



## Commentary: Unified communications and collaboration

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Alex Smith, Analyst, Canalys, at 2010 NetEvents APAC Press Summit, Singapore, said that Unified Communications is a critical aspect of any organisation. It facilitates productivity within employees and helps companies communicate with external sources as well including partners, suppliers and even customers. And traditionally a lot of companies initially focus on the voice or the telephony side of the market. And the PBX market really came about as a way to facilitate cost effective and efficient forms of voice communications within companies.

But recently over the years we've seen a number of different communications technologies really come into play in the enterprise. This includes most notably email, which is by and large now of the most important forms of communications across businesses, but also other things like conferencing solutions and contact centres.

Many of these solutions as well were brought to the enterprise by the end users themselves. Most notably instant messaging by and large began as a consumer technology that rapidly found its way into the enterprise as it was brought in by the end users.

Now the problem with having all these different forms of communication technologies was that they tend to operate in silo environments. And it makes it very difficult for an enterprise to really organise and facilitate a coherent and converged communication strategy. So that's where the whole concept of Unified Communications really came about, and is looking to unify all these silo forms of communication technologies.

Now the interesting thing about Unified Communications is because it's a concept rather than a specific technology everyone seems to have a slightly different view of what Unified Communications is. For us at Canalys we believe that the PBX and presence part of it is really one of the integral parts. And really what you see aims to do is put the person rather than the device at the centre of who you are trying to contact. So for example, if you look at the way that things are operating today if I want to get in touch with my manager I have to maybe look at — if I go to my messaging solution to see if he is online or go to the email solution to see — look at his calendar to see what his schedule is, I may find that he is out on the road and then I have to go to my phone and dig out his mobile phone number.

And really all these contacts are existing as separate data bases. So we believe that unifying it into one data base where you have one contact with all the different forms of how you can communicate him is a really central part of UC.

But of course, the different panels may have their own views. And so for example, Richard Norris from — you're from Wainhouse Research, and you do a lot of market research into the UC market, so maybe if you could just explain some of your views and thoughts about UC.