Star2Star® COMMUNICATIONS

The True Value Of Unified Communications:
How UC Can Boost Your Bottom Line

Billionaire financier Warren Buffet famously said "Price is what you pay. Value is what you get." Nowhere is this more true than in the world of Unified Communications (UC). At Star2Star, we're devoted to providing our customers with the best value in the UC space.

The challenge in determining the true value of UC is that much of the value is cumulative. For example, if your company's phone system frequently drops calls and loses potential sales, that system is costing your business far more over time than just the monthly service fees.

On the other hand, a system that is easier and faster for employees to operate could end up saving more than it costs to own.

For example, using the screen pop function of StarContact CRM Integration saves a call center agent 15 seconds per call that would otherwise be spent looking up customer information. If that cuts the average call time from 5 minutes to 4 minutes and 45 seconds, that agent could handle an average of 5 more calls each day. That's a tangible, measurable benefit.

And what about the added customer satisfaction that comes from a shorter call, and the feeling of personalized service that comes from being recognized immediately? There is obviously a great deal of value in customer satisfaction, but how do you put a monetary figure on it? How would you even begin to assess the satisfaction of thousands of customers?

At Star2Star Communications, we're obsessed with providing the greatest possible value to our customers. Our Scalable Cloud Communications Solutions supply both tangible and intangible benefits to all aspects of a company's operations. In this paper, we'll explore the true value of UC from Star2Star, beginning with the efficiency and simplicity that the Star2Star Solution provides.

Efficient and Easy-to-use Communications

With Unified Communications from Star2Star, every application interacts seamlessly through a single interface. We have designed all of our applications to operate as a single solution, rather than as a separate service. This provides a great deal of value to our customers.

Users only have to learn a single user interface, greatly shortening the learning curve. Employees are able to focus on truly mastering the system rather than dabbling in several. The resulting familiarity not only makes users feel more comfortable and increases their job satisfaction, but also makes them more skilled communicators.

Since Star2Star features operate through a single, consistent user interface, it is far simpler for a user to communicate across several types of media. For example, StarFax Personal allows users to receive faxes via email. This means that they can communicate immediately by fax, even without a physical fax machine.

A Find Me/Follow Me feature allows users to forward incoming calls to their home or mobile phones – or even to both at the same time. This means that anyone who knows their office number can reach them anywhere, without having to take any action or know any other numbers.

Star2Star Delivers Real Value in Unified Communications

Star2Star's proven UC feature set, high reliability, and excellent sound quality add up to more than the sum of their parts.

Star2Star's features are easy to access, and they are designed to be as easy-to-use as possible. Our Cloud-Based Auto-Attendants are significantly simpler to manage and change, locally or company-wide, than most competing services. Some customers save hundreds of hours of labor every year just because Star2Star makes it easier for them to change their auto-attendants to holiday hours.

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The efficiency and ease of use of Star2Star's solutions provide company-wide benefits. Employees suffer less frustration when communicating, increasing their satisfaction. Because less time is needed for communication and other services, fewer man-hours are necessary and businesses can cut down on labor costs.

Faster Communications

Virtually every aspect of a business's operations involves communication. Even minor reductions in communications time can dramatically reduce the time it takes to get something done. For example, a salesperson waiting on a superior's approval to move forward with a deal can send them an instant message using StarChat to get approval immediately, rather than waiting for them to finish a meeting. By closing that deal faster, the salesperson can begin work on the next deal sooner.

The effect of reducing communications time is cumulative and can add up quickly. Five minutes saved here and an hour saved there can shave days, weeks, or even months off project times. The time saved grows as the size and complexity of the project increases. Let us assume that the salesperson in the example above was able to get the deal approved 30 minutes earlier than he or she would have without Star2Star. If five other salespeople working on the same project were also able to get deals approved 30 minutes faster, the company would save 3 total hours of employee time. For operations that require tens of thousands of communications between thousands of employees, the amount of time Star2Star can save a company is tremendous.

As your communications speed up, your selling cycles shorten. Reductions in project time mean that your products are ordered, produced, and shipped faster than ever before, freeing your company to begin the process again sooner than you imagined possible. Faster selling cycles mean more selling cycles, which mean more sales and greater revenues. For some companies, those extra sales cycles can translate to millions of dollars.

Employees who are spending less time operating or waiting on a communications system are now free to dedicate that time to other pursuits. Star2Star not only helps your employees work faster, it lets them accomplish more. A real estate agent who spends less time trying to reach other agents at the home office for information may be able to show clients more houses and increase the likelihood of a sale. A personal assistant who spends less time routing and transferring calls may be able to spend more time organizing and maintaining the office, increasing the productivity and comfort of everyone.

It may be a cliché that time is money, but that doesn't make it any less true. Companies using Star2Star are able to reduce the time necessary to complete any process that involves communications, allowing them to lower their costs and increase their revenues. One last example of a time saving solution from Star2Star is the video conferencing application, StarVideo.
For example, suppose an attorney needs to present the terms of a proposed lawsuit settlement with the nine-member board of a company. Instead of tracking each member down, the attorney can hold a single videoconference, share the documents in the videoconference interface, and have everyone involved, all in real time — regardless of their physical location. .

