard rather than using separate applications for workflow and communications.

This paper takes a look at the rise of Workstream Messaging, why its time has arrived, and how organizations are using it to improve communications and collaboration. Workstream Messaging is where agile meets communications.

The Era of Continuous Productivity

The impacts of new technologies creep up on us. Devices and applications change more quickly than our behaviors. We often start by replicating established methods and then evolve entirely new processes. For example, the first PCs offered the same benefits as typewriters. They were used to write and print office memos that were routed physically through an office. As the technology matured, email replaced internal mail.

No device has changed our modern lifestyle more than the smartphone. We are now more connected than ever before – not just via telephony, but also over a variety of modalities and applications. The smartphone connects us to each other and to information.

Our new era of *continuous productivity* fosters seamless interaction between our work and personal lives. People often use the same tools and platforms for personal tasks and for work. The constantly connected social and mobile genera-



tional shift is ushering in new tools, expectations, and approaches to how we work.

In the modern workplace, the start/stop world of episodic work is shifting to a continuous model. Consider the following:

Combined with increasingly distributed teams, the modern workplace requires modern tools that can provide:

- Access to the collective knowledge of an entire organization.
- Facilitation of collaboration across and between organizations in a way that gives equal access and tools to all team members.
- The ability to time slice, context switch, and proactively deal with situations as they arise, shifting from a world of start/stop productivity and decision making to one that is continuous.

The vast majority of organizations today face challenges with adapting to these changes. The impacts include consumerization of IT, Shadow IT, BYOD (bring your own device), increased teleworking, and many more, but the reality is, meetings and email are no longer sufficient.

Start/Stop Episodic Work	Continuous
Daily newspaper	News website
Weekly reports	Data becomes accessible as created
Commission a server	Dynamic Spin/up down resources
Blog post	Tweet
Version numbers	Software as a Service (SaaS)
Email and voice	Messages

Productivity in the current workplace is under siege. Consider the following:

- Employees spend about two hours of their day recovering from distractions.
- People use mobile devices, on average, over three hours a day.
- Employees spend about two and a half hours each day searching for information.
- The average knowledge worker is checking email about 300 times a day, or about 36 times an hour.
- Most employees feel at least one hour of their day is lost toward unproductive meetings.



asynchronous and real-time. Email is an example of asynchronous communications, as each party’s participation is independent of the others’. Real-time communications such as voice and video conversations require participation from each party at the same time.

Throughout most of our collaborative history, these two domains were generally considered to be mutually exclusive. That’s because asynchronous communications were originally subject to long delays – ships and ponies transported letters.

Ubiquitous connectivity, however, now makes asynchronous communications nearly real-time. In fact, text-messaging services are the most widely used mobile applications today. Free and paid messaging apps (such as WhatsApp and WeChat) represent six of the 10 most popular apps globally.¹

It turns out that messaging is highly effective in an always-connected world. It has the benefits of near real-time without the imposition. Because voice is intrusive, we frequently prioritize other activities over live calls. Email is so crowded that responses are rarely immediate. Messaging solutions allow us the flexibility to carry nearly real-time conversations – or not. Asynchronous communications have many other benefits. Messages can be sent to a single individual or an entire team and provide a written, shared history at the same time.

Why Workstream Messaging?

UC solved the make/receive a call anywhere problem, but there’s still a problem. Today, we no longer leave our phones on our desks when we attend meetings – we carry our phones with us. That means instead of calls going to voicemail, they interrupt us. To work around this issue, messaging has become a preferred means of communication.

Messaging can be more urgent than email and less intrusive than voice. Messaging gives control to the receiver because it gives him/her the option to respond immediately (near real-time), later, or not at all – on their terms.

Communications and collaboration technologies have largely operated in two separate domains:

Today, our conversations frequently transition between asynchronous and real-time modalities such as responding to a phone call with an email or responding to a missed call with a text. We are adapting our communication methods to combine real-time and asynchronous modalities. The problem is that this behavior scatters our conversations across multiple applications and devices.

