

The Evolution and Future of Enterprise Communications

Introduction

CIOs and IT managers regularly ask themselves, what communication tools and services are required to increase the productivity of the enterprise. Until today enterprises primarily have been using email, unified communications and social networks. However, in today's dynamic IT landscape there are daily news of innovative tools and services for the communication and collaboration of businesses. It is often difficult for enterprises to understand which solutions are really beneficial to improve the collaboration and communication with colleagues and teams and to increase the productivity of the business overall.

Looking at the evolution of enterprise communication in the past 20 years or so, patterns become visible that make it more obvious, what is really needed and where the future of enterprise communication will lead.

1. E-Mail

Email was around for some time in military facilities and universities, but it took until the late 80's for the first commercial providers of email to appear (e.g. Compuserve, MCI mail, AOL). The growth of email was strongly connected to the adoption of the internet and world wide web. Consumers, who subscribed to an online service for internet connectivity, in most cases received an email address with the account. The email became quickly popular as a fast, cheap and direct communication channel to family and friends (especially when they lived further away or abroad). These benefits and the ease use appealed to businesses as well in order to enable better team communication and allow faster information exchange with customers, suppliers and partners. In addition the email was cheaper and faster than letters or faxes and allowed easy sharing of files with colleagues and teams. Soon email became a core productivity tool in the enterprise world.

2. Unified Communications

There were many IM and VOIP services for personal computers in the late 90's. In 2003 Skype was released and quickly growing in the consumer space. Skype offered instant messaging, simple group chats, voice and video calling, as well as online meetings. The real-time messaging, group communication, ease of use and global availability were the reasons for Skype's popularity. This feature set also became a software category named Unified Communications. Many business tools (e.g. Lync, IBM Sametime, Cisco Jabber, etc.) were developed which had a very similar feature set as Skype, but focussed on enterprise uses cases, administration and data protection. These tools have been widely deployed in the enterprise market due to their productivity and communication benefits for organizations of all sizes.

3. Enterprise Social Networks

At the turn of the millennium social networking became popular especially in the USA and Asia. At first several consumer services (e.g. Friendster, MySpace, Bebo, Orkut, etc.) launched, which enabled users to connect with family, friends and others who share interests, activities and hobbies. These social networks encouraged sharing, knowledge exchange, cooperation and (of course) networking. In the end Facebook won the consumer market. It didn't take long until the first business social networks (e.g. Lindedin, Xing) were started with a concentration on networking, recruiting and careers. Then came dedicated enterprise social networking tools (e.g. Yammer, Salesforce Chatter, Jive) which brought the benefits of consumer tools to businesses. Most of these tools looked very similar to Facebook. The goal of enterprise social networking has been knowledge sharing, distributing news, cooperation across projects and teams, as well as networking within the company.

4. "Whatsapp for Enterprise"

With the rise of Android and iOS smartphones the first messaging apps became available. These apps allowed consumers to send text messages for free as an alternative to expensive SMS. The huge demand was especially driven by teenagers, who generally send hundreds of text messages per day. Whatsapp was the most reliable among these new messaging apps, expanded quickly to the most relevant smartphone platforms, and developed a comprehensive feature set (e.g. photos, videos, locations, contact sharing, voice messages, read receipts). The ease of use, the messaging speed and the broad use cases quickly made Whatsapp the most popular communication tool on smartphones.

Whatsapp is also very popular among business users. Very often it is nowadays part of the shadow IT, and enterprises are often concerned of potential disadvantages, damages and issues of Whatsapp for businesses. Since enterprises require strong data protection, company-wide security, professional administration, extensive IT ecosystem integrations, secure APIs, cross-platform applications, mobile application management, compliance policies and many other things for their use, dedicated "Whatsapp for business" messaging apps like Teamwire are currently evolving around the globe. "Whatsapp for business" messaging apps for the internal communication and collaboration of enterprises are probably one of the major IT trends currently.

Summary

The above tools have been the most important ones for the communication and collaboration with colleagues and teams in the enterprise in recent years. They cover a broad spectrum of standard use cases and are widely used. Needless to say, there are other team communication and collaboration tools for enterprises as well. However, these other tools are then normally deployed for specific scenarios and use cases, and not required across the business.

In summary it can be said that the general enterprise communication follows trends in consumer markets. Communication tools that are popular in the consumer space are likely to become adopted in the enterprise world as well. This is at the moment true for "Whatsapp for business" messaging apps and probably true for all communication categories to come.

About Teamwire

Teamwire is a fast, intuitive and secure enterprise messaging app. Teamwire helps businesses to solve the Whatsapp problem, increase productivity and improve team communication in the messaging era. Users can send 1:1 and group messages, post status updates, exchange video and voice messages, and share photos, locations, calendar dates, files and much more. Teamwire fully complies with strong German and European data protection needs and is a completely encrypted solution. The service can be easily managed for the whole organization and ensures company-wide compliance. Teamwire is available for all mobile and desktop platforms as a cloud, private cloud or on-premise solution.

More information: <http://www.teamwire.eu>