Increased Mobility

Mobility is no longer a luxury for businesses; it is a necessity. Business is now conducted on a truly global scale, and even smaller companies must maintain relationships across vast distances. Mobile workers are now the norm, whether they are traveling salespeople, regional managers, or insurance claims investigators. Less mobile companies are at a huge competitive disadvantage in a global marketplace.

Until recently, it was still difficult and expensive to adequately manage and support mobile workers. Star2Star2's cloud communications solutions make remote working easier and more cost-effective than ever before. Features like Find Me/ Follow Me, voicemail access from email, and the ability to use Star2Star's services on virtually any broadband Internet connection ensure users never lose contact, no matter where they travel.

In today's Internet-driven world, everything can change in seconds. Agents in the field have to stay informed at all times or risk falling behind. Suppose a financial planner has a 2:00pm appointment with a potential client who only has the planner's office number but needs to cancel at the last minute. If the planner has Star2Star, his or her Find Me/Follow Me can ring his or her cell phone at the same time as the office phone and alert the agent of the cancellation immediately. Alternately, the planner can access his or her voice mails from email remotely and retrieve a message left on the office line. Either way, the agent won't waste time and money traveling and waiting on someone who isn't coming.

Workers now demand more freedom to work and live where they want. In an increasingly competitive job market, employers have to keep up with this demand if they want to build and retain the best possible workforce. Imagine an inbound call center has a top agent, but that agent's spouse takes a new position that requires a move. If the call center uses Star2Star's solutions like StarCenter, it does not have to replace the top agent with an inferior performer. Rather, the agent can set up a personal computer at their new home to use a SoftPhone and access all of Star2Star's features. The agent can even make and receive calls using a company line.

Another problem that many companies deal with on a daily basis is the high cost of travel: fuel, airline tickets, hotel rooms, food, and more. Not too long ago, there was no viable substitute for travel; the importance of face-to-face meetings and collaboration made it a necessity. Star2Star solutions provide all of the same benefits of a face-to-face meeting but don't require the user to leave the office, essentially providing mobility without travel. A company with five offices in three states could use StarConferencing to hold a voice conference with up to 150 users instead of paying to send everyone to a single location. Conferencing also leads to greater collaboration, which is also part of the true value of Star2Star.

Company-Wide Collaboration

The free exchange of ideas and information is crucial to business success. The most successful companies are those that make the most effective use of their human capital. The entire modern business model is premised on the assumption that a group working together is able to accomplish more than a collection of individuals working alone. Star2Star makes it easier to collaborate than ever before, whether with a co-worker across the hallway or a customer across the country.
Collaboration is like anything else; the easier and less expensive it is, the more employees are going to engage in it. If a retail store manager has to make a long distance call to speak with the manager of another store, that manager is unlikely to call for advice on comparatively minor matters, even if the other manager has experience in the area. With Star2Star, all lines on the same account can be called for free, regardless of their physical locations. The two managers can then call each other to share advice and experience on any matter and improve every aspect of their stores' operations.

Greater collaboration leads to greater results, and new technology often brings greater collaboration. By installing mechanized conveyor belts and adding more workers to his team, Henry Ford was able to slash the time it took for his factory to produce a car from around 12 hours to around 2.5 hours.

Star2Star supplies the technology and software businesses need to break down barriers to collaboration, and the employees take over from there. With Star2Star, voice and videoconferencing, instant messaging, fax, high quality phone calls, and the infinite collaboration they provide are just a few clicks away.

Perhaps the single most valuable asset of any business is the collected knowledge of the organization and its employees. Unified communications from Star2Star enables businesses to tap into this asset more effectively.

If a legal department in Miami needs a series of documents from an accounting department in Seattle, they can send an instant message with StarChat to have them faxed over with StarFax. If a team of engineers is tasked with building a bridge in Virginia that is very similar to one another team built in Oregon, they can use StarCon-

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ferencing to host a brainstorming conference call with every member of both teams. If a call center is having difficulty communicating with a customer who speaks a foreign language, the call center can transfer the customer to an agent at another location who speaks the language fluently.

In all three examples, a company took advantage of its entire knowledge base to meet needs, save time, and improve the final product. Those hypothetical companies were also able to improve customer satisfaction.

Increased Customer Satisfaction

The primary goal of any company should be to keep its customers satisfied. Satisfied customers are far more likely to be repeat customers and to recommend the company to other potential customers. Even in the Internet Age, word-of-mouth is still a powerful force. Although customer satisfaction is nearly impossible to accurately measure or monetize, it is clear that it is very valuable. Scalable Cloud Communications Solutions from Star2Star increase customer satisfaction in a number of ways.

Customers often want to be a part of the development and production process. It gives them a feeling of control and also helps to ensure that the end product is exactly what they desired. Star2Star makes it easier and more affordable to engage customers throughout the entire sales process.

