



Collaboration is Changing the Game for the Healthcare Industry *Forward-Thinking Companies Are Turning to UCC Solutions*

A Frost & Sullivan White Paper

Introduction 3

Healthcare is Ripe for Change: Three Use Cases 3

Pharmaceuticals/Manufacturers 4

Insurance Companies 5

Hospitals, Urgent Care Centers, Large Practices..... 6

Best Practices for Success..... 6

Call to Action 7

INTRODUCTION

There is one constant in today's ever-changing healthcare environment: collaboration is critical to success. With the increasingly vast availability of data, information is fast becoming commoditized. What matters isn't so much what you know (since everyone can know it), but what you do with that data once you have it. And to do something good with the information you possess—to innovate across the organization, with colleagues, partners, suppliers, and even patients—you need to share knowledge, experience, creative ideas, and action items.

Of course, that's easier said than done—especially in a world in which healthcare companies are operating on a global scale and one in which more than half of their employees work outside of a traditional corporate office. To drive collaboration in a virtual workplace, forward-thinking companies are turning to advanced communications technologies like video and web conferencing, or other tools that integrate live data, also known as unified communications (UC) solutions. These tools make it easy for people to work together, face to face and on the same information or 3D models, from anywhere in the world, anytime, and in any environment.

This paper will look at three areas of healthcare that are ripe for change—pharmaceuticals and manufacturing, insurance, and caregivers—to show how and where leading organizations are using video collaboration and analytics to transform their operations, lower costs, increase revenues and, ultimately, improve patient outcomes. And it will deliver best-practices recommendations for how your company can choose a solution that will allow you to see the benefits of an integrated, inter-connected world.

HEALTHCARE IS RIPE FOR CHANGE: THREE USE CASES

The US healthcare industry is experiencing rapid change thanks to a wide array of factors, including regulatory issues, new government mandates (including the Affordable Care Act), an aging Baby Boomer population, an enormous Millennial population that's entering prime child-bearing years, and the need to find new and more effective treatments for everything from drug-resistant infections to new viruses and other diseases.

New collaboration technologies are available to help ease the transition for many healthcare organizations, including drug developers and manufacturers, insurance companies, and caregivers. Web, audio, and video conferencing—as well as advanced digital displays—can help companies make it easy for their employees to work together and stay up to date on the most current information—anytime, anywhere.

Frost & Sullivan research shows that 73% of US companies have deployed web conferencing, 65% use stand-alone audio conferencing, and 61% rely on video conferencing to drive collaboration among their employees, partners, and customers or patients. Video conferencing is used on a daily basis by 23% of organizations and weekly by another 23%. Web and audio conferencing are used even more often, and more than half of responding organizations rate their conferencing tools as important or very important to getting business done.

When it comes to IT investments, however, healthcare organizations face unique challenges: a recent Frost & Sullivan survey of 199 IT decision makers in the sector reveals that after security and network health—perennial issues that attract every IT manager's attention—aligning IT with business goals and dealing with new regulatory requirements are top challenges in the space.

Top drivers include reducing costs, expanding into new markets, boosting creativity and innovation, and improving productivity.

Top 3 Drivers for IT Investment, Healthcare



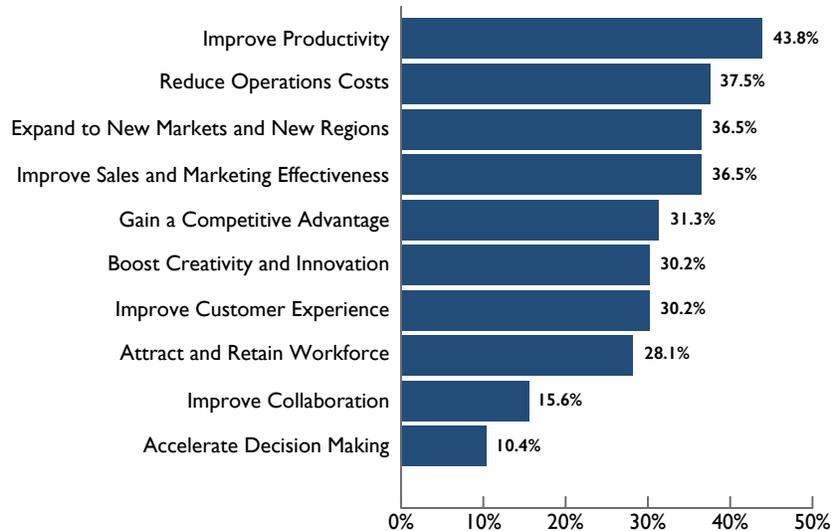
Source: Frost & Sullivan

Healthcare companies can overcome their challenges and support their drivers by deploying advanced unified communications and collaboration (UCC) tools. What follows are three examples of how healthcare companies in three different sectors can leverage UCC technology to reduce costs, improve collaboration, create a better customer experience, and gain a clear competitive advantage.

