

Chapter

5

Assess your landscape.

Defining the essentials of cross-company collaboration and communication in work's next evolution.

If someone in late 2019 told you that a global pandemic would soon send most work and education home for months on end, you probably would have kept sipping your latte and returned to ordering summer 2020 concert tickets on your phone.

Of course, that's exactly what happened. But as we look at which organizations adapted more effectively, we see agility and resilience as their most common trait, not foresight. Agility and resilience most often supported by deep investment in cloud communications and collaboration. Forward-thinking leaders are now taking steps to build upon this, driving sustainable transformation of people, process and technology, and allowing them to operate, govern, and yes, even [educate from anywhere](#).

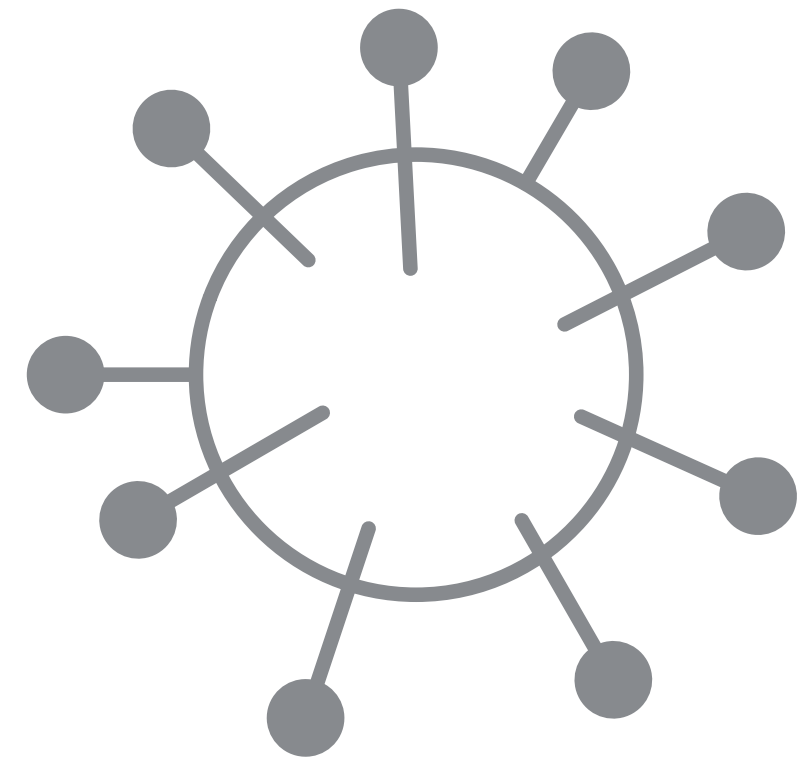
Be prepared.



Following on the heels of the first-ever virtual Enterprise Connect conference, *No Jitter* Editor and Enterprise Connect co-chair Beth Schultz published *Enterprise IT on COVID-19: 'I Came, I Saw, I Conquered'*. In it she recapped a roundtable she had moderated with Gary Kohlheim, Director of Services at Laureate International University, a private, online university committed to expanding access to higher education and empowering the greater good. As the 50-year-old university moved online, digital experience became the foundation for engagement between students, staff, and support resources. Laureate International University was early to adopt a cloud-first approach to communications and contact center, initially driven by the desire for a superior student experience across phone, email, SMS, and chat. This shared IT and business goal led Laureate International University to 8x8 and its **Open Communications Platform**. By implementing a unified cloud platform for CCaaS and UCaaS, they laid the foundation for a consistent student experience, a holistic view of that experience, and a sustainable platform for agility and resilience.

Moving forward.

When discussing Laureate International University pandemic experiences, Kohlheim said its adoption of the **8x8 cloud platform** “put us in a really good position to be ready for an event like this.” In fact, they were able to transition their professors and staff as well as their contact center specialists to remote work with zero impact to student/professor/staff interaction. Kohlheim emphasized that their adoption of a cloud platform was particularly beneficial from a student perspective. **Recent research** from Frost & Sullivan, *Communications Platforms: Reaching the Next Innovation Front of Enterprise Communications* compares the platform approach versus standalone applications, finding that “ultimately, a communications platform offers a centralized and complete view of how both people—employees, contact center specialists and customers—and machines (applications, bots, automated marketing campaigns, etc.) interact with customers, prospects, suppliers and partners.”