Workstream Messaging solutions represent a new category of enterprise communications. These new solutions embrace multiple modalities in a single application. An application that centralizes conversations and related context inevitably becomes central to workflow. This emerging space is also sometimes referred to as “Continuous Communications” and “Team Collaboration.” All three terms are valid.

None of the individual technologies is new, but as an emerging category, they have significant impact. Continuous communications emphasizes persistent communications, which many IM-type solutions including SMS now offer. Team collaboration stresses the importance of new tools that are built first for teams. This is very important, but many tools designed for individual communications are becoming team oriented. We prefer the term Workstream Messaging because it emphasizes that communications and collaboration should be central to the flow of work, not just complementary, as many tools are viewed today.

Workstream Messaging solutions are similar to UC conceptually in that both foster online conversations. UC solutions evolved primarily from a real-time perspective. Workstream Messaging solutions evolved from messaging. As a result,

Workstream Messaging overlaps with and fills the gaps between disparate email, voice, social, and conferencing products and services.

Workstream Messaging solutions sit at the intersection of several existing and emerging forms of enterprise communications. The services have the following components:

1. Persistent messaging engine designed for one-to-one and group communications
2. Messaging-centric communications model
3. Real-time capabilities
4. Shared content such as documents and photos
5. Integration capabilities with other business applications
6. The concept of teams, not just individuals

Many Workstream Messaging solutions also support telephony. Most Workstream Messaging solutions are delivered as a service and leverage powerful back-end processing, although some can be obtained as a product.

Additional characteristics of Workstream Messaging solutions include a mobile-first/cloud-first approach. The solutions generally span organizational boundaries and frequently leverage next-generation technologies such as WebRTC and advanced search. Another defining characteristic is that Workstream Messaging solutions tend to be self-organizing. Workstream Messaging contains conversations by subject or participants far more effectively than other collaborative tools.

Examples of Workstream Messaging Solutions

There are several Workstream Messaging solutions on the market. Most were introduced in 2015 and 2016. The oldest go back about four years, and new ones are still appearing regularly. The list is just a short sample of these applications:



- Atlassian HipChat
- BroadSoft Team-One
- Slack
- Cisco Spark
- Unify Circuit

Inclusive and Exclusive Communications

UC and email systems operate by default as forms of exclusive communications. This means communications are between invited parties, and others are excluded. The exclusivity is further compounded by a general expectation that email conversations are private. It can be an awkward violation when these messages are shared or forwarded without consent. Customarily, when someone leaves an organization, IT deletes their entire inbox, even though it likely contains relevant history regarding various decisions and outcomes.

Social platforms or even internal blogs and wikis are forms of inclusive conversations. In this case, people beyond the active participants share the conversation. This broader audience could include a project team, department, entire company, or even a wider audience that invites others to optionally participate. The conversation and outcome is available and discoverable, and new additions to a project team can access the history.

It is not a matter of which is better; both inclusive and exclusive communications are important. What's really new is the increased flexibility. Most organizations simply don't have the tools to facilitate inclusive communications. Inclusive communications can boost productivity and create a form of organizational

THE PROBLEM WITH EMAIL

Never before have there been so many ways to communicate, but email has become the kingpin. Because email is simple, versatile, and universal it has become a communications clearinghouse – and now its success is becoming its liability.

Email is inherently an exclusive form of communications, and each email message must be processed individually. Email becomes even more ineffective when users adapt it for inclusive communications with broadcasts and inappropriate reply-alls. Email overload is a common complaint among modern knowledge workers. The technology was designed for communications but has become an uncontrollable inbox, filing system, and social hub. The email inbox is a heap of important time-sensitive notifications, voicemails, social network alerts, travel confirmations, even shopping receipts. A McKinsey study found that email is the most time-consuming activity for workers other than role-specific tasks, and that it consumes up to 28 percent of our work time.