Pharmaceuticals/Manufacturers

For drug and other medical manufacturers, improving productivity is the top driver for IT investment, followed by reducing operating costs, expanding into new markets and regions, improving sales and marketing, and gaining a competitive advantage.

Plans for IT Investment, Healthcare Manufacturers



Source: Frost & Sullivan

Video conferencing and other UCC tools can help with all those needs, but Frost & Sullivan research shows that for manufacturers, boosting productivity around research and development (R&D) is critical to business success. Most R&D processes involve multiple teams, each with multiple participants spread around a geographic region, country, or the world. Collaboration among groups is imperative at every stage in the process, from initial research to dealing with government agencies and regulations, to trials and, finally, manufacturing and production.

When employees, partners, and suppliers have to work together, traveling gets costly and time consuming—and can be a significant drain on productivity, since a single meeting can require days out of the office. By allowing teams to meet virtually, using advanced conferencing and communications, manufacturing companies can speed development; encourage innovation among disparate sectors; ensure all compliance, regulatory, and QA metrics are met; and have a positive impact on the bottom line.

Insurance Companies

Among insurance companies, expanding into new markets is the biggest driver behind new IT investment, followed by the desire to improve productivity, improve sales and marketing, and reduce costs.

Plans for IT Investment, Healthcare Insurers



Source: Frost & Sullivan

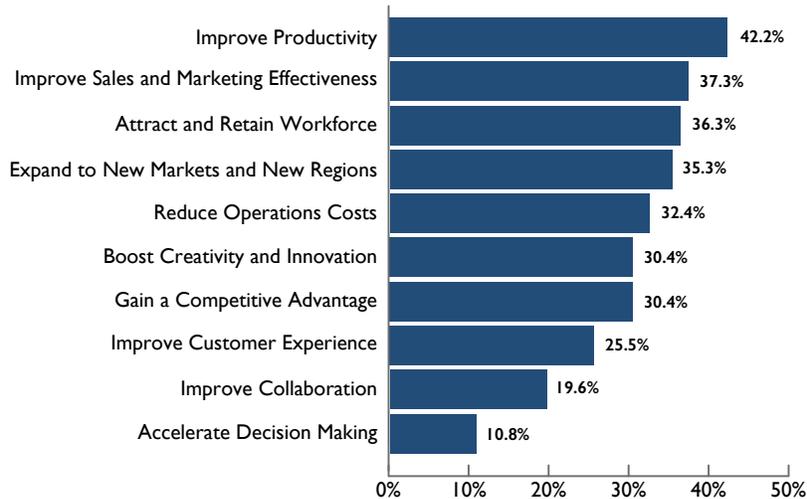
As insurers move into new markets, they need to onboard new employees, train and coach the sales organization, ensure marketing delivers messaging that's right for the new region, and collect customer feedback to tweak offerings to meet their new customers' needs. Video conferencing makes it easy for growing firms to offer continuous training to their new and experienced reps, without pulling them out of the field and negatively impacting revenues. It also allows various lines of business to meet on a regular basis to share content, work on projects and deliverables, and ensure all groups and employees are working toward the same goal. Digital signage assures all employees are familiar with new facilities and are up to speed on all corporate initiatives.

Remote conferencing capabilities also help drive productivity by making it easy for employees to meet, regardless of where they're located, anytime and anywhere. Advanced UCC tools—including large-scale video conferencing implementations, digital signage, and smart whiteboards—encourage employees to think outside the box whenever they meet to brainstorm ideas.

Hospitals, Urgent Care Centers, Large Practices

The top driver for IT investment among medical providers is to improve productivity, followed by improve sales and marketing effectiveness, attract great employees, and expand into new markets.

