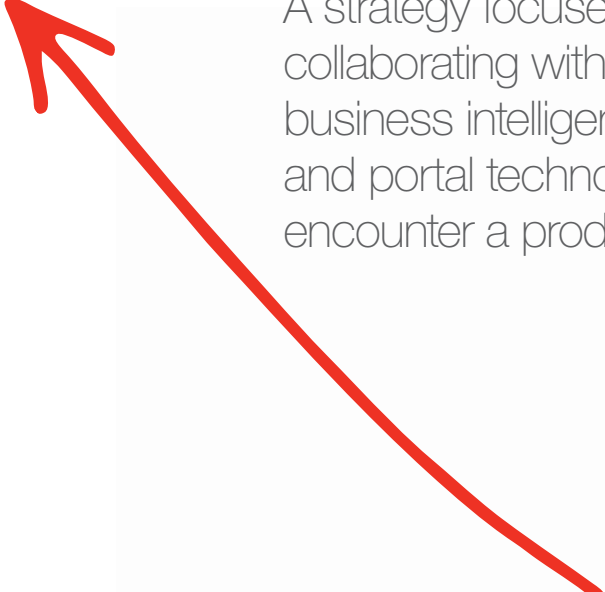
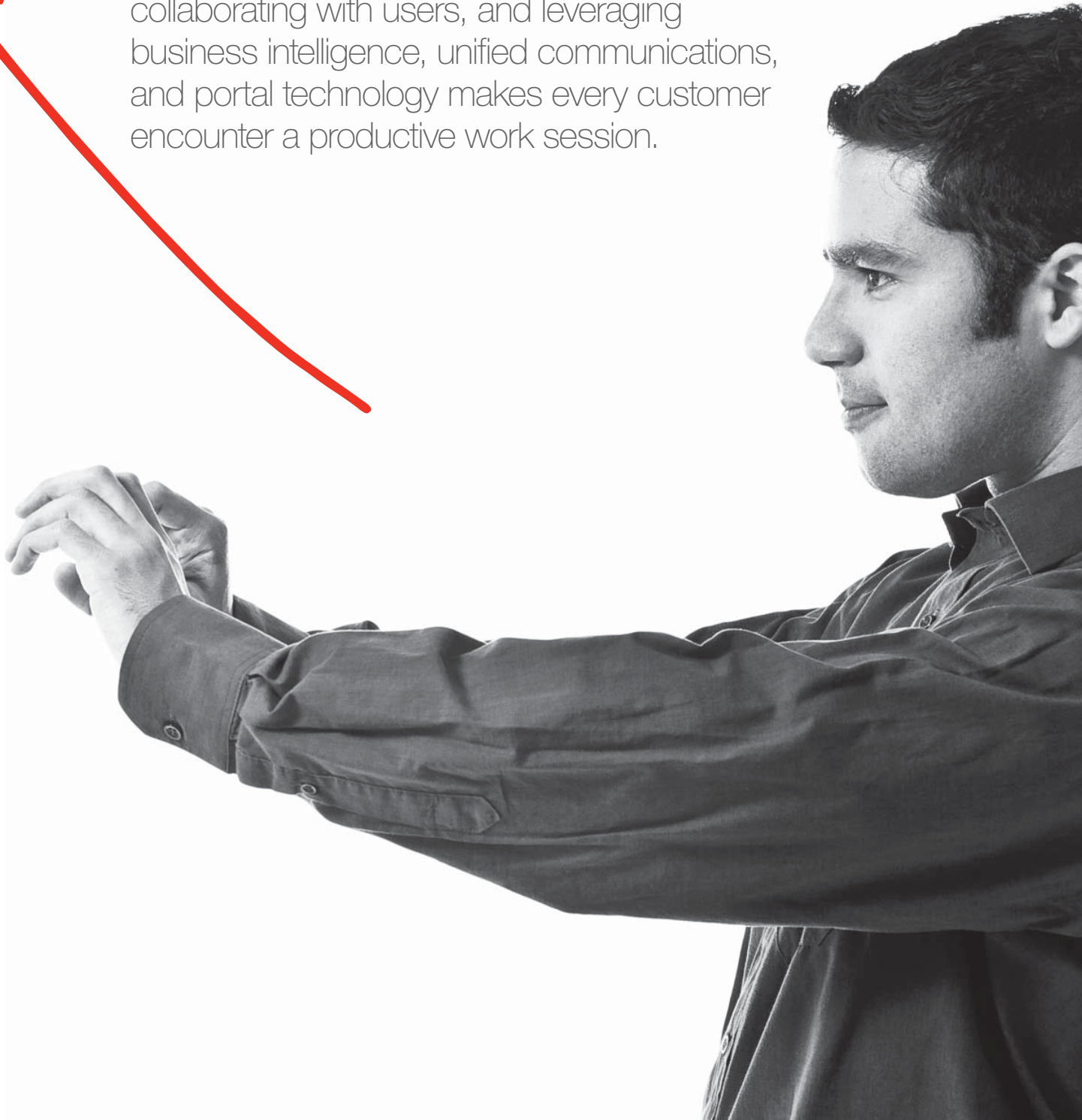




Reach Out



A strategy focused on reaching out, collaborating with users, and leveraging business intelligence, unified communications, and portal technology makes every customer encounter a productive work session.



