

ESG SHOWCASE

Benefits of Deploying Managed Unified Communications and Collaboration Solutions

Date: October 2021 **Author:** Bob Laliberte, Senior Analyst and Practice Director; and Leah Matuson, Research Analyst

ABSTRACT: Organizations need robust and long-term unified communications and collaboration solutions to enable a distributed workforce to remain productive and serve their customers. For this to happen, it will be critical for organizations to leverage a service that is properly scoped, implemented, and integrated into existing business processes. This service also needs to be highly available and performant to ensure optimized experiences. ePlus, a proven technology solutions provider, has partnered with Cisco to deliver a managed service capable of meeting those requirements.

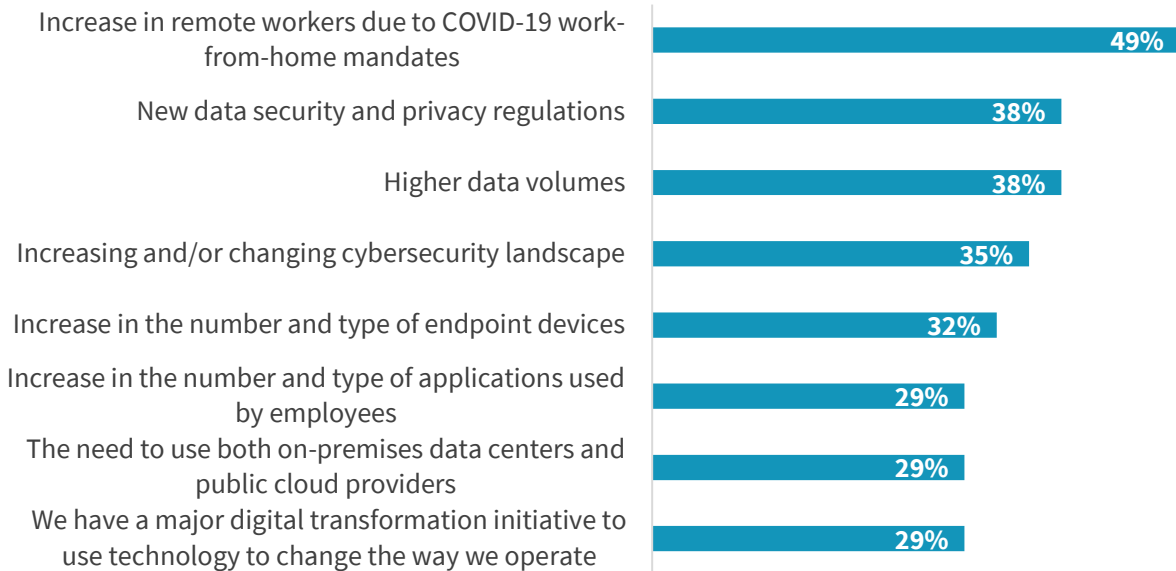
The Current Environment

Today's IT environment has become highly distributed—applications are extending across multiple public clouds, data centers, and the edge, and massive numbers of employees are working remotely. While many organizations have found that these distributed environments offer greater flexibility, they also find that they create more overall complexity. In fact, ESG research shows that 75% of midmarket and enterprise survey respondents believe IT complexity has increased over the past two years, citing causes related to distributed environments like the increase in remote workers (49%) and the need to use both on-premises data centers and public clouds (29%) (see Figure 1).¹

¹ Source: ESG Research Report, [2021 Technology Spending Intentions Survey](#), January 2021. All ESG research references and charts in this showcase have been taken from this research report.

Figure 1. Top 8 Drivers of IT Complexity

What do you believe are the biggest reasons your organization’s IT environment has become more complex? (Percent of respondents, N=496, five responses accepted)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

The Pressing Need for Comprehensive Unified Communications and Collaboration Solutions

The combination of highly distributed environments and an ever-increasing remote workforce has highlighted a pressing need for comprehensive unified communications and collaboration solutions. After all, with more people working remotely than ever before, effective, reliable online collaboration and communication solutions have never been more important.