Now, Kohlheim is looking forward to other ways he can support the university and its 50,000+ students. For Kohlheim, that means focusing on experience, “getting [students] information as quickly as possible and being consistent across channels, whether it’s a phone call or chat. Providing that same level of service [across channels] is pretty exciting, and we’re fortunate that we’ve been able to stay on that path.” Kohlheim credits the communications platform choice with enabling his team to focus their time on “turning things on” to meet organizational needs rather than be mired in development work.

We’ve seen Laureate International University experience replicated by other 8x8 customers, and IT asset management firm Snow Software found further evidence in its poll of 250 global IT leaders about how the onset of the pandemic had affected their cloud adoption plans. **82% of respondents said they had ramped up their use of cloud** in direct response, and **60% said their use of off-premises technologies had continued to grow since then.** Most businesses now acknowledge that there is no going back, and the benefits of cloud communications platforms extend even beyond agility and resilience.

60%

said their use of off-premises technologies had continued to grow since the onset of the pandemic.

Source: Snow Software poll of 250 global IT leaders, June 2020

Assessing the landscape.

In reality, success was not universal. Riverbed's recent [Future of Work Survey](#) found that most businesses lacked the appropriate technology, with [69% saying they were not completely prepared to support extensive remote work at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak](#). Even for those organizations where most employees were already remote, more than half said they were still not completely prepared. Gartner's July 2020 Hype Cycle for Unified Communication and Collaboration Strategies recognized COVID-19's impact on the digital workplace, saying "organizations must reassess their UCC strategies to support the growing importance of remote work and business continuity."

For every successful organization, there's another organization who survived the short-term transition but now recognizes it lacks the capabilities and technical agility to prepare it for the next phase.



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of businesses were not completely prepared to support extensive remote work at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Source: Riverbed, Future of Work Global Survey, June 2020

Leaning forward.

Most organizations recognize the value of cloud communications and contact center solutions, but struggle with how to make the move. Legacy phone and contact center solutions can be complex, with no easy rip-and-replace solutions for those on-premises PBX systems.





Successful organizations began preparing for this day several years ago by creating cross-functional teams of contact center, finance, IT and business representatives to drive the analysis and evaluation process for their communications and contact center solutions. This alignment between business and IT is key to long-term success. There is strength in partnerships with business teams able to focus on defining requirements while IT focuses on implementation, operation, and administration, ultimately choosing a solution that meets the needs of both, serving the organization well in challenging times.

Taking the lead.

Laureate International University selected a future-ready [communications platform](#), avoiding the “islands of collaboration” that stem from point solutions. Kohlheim sees their decision as a key success factor over the last six months and what will allow them to quickly advance in the future.

Going forward, the university is expanding its usage of the 8x8 platform to leverage intelligent self-service capabilities. More and more organizations are advancing their use of artificial intelligence—a topic we explore further in our [AI Assisted Self Service in the Work from Home Era webinar](#) and in [Chapter 2 of our eBook series](#). The promise of these capabilities is proving critical to overall business continuity and resilience.





Chapter 5 Takeaways

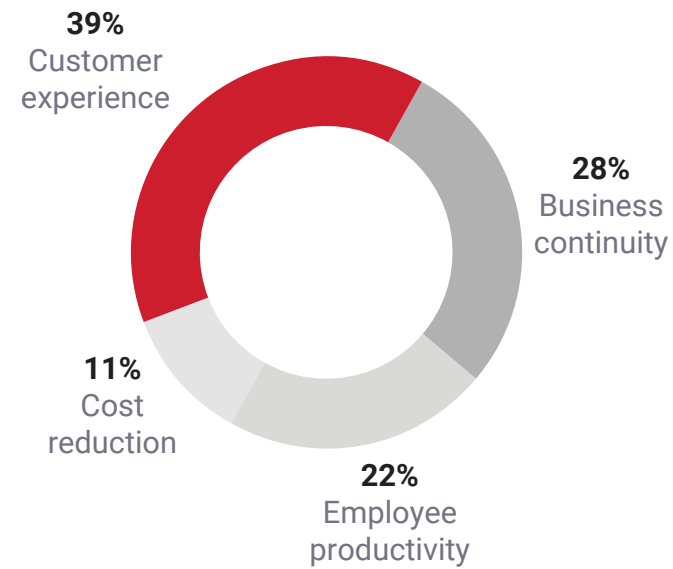
Many forward-thinking organizations are taking advantage of a single, integrated cloud communications platform to unify voice, video, chat, and SMS, including contact center agents.