Plans for IT Investment, Healthcare Providers



Source: Frost & Sullivan

By far the best way to improve productivity among caregivers is to make it easy for them to capture and share information, allowing them to focus on care rather than paperwork, and to move quickly and effectively from one patient to the next. UCC tools allow practitioners to get immediate access to information and one another; digital signage and regular updates through smaller devices such as tablets ensure all employees know exactly what's happening within the facility—and their specific area in it—at any given time. These tools are especially effective for conveying information on patient status; room and bed availability; which operating theaters are in use and by whom; and where other caregivers, including nurses, techs, specialists and social workers, are currently located.

Video conferencing also encourages communication and collaboration among practitioners, even if they're located in separate buildings on a campus or across the country. This helps hospitals, urgent care facilities, and other provider organizations work together to implement and maintain best practices—and then get the message out that they are doing a superior job and seeing excellent patient outcomes. It also enables access to experienced physicians and other providers, regardless of where they are located in relation to new markets or facilities.

Finally, by supporting a more flexible workplace—where information is easily available and employees do not need to be co-located in order to work together or do their jobs—hospitals and other facility operators can attract the best and brightest practitioners, which helps attract new patients for both emergency and elective services. That gives them a boost in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESS

Choosing the right technology to support advanced communication and collaboration isn't easy: the choices abound, but understanding your business needs and finding the right match can be tricky. Healthcare organizations, in particular, should look for a provider with extensive experience in strategic planning around UCC and video collaboration tools, including the hardware, software, services, and cloud-based options that comprise a best-in-class deployment.

First, think about the facilities you're working with and how you'd like to incorporate video screens or walls, interactive displays, and UCC tools for maximum effect. A drug manufacturer looking to improve R&D in its labs will have much different needs from a hospital that wants to surface real-time information on digital displays for patients and caregivers. The right partner should be able to help you with expert advice on what technology to include to maximize the user experience, as well as work within specific architectural and design constraints.

You'll also want a provider that can supply all the necessary hardware and software—including infrastructure, high-definition video and audio systems, interactive displays, cloud-based solutions, and even lighting and furniture designed just for your environment. Ideally, the vendor can work with you to create a standard user experience throughout the organization—from one building and use case to the next. This approach makes it easy for employees to leverage the technology, regardless of where they're using it, or how they use it, on any given day.

If you're trying to drive change by improving collaboration, it's critical that you give your employees a high-quality, reliable, and secure experience with the ability to meet, access real-time data, generate new ideas, and then share the results easily across the team. It's best to find a partner that can provide complete, round-the-clock support for all of your on-premises or cloud-based video assets. By turning over routine management, service and support to a provider, you can free up your internal IT staff to focus on projects that are core to your business and meet utilization goals.

Finally, keep in mind that technology is only half the story when it comes to supporting communication and collaboration in today's always-on world. Chances are, some cultural changes will be in order, too. You may need to actively encourage teams, or even individuals, to share data and research across lines of business, or even with colleagues, partners, and customers sitting outside the organization. An experienced technology solutions provider should have the knowledge and expertise to help with those efforts, offering everything from best-practices recommendations to lessons from other customers, to training and cultural support options to help drive the message home—and ensure maximum return on investment.

CALL TO ACTION

All aspects of the healthcare industry are experiencing rapid change. To turn this challenge into an opportunity, forward-thinking organizations are embracing advanced collaboration to cut costs, boost productivity, jump-start creativity and innovation, expand into new markets, and positively impact the bottom line. Those that choose the right partner achieve their goals more quickly and experience less disruption along the way.

An experienced technology partner can deliver a complete array of hardware, software, cloud, and professional services, including assessing your legacy equipment and roadmap for the future. The right vendor can also provide 24/7 IT support in all relevant geographic regions, deliver a standard end-user experience, and offer help with adoption, training, and end-user support.

Given that the majority of manufacturers, insurance companies, and care providers operate at least partially in a virtual workplace, enabling remote conferencing and collaboration is critical to business success. Paired with real-time data, enterprise management, and digital signage networks (and a strategy for deployment that takes facilities and corporate culture into account), advanced UCC tools can help healthcare businesses drive change throughout the organization—across campus or around the world.

NEXT STEPS 

Schedule a meeting with our global team to experience our thought leadership and to integrate your ideas, opportunities and challenges into the discussion.



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