Suppose a boat owner is looking to repaint their boat and calls a marina to see if they can meet a set of strict guidelines, but the only one present at the office is a receptionist. Since Star2Star users have access to system-wide inbound and outbound call recording, the receptionist can record the call and store it until one of the painters can listen. The customer could remain involved by faxing precise color specifications, participating in a conference call with the marina's management and painters, or simply calling to check on the status of the job.

A more personalized sales process is more likely to result in a completed sale, and Star2Star allows companies to personalize their sales process to an unprecedented degree. A leading example is StarContact, which integrates a user's customer database into their communication system. StarContact will display screen pops containing information about a customer automatically when that customer makes or receives a call. Users can review the customer's profile and account prior to speaking, allowing them to greet the customer by name, and provide personalized service from the start. This also speeds up call times and reduces the customer's inconvenience.

A large portion of customer satisfaction is determined by the quality of the final product and the speed with which it is produced. Star2Star ensures both by providing extremely reliable service. If a company's communication system goes down, it can halt production for days or even weeks. Star2Star guarantees 99.999% uptime reliability and actively maintains it with StarWatch continuous monitoring of every Star2Star system. If something does go wrong, Star2Star offers next-day parts replacement and extensive disaster recovery protections such as StarRecovery.

Customers want to feel secure that their needs are going to be met, especially in fields such as health care, financial planning, and hospitality. Companies increase customer security by presenting themselves in the most professional and advanced manner possible. Star2Star's solutions allow even sole proprietorships to sound and feel like a multi-national corporation. For example, a two-partner law firm could set up a cloud-based auto attendant that alerts potential clients of the firm's operating hours before routing them to leave a message — instead of having the client hear several rings before being prompted to record a message. That firm could also dramatically reduce their costs with Star2Star, which is the topic of the next section.

Dramatic Cost Savings

Star2Star adds immense value to a business, while simultaneously reducing costs. Star2Star solutions are engineered with cost reduction in mind, and the results show it.

For example, components such as the StarBox™ Cloud Connection Manager are less expensive to purchase, and they use substantially less power than competing

products. Star2Star can arrange flexible leasing terms to lower costs even further. Star2Star also provides a variety of lower-cost phones for cost-sensitive customers.

The unique Blended Architecture™ upon which Star2Star's entire solution is built runs with lower operating costs than competing systems. The Star2Star solution works on virtually any broadband Internet connection, so customers don't have to pay for expensive private IP network connections.

Two of Star2Star's biggest money-saving features are line pooling and line bursting. Star2Star provides users with a bundle of virtual call pathways, or "lines," that can be shared throughout a user's North American locations, allowing companies to reduce the number of lines that they need. A 10-location pizza chain with two lines per location could instead pool 15 total lines between all 10 locations for a reduction of 5 lines. Businesses that take advantage of bursting lines will have additional lines added on a temporary basis whenever more calls come in than their standard allotment of lines can handle. This allows businesses to handle peak call times with minimal expense.

Labor is one of the largest costs that businesses incur, and Star2Star can help reduce man-hours. Star2Star is so easy and efficient to use that employees don't need to work as long or as much. Whereas some PBX systems require a small staff of trained professionals to operate them, Star2Star and our partners take care of that, freeing an IT staff to focus on other areas.

Star2Star offers many solutions that have traditionally been provided as stand-alone services. These services can be replaced once a business signs up for the corresponding Star2Star solution. For example, many businesses pay call answering services to take and deliver messages, often during non-business hours. Star2Star services like auto-attendants and voicemail access from email provide sufficient functionality that they render a call answering service unnecessary.

The single biggest expense involved with virtually any communications system is getting it up and running. Hardware has to be purchased or leased. An installation crew has to come in. Business operations are disrupted as the staff learns the new system. Unfortunately, many companies are forced to change systems when they grow so large that they max out their system's capacity and can no longer add new users. Businesses who use Star2Star don't have this problem. Star2Star's solutions offer virtually limitless scalability, allowing them to grow along with a business.

Star2Star not only lower costs, but also greatly simplifies the budgeting and billing process. With Star2Star, a business gets a single bill every month that contains all of the Star2Star services on its entire account, regardless of the number of locations. In a few circumstances, Star2Star has been able to cut the number of phone bills that large chains receive from several thousand down to one. Star2Star also benefits customers by letting them know exactly how much their communications bill will be every month. With a few exceptions such as bursting lines, Star2Star services are billed at the same rate every month regardless of amount of use. This allows companies to budget more accurately.

Conclusion

As you've seen, the true value of Unified Communications from Star2Star Communications is about much more than a price tag. Star2Star's Scalable Cloud Communications Solutions adds value to every aspect of a business, from reducing production times to increasing customer satisfaction. Star2Star revolutionizes the way a business communicates, making it easier to share information, express ideas, work with customers, and manage operations. Businesses that have been Star2Star users for years are still discovering new ways that Star2Star adds value to their company.

If you've been impressed with the true value of Star2Star, you will only be more impressed in the future. Star2Star is continually innovating in a never-ending quest to bring more value to customers. New features and services, along with updates and improvements to existing ones, are released frequently. Star2Star customers have come to expect a communications solution that only gets better over time.

Star2Star COMMUNICATIONS
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