Email dates back to the early 1970s and became essential for many businesses in the '80s. Initial deployments were mostly restricted to internal users before the internet made it global. Fast speeds and near-zero usage costs caused email adoption to explode. Because it works across devices and locations, email was one of the internet's first killer apps. Today, we are expected somehow to be current on all conversations, with appropriate responsiveness.

memory while simultaneously reducing the burden of keeping others involved and informed.

Workstream Messaging solutions offer asynchronous flexibility with rich real-time capabilities – designed for a mobile-first and cloud-first era. These new, modern workstream collaboration and communications solutions are the first business solutions designed for inclusive and exclusive communications as well as asynchronous communications and real-time conversations.

Benefits of a Workstream Messaging Solution

Workstream Messaging appears to be the application that no one realized was missing. There’s been so much focus on and progress with unified communications that the differences often seem minor at first. The fundamental difference is that UC is voice-centric, while Workstream Messaging is messaging-centric. This change in paradigm is significant and brings with it numerous key benefits.

Departments and organizations that take the plunge on Workstream Messaging solutions consistently report an overlapping set of benefits that include:

Increased Collaboration: As a communications modality, messaging tends to be brief and to the point. Most alternative forms of communication, including face-to-face, telephony, video, and email, carry social overhead with them. This can be trivial such as salutations, closing, and signatures, or more significant conversational diversions (such as: “Did you see the game last night?” “Some weather,” etc.). As a result, the interactions within Workstream Messaging are more efficient, increasing interaction.



Business processes often rely heavily on email. It frequently becomes an informal hub for work requests and statuses. We build informal processes around our email. Yet email is generally not well suited for project or task management, real-time communications, or content sharing.

Workstream Messaging solutions offer an elegant alternative. These products and services live in a new space that overlaps most forms of modern communications. They retain conversation history in a searchable and shareable format. They work across organizational boundaries, and they contain contextual information such as relevant documents. These products facilitate and record ongoing multimodal conversations in an inclusive manner that invites collaboration.

Ultimately, Workstream Messaging reduces email. At first glance, this might not seem like a benefit, because it moves messages from one tool to another, but the advantages of centralization of content and communications is tremendous. By migrating most internal and project communications to Workstream Messaging, there’s also the added benefit of making email more manageable.

Reduced Risk Invites Collaboration: Part of the shift from start/stop to continuous productivity includes an increase in collaboration. Rather than fear offensive or incorrect conclusions, team members seek feedback to collaborate on the conclusions. Most organizations value this increased collaboration. After all, collaboration can generate innovation, and what's more, 82 percent of knowledge workers feel the need to partner with others. The clear opportunity is to provide enterprise-wide tools that facilitate team collaboration, such as Workstream Messaging applications.

Increased Discoverability: The inclusive nature of Workstream Messaging – as opposed to the exclusive nature of email – means that conversations, people, and content become more discoverable in organizations that use Workstream Messaging solutions. Of course, not all content is meant to be discoverable. In these cases, organizations can implement privacy and security controls. Often, however, workstream content defaults to public or accessible. Even in the case of private conversations, when additional parties are added to a workstream conversation, they also gain access to the conversation history.

Organization: A key benefit of persistent communications is conversation history. For this reason, effective search is a popular and critical feature. Workstream Messaging solutions have the added benefit of self-organizing the content. Email, on the other hand, is a giant LIFO (last in, first out) file system, and finding important content can be difficult. Inbound messages in a Workstream Messaging service tend to go directly to the appropriate container (space, room, or file), which can be designated by person or by subject.

Viral Adoption: Software is only useful if people adopt it. This is particularly true for communications applications, which are subject to Metcalfe's Law: the value of a service increases with its users. Unlike personal tools that only affect individuals, communications tools are only effective with widespread adoption. Generally this is not a problem for Workstream Messaging applications, which appear to be exactly what employees want. Workstream Messaging tends to become viral within enterprises due to both push and pull pressures. Sixty-two percent of the respondents who use Workstream Messaging applications agree that their meetings and interactions are effective. User demand often exceeds the planned rollout. There's also a peer-pressure effect as converted employees scold colleagues for using email and other older tools for collaboration.