In the old business model, the gap between you and your customers was determined primarily by geography.

You were here, and they were there.

To do business with them you had to be in the same place at the same time. Technology has fundamentally changed that business model. Geographic boundaries cease to exist in our connected world. We're all out here online together.

As a result, reaching out to your customers takes on a whole new reality. You can now conduct business with your customers from anywhere, at anytime. Of course, so can your competitors.

It follows, therefore, that those organizations that do the best job leveraging technology to reach out to existing and new customers are going to be the most successful in the new business environment. The new generation of employees entering the workforce is going to expect state-of-the-art communications—as is the new generation of customers.

Recent disruptions in the economy have put many existing business relationships up for grabs. As the next economy takes shape, customers are going to be drawn to those companies that can connect and engage them online. Unified communications, portals, software-as-a-service (SaaS), social networking, outsourcing, cloud computing—the technologies exist and are equally available. The ultimate competitive advantage is communications in today's global, 24/7 virtual marketplace. Most IT departments have deployed some degree

of all of the above. You may already have VoIP, for example, and your people all have cell phones and smartphones. You have an internal HR portal, and you've been trying to free up time to work on the project management portal your chief operating officer wants.

That is not enough.

Five Key Growth Practices for Reaching Out

- Collaborate with business users on your IT strategy.
- Remember that reaching out requires reaching in. Enhance application integration and interoperability.
- Use business intelligence to refine internal processes and focus on the most profitable business opportunities.
- Use unified communications to extend your business into your marketplace.
- Exploit portal technology to include your employees, customers and partners in ongoing and productive work sessions.



A well-designed “reach-out” strategy ensures all of the communication technologies work together harmoniously.

Reach-Out Strategy

The challenge for IT departments, going forward, is that technology is only part of the solution. The other part is being able to collaborate with the most difficult community of all: users, both internal and external. IT can’t develop any of the solutions organizations need to reach out to their customers without the direct participation of business users in the development process. Whether it is business intelligence (BI), unified communications, or portals, all of the technologies that have the potential to enable your organization to reach out come with the need for interdepartmental collaboration. As a result, IT professionals need to hone their social skills as well as their technical skills.

The interdependence of the different sets of users that is required reflects the interdependence of the underlying technologies involved. You can’t use BI to focus on retaining and finding more of your best customers, for example, without an integrated application environment. You can’t enable your mobile workforce to do business anywhere, anytime, without a stable and robust network infrastructure. You can’t provide customers with a portal they can use to buy more goods and services from your organization without providing security, interoperability and process control.

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The good news for IT is that, besides accomplishing a high degree of meaningful communications for your users, a well-designed communications strategy will also make it easier for you to support the technologies that are required to help your organization reach out to its customers. Establishing buy-in from key executives up front also ensures a successful outcome.

Logicalis’ Jump-Start programs (see “Grab Opportunity” for a complete list) are designed to help an IT department evaluate its IT infrastructure, identify specific needs, and align priorities with business objectives.

Better Decisions

A key set of decisions that executives need to make as part of a reach-out strategy is deciding exactly to whom they want to reach out. A well-designed BI strategy can help them set their sights on the most profitable business opportunities.

“The most fundamental way business intelligence impacts the balance sheet,” says Logicalis Vice President, Consulting Services Chris Rafter, “is by helping companies make better decisions at all levels, from senior executives all the way down to daily operational decisions.”



Key Benefits of Business Intelligence

- Make better decisions
- Improve operational processes
- Optimize customer profitability
- Satisfy external reporting interests

Rafter says BI enables an organization to turn all of the data it has been collecting over the years into an active asset that can be mined for useful information. It can, for example, help you identify an exact profile of your best customers and how to get more like them. A thoughtful BI initiative can also reveal inefficiencies in your internal processes and help you better serve both your existing and future new customers.

Combined with portal technology, BI can provide a dashboard of select information to help you navigate an intelligent course in the still foggy road into the next economy.

Done right, it can help point the direction while also providing a way to measure and monitor the success of your efforts.

Touch Points

Unified communications—the convergence of several technologies that reached a flash point when voice entered the IP universe—has progressed so quickly from a technology breakthrough to a competitive necessity that some changes in the workplace are taking awhile to catch up.

As part of a reach-out strategy, unified communications makes it possible to respond more efficiently and effectively to customers in the thousands of small interactions that build lasting relationships.

Unified communications can do more than just put you in front of your customers. It can put you together with them and make every encounter a productive work session. For example:

Project leaders who used to have to get everyone in a room together to go over requested changes with a customer and then follow up via email can now use an online work session to make changes together in real time. Being able to collaborate on the fly like that not only cuts down on travel costs for everyone, but it also eliminates all of those “this-is-what-I-think-I-heard-you-say” follow-up email.