In fact, ESG research indicates that when IT professionals were asked what they believe the most significant lasting impact of the current COVID-19 business disruption on their organizations’ longer-term IT strategy was, the top response was a broader use of online collaboration tools as part of daily work patterns. Indeed, the research indicates over half (55%) of respondents stated that spending on communication and collaboration solutions would increase this year. And when asked what considerations would be the most important for justifying IT investments to their organization’s business management team, respondents reported that improving collaboration capabilities was one of the top three justifications, only behind improving cybersecurity and increasing employee productivity.

While collaboration is essential for increasing productivity and operational efficiency and improving the user experience, organizations across industries have been struggling to find the most effective unified communication and collaboration solutions for their unique business needs. In addition, many organizations that do find the most appropriate solutions to fit their needs may not employ trained staff who possess the appropriate skillsets necessary to deploy and manage those solutions. Looking at all the variables, this scenario can be challenging, if not somewhat daunting.

Enter ePlus, a proven technology solutions provider and long-time Cisco technology partner. ePlus enables customers to easily and efficiently deploy long-term, unified communications and collaboration solutions with its ePlus Cloud Collaboration, powered by Cisco Unified Communication Manager (UCM) Cloud and Managed Services.

ePlus Cloud Collaboration and Managed Service Solutions

For more than 20 years, ePlus has been providing a wide range of managed technology services covering the complete IT lifecycle. The company focuses on midmarket to enterprise customers, helping them to accelerate the adoption of on-premises and cloud-based unified communication and collaboration solutions. ePlus offers an outcomes-focused perspective to help customers understand the big picture, while also delivering practical approaches. This enables customers to see both the forest and the trees—assisting them to achieve a more modern, secure digital business.

Managed Service Centers and Support

Using its extensive experience and deep expertise, ePlus supports its customers, leveraging its four US-based managed service centers, which enable ePlus to deliver 24x7 monitoring and support. ePlus offers a flexible subscription model to help customers monitor, manage, and maximize business-critical technologies, including cloud, security, data center, mobility, and collaboration.

Further validation of ePlus expertise can be seen in its 20+ year relationship with Cisco. ePlus holds certifications as a Cisco Gold Certified Partner for Cisco Master Collaboration Specialization, Security and Cloud; Cisco Master Managed Services with Master/Powered Services for Unified Communications (UC) and Security; Cisco Master Enterprise; Cisco Master Security Specialization; Cisco Master Collaboration Specialization; and Customer Experience/Lifecycle Authorization.

ePlus Delivers Customer Value

ePlus Managed Services offers an independently audited and certified ITIL-based framework, 24x7 support, customized tools, dashboards, and highly trained staff. ePlus Managed Services enables customers to gain better visibility and insights into their collaboration environment, helping to inform and guide business decisions. Throughout its tenure, the vendor's managed services expertise has demonstrated customer value across a wide variety of areas, including the following:

- **Breadth and Depth of Expertise.** From 24x7 managed services and support to software upgrades to moves/add/deletes, ePlus has hundreds of professionals delivering managed services with access to more than 650 ePlus certified technology professionals that collectively hold approximately 2,200 certification titles, across more than 60 vendors, with a heavy concentration in our top vendors like Cisco.
- **Global Reach with Local Support.** ePlus leverages the power of four US-based service centers staffed with certified technology professionals and offers global onsite support via a trusted, established partner network.
- **Aggregated Executive Dashboard.** All ePlus Managed Services customers receive access to a comprehensive dashboard, which offers an easily accessible, real-time view of their distributed IT environments monitored by ePlus. The executive dashboard provides a number of features, including managed data aggregation, mapping and global infrastructure resource utilization, and trending data across multiple device types via an intuitive user interface. Customers can also view aggregated metrics and the health status of all components under ePlus management (e.g., unified communications, routers, switches, wireless, servers, etc.) along with topology and maps to speed troubleshooting.
- **Enhanced Integration and Audit.** ePlus is able to provide tight integration and eBonding between ePlus and its customers and technology partners, enabling visibility, continuity, and streamlined support. This means that when a help desk ticket is opened up with a customer or Cisco, that ticket is automatically synchronized with the ePlus Service Desk. Consequently, each time ePlus opens the same ticket, the ticket is automatically synchronized with the