Effectiveness: Organizations using Workstream Messaging frequently cite an increase in productivity. Employees are more up-to-date. The effects include fewer formal meetings, and the meetings that do occur are often shorter or at least end on time. The overhead burden associated with communications is reduced – including reply-all emails, non-productive meetings, and other low-value tasks.

New Access to Existing Content: Because most Workstream Messaging solutions offer integration capabilities, it is common to reveal new features and functionality of existing services via the API layer. A good example of this is the Google Drive integration found in BroadSoft's Team One and Hub solution that automatically pre-sorts documents shared among conversation participants. This feature is not available in the Google Drive UI.

Cost: Demonstrating the ROI of Workstream Messaging isn't obvious. Given the relatively young age of the Workstream Messaging market, there are no best practices for deployment or established ROI metrics. Organizations will have to develop their own methodology to understand the value returned to the organization. It does appear that Workstream Messaging increases productivity, communications, and collaboration. It does not tend to completely replace any given tool. The good news? Workstream Messaging solutions are generally inexpensive – typically charged in single digits per user per month.

Recommended Evaluation Criteria

Defining effective evaluation criteria can be difficult. Given the breadth of vendors and the variety of different workers who participate in project teams, developing evaluation criteria that can be mapped across the vendor landscape can be a significant hurdle. How the tool fits into the company's workflow will depend on the organization's processes.

Some key considerations for evaluation that every business should consider are:

- **Incumbent UC solution provider:** While virtually all Workstream Messaging solutions support peer-to-peer voice and video conferencing, not all provide integrated communications. A key benefit of Workstream Messaging is the centralization of people, content, and communications (real-time and asynchronous) into a single tool.
- **Application integration:** While APIs are common, the depth of the APIs and pre-built integrations will vary dramatically. Inquire

about the specific applications and capabilities that are in current use.

- **End-to-end encryption:** Having data encrypted from end to end is a critical feature for any organization using Workstream Messaging for sensitive information.
- **Video interoperability:** While most Workstream Messaging solutions support client-to-client and client-to-browser video, not all support room systems. Video conferencing continues to grow and also benefits from Metcalfe's Law. A room solution can and should be part of the Workstream Messaging vision.

The Workstream Messaging market is still emerging, which makes direct feature comparisons challenging. Comparing products requires an understanding of what features are available today as well as the near-term roadmap.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The digital business era has transformed enterprise IT. More and more applications have moved to the cloud, and many organizations have adopted a "mobile first" mentality when it comes to application development. One area of enterprise IT that has yet to transform is enterprise collaboration. Traditional collaboration tools such as chat and email are optimized to enable an individual to communicate with another individual or a group of people. However, they do not enable efficient team-wide collaboration.

The new Workstream Messaging market allows agile teams to quickly get together, share information, and complete tasks or make decisions in as short a time as possible. In this competitive

business climate, where new companies are disrupting traditional industries almost overnight, decision-making speed is a key to survival. Those that are able to become agile, digital organizations will lead their industries. Those that cannot will rapidly become irrelevant and struggle to survive. Workstream Messaging can enable the highest level of team agility and rapid decision making.

1. Internet Trends 2015, Mary Meeker, Kleiner Perkins Caufield Byers. May 2015.

Provided by BroadSoft

BroadSoft is the technology innovator in cloud communications, collaboration, and contact center solutions for businesses and service providers across 80 countries. We are the market share leader for cloud unified communications with an open, mobile and secure platform trusted by 25 of the world's top 30 service providers by revenue. Our BroadSoft Business application suite empowers users and teams to share ideas and work simply to achieve breakthrough performance.

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