One unified communications-enabled account executive says he often lets the customer decide whether to meet in person or virtually: "I can fly out to meet you the Tuesday after next, or we can launch a workspace conference online and go over everything together in an hour," he tells them. More often than not, he says, the customer opts for the workspace conference with the condition, "You can buy lunch next time you're in town."

Logicalis Director of Cisco Practice Jim Dossias recommends starting slowly. "You don't have to take it all on at once," he says. "You can introduce new capabilities at your own pace."

Once the basic platform is in place, all that is required is some imagination to leverage it in ways that are specific to your company's vertical market and also to your specific job description. For example, Logicalis helped one major real estate firm in the Northeast put all of the resources of the home office on its sales staff's notebook computers. A broker's telephone number rings on her notebook wherever she is. She is able to initiate, receive and transfer calls, as well as set up conference calls as easily as if she were sitting at her desk.

Many clients have taken advantage of videoconferencing to hold virtual sales meetings, training sessions, project reviews and spontaneous work sessions.

Presence-enabled systems let you know where your contacts are at any given time, as well as how best to contact them. Instant messaging lets you interact in real time.

Key Benefits of Unified Communications

- Extend the workspace beyond the desktop
- Speed access and improve communication
- Integrate different communication devices and applications
- Empower collaboration
- Streamline business processes
- Enhance profitability

Virtual call centers combine the benefits of saving money with reaching out to your customers. Logicalis set up a virtual call center for one of its banking customers, for example, that dispatched incoming calls to the bank's central customer service center on Saturdays to tellers at its branch offices. The savings that resulted from not having to hire customer service agents to handle those calls essentially covered the entire cost of the implementation.

Interconnectedness

Virtual call centers have the potential to provide management flexibility, increase responsiveness and improve employee satisfaction. But to be truly effective, users of virtual call centers need to access secure portals that present them with all of the information they need to do whatever it is they do. To provide that information, portals have to be able to draw on data from multiple applications.



Further Reading

Visit
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Read
Read our feature story
"More Than Just Talk"
at www.us.logicalis.com/uc

Presence-enabled systems let you know where your contacts are at any given time, as well as how best to contact them. Instant messaging lets you interact in real time.

“Too many portal projects are technology-driven,” says Logicalis Vice President, Application Services Shaun Olsen. “Successful enterprise portal projects are driven by a strong methodology and a clearly defined sense of purpose. The technology can be whatever is most compatible with your IT environment.”

“Planning is key,” adds Logicalis Consulting Director Dave Guerro. “Every minute you spend on planning on the front end will save time on the back end, and many times the time savings is exponential.”

Designed, implemented, tested and managed appropriately, portals empower collaboration—not only between employees, but also between customers and partners. For example, Logicalis helped a construction company implement a portal that lets clients monitor progress on a job. Another portal allows subcontractors to check schedules and availability of resources and materials. A portal for an electronics distributor allows its customers to order parts with a barcode scan from their own warehouses.

Reaching Out/Reaching In

Unified communications and portals, as well as evolving technologies like cloud computing and social networking, continue to erode the distance not only between your employees, but also between your organization and its customers and partners.

The surface appeal of these technologies has clearly enthralled the media and made them “must-haves” for many outside of the IT department. Inside the IT department enthusiasm for the technologies is tempered by an understanding of what has to happen beneath the surface for them to work effectively and without putting the entire IT infrastructure at risk.

All of the technologies that enable an organization to reach out require a level of interoperability and integration that is a work in progress in most IT environments. Before they can reach out, the technologies that link us to outsiders have to be able to reach in. The network infrastructure has to be stable and robust, applications need to be able to share data, storage needs to be adequate, backups scheduled, redundancy provided for key systems and disaster recovery assured...just in case.

Advances in technology have brought us to the brink of a truly interconnected—wired and wireless—global marketplace. No organization that wants to succeed can fail to participate.

“Optimize Operations,” the next feature in our four-part Get Ready to GROW series, will look at virtualization, outsourcing, managed services, software-as-a-service and other technologies that can enable your organization to participate fully in the next economy.



Further Reading

Visit
www.us.logicalis.com

Read
Check out our Get Ready to GROW microsite to download all of the features and other resources at www.us.logicalis.com/GROW.



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Logicalis is an international provider of integrated information and communications technology (ICT) solutions and services founded on a superior breadth of knowledge and expertise in communications and collaboration, data center, and professional and managed services.

The Logicalis Group has annualized revenues of \$1 billion, from operations in the UK, US, Germany, South America and Asia Pacific, and is fast establishing itself as one of the leading IT and Communications solution integrators, specializing in the areas of advanced technologies and services.

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Logicalis Group employs over 1,900 people worldwide, including highly trained service specialists who design, specify, deploy and manage complex ICT infrastructures to meet the needs of over 5,000 corporate and public sector customers. To achieve this, Logicalis maintains strong partnerships with technology leaders such as Cisco, HP, IBM and Microsoft.

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