customer and Cisco and updated to the last noted instance. Not only does this expedite problem resolution, but it also ensures there is an audit trail that keeps track of any and all events for ease of compliance.

- **Security and Domain Knowledge.** ePlus Advisory and Managed Security Services offers customers the benefit of their significant domain expertise and capabilities. This is particularly important when moving applications to the cloud and ensuring the appropriate security posture. The ePlus team also has in-depth network experience to ensure optimized connectivity.
- **Accelerated Troubleshooting.** Given their experience and expertise, Cisco has certified ePlus to take first-and second-level calls, providing customers with quick and efficient troubleshooting and generally resolving first- and second-level calls before they evolve to a Level 3 status. According to ePlus, the vendor typically resolves 94% of its cases without ever needing to involve the Cisco Technical Assistance Center (TAC). However, should a case be elevated to TAC, the case is escalated at a much higher level due to the relationship with ePlus.

As part of their accelerated troubleshooting services, ePlus offers:

- **End-to-end Management.** ePlus offers customers end-to-end management via letters of agency with carrier networks, ensuring a single point of contact for all problem resolution.
 - **Intelligent Alerting and Testing.** ePlus can “inject intelligence” into a service desk help ticket based on the particular company’s historical trends and any previous anomalies, allowing engineers to immediately see the *historical view* of the problem as well as recommendations for rectifying the existing situation. This alerts engineers as to what to look for, rather than forcing them to waste valuable time manually reviewing general issues.
 - **Robotic Process Automation (RPA).** ePlus has created RPA tools to help customers perform proactive readiness testing on video conferencing setups before going live, ensuring the conference will run smoothly.
- **Flexible Financial Models.** The capital finance group within ePlus offers customers a viable means to decrease the time, resources, and capital requirements associated with IT procurement and leasing for on-premises environments. For those customers not ready to move an application to the public cloud, the capital finance group within ePlus can help to create on-premises consume-as-a service solutions until they are ready to migrate to the cloud.

The Bigger Truth

In today’s dynamic business environment, organizations need to ensure effective communication and collaboration across the company, but effectively accomplishing this isn’t always easy.

ePlus offers both cloud-based and on-premises solutions and has had 20+ years of experience aiding global customers in managing their existing environments, migrating to the cloud, and efficiently dealing with business-critical challenges.

ePlus provides customer value across many fronts—from its depth and breadth of technical expertise for collaboration solutions to its global reach with local support; from accelerated troubleshooting to in-depth security and cross-domain knowledge; and flexible financial models for the cloud, as well as on-premises.

Organizations looking for a managed services partner that understands the essentials and can seamlessly work with them on specific business and technology requirements should consider ePlus.



All trademark names are property of their respective companies. Information contained in this publication has been obtained by sources The Enterprise Strategy Group (ESG) considers to be reliable but is not warranted by ESG. This publication may contain opinions of ESG, which are subject to change. This publication is copyrighted by The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc. Any reproduction or redistribution of this publication, in whole or in part, whether in hard-copy format, electronically, or otherwise to persons not authorized to receive it, without the express consent of The Enterprise Strategy Group, Inc., is in violation of U.S. copyright law and will be subject to an action for civil damages and, if applicable, criminal prosecution. Should you have any questions, please contact ESG Client Relations at 508.482.0188.



Enterprise Strategy Group is an IT analyst, research, validation, and strategy firm that provides market intelligence and actionable insight to the global IT community.



www.esg-global.com



contact@esg-global.com



508.482.0188