You have a choice on your journey to communications centrality. Laureate International University, like thousands of other organizations, chose to invest in the 8x8 Open Communications Platform, providing them with voice, video, chat, contact center, and enterprise APIs.

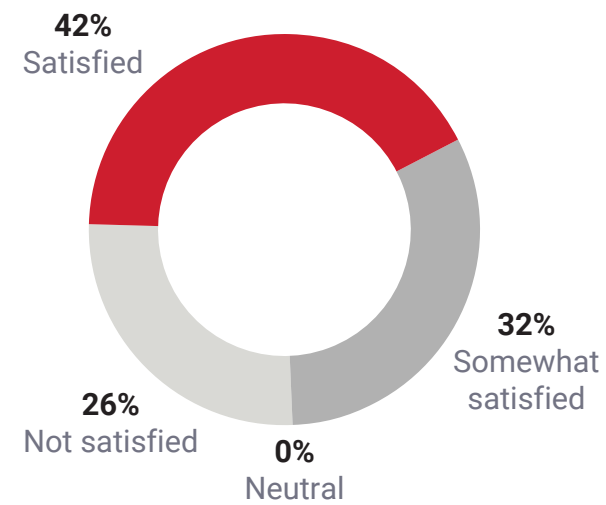
One of those other organizations is [Acer](#). To hear Acer's unique journey, [watch our on-demand webinar](#) detailing their lessons learned about enabling their global workforce and pivoting to an operate-from-anywhere mindset.

8x8 Poll Results

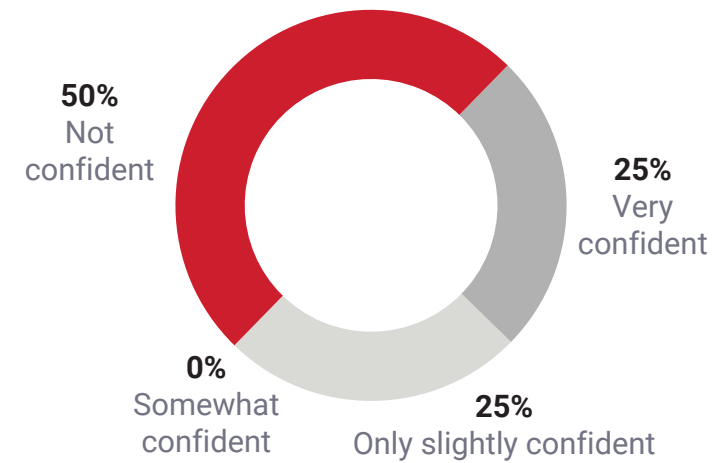
What is most important to you when selecting digital communications tools?



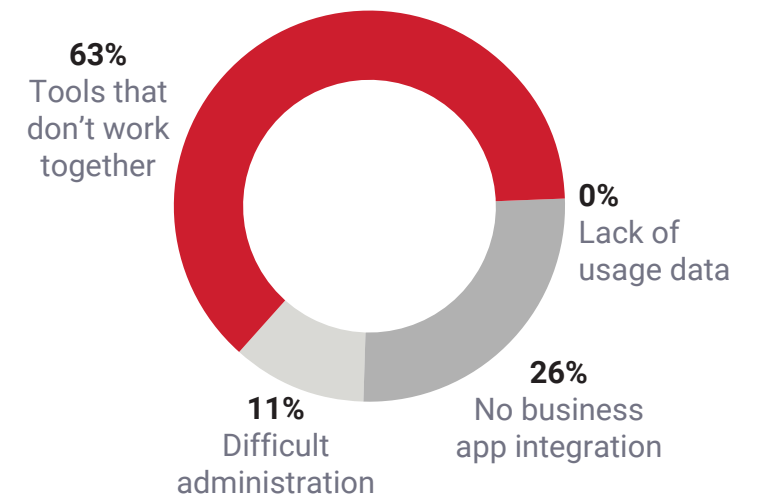
How satisfied are you with your organization's digital communications tools?



How confident are you in the security & governance of information shared via digital communications tools inside & outside of your company?



What's the most significant pain point your organization has with communications tools? (e.g. email, Slack, Teams, chat, video conferencing)



Sources: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter

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