

Unified Communications Buyers' Guide

How to choose the right UCaaS
platform for your business



About this guide

If you're reading this, we're willing to bet you've already decided to move your communications platform to the cloud.

No, not just move it—transform it. And in doing so, deliver differentiated experiences with an integrated solution for employee and customer communications. By moving to the cloud, you'll supercharge your organisation's customer experience (CX) with faster service and hardwire business continuity into every aspect of your communications while boosting employee productivity and satisfaction.

Future-ready organisations understand that the most significant business asset is their customer base, and superior customer experience and satisfaction are what will drive measurable value in the long run. Companies that get CX right consistently outperform their peers on several critical dimensions including customer loyalty and revenue.

Pivotal components of their long-term strategy are (1) embracing the right combination of internal communication tools, (2) powering external channels (voice, video, web chat, SMS, and virtual assistants) and AI-enabled

applications, plus (3) utilizing customer insights and analytics to deliver the data needed to perfect technology and business decisions.

The right business communications platform can do all this and more. And for such a critical system transition, there are bound to be apprehensions about the process and concerns around not only finding the right-fit vendor, but also ensuring a successful rollout and continued long-term success.

This guide takes you through the key themes and concepts organisations should consider when selecting Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) technology and offers insights into the the **8x8 Platform for CX**. 8x8 has been recognized as a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service for **thirteen** consecutive years.

What should you expect from a good UCaaS platform?

Step 1:

What to look for? The short answer: It depends.

It depends on what your customers and your business demand. Today's businesses face rapidly-changing demands, whether due to customer trends, competitor activity, customer and employee expectations, individual and generational preferences, and other unforeseen factors. So the more versatile and robust your unified communications (UC) solution, the easier it will be to respond to any business challenges that come your way.



A top-notch UCaaS platform and vendor provides:

Reliability for the best end-to-end experience

- 99.999% single uptime SLA for all CX services, including UC and contact centre (CC)
- AI/ML-based GlobalReach™ tech for optimised routing to ensure superior voice quality and MOS score, even in low bandwidth conditions
- 24/7 support for UC and CC for faster time to resolution

A true partnership to accelerate tech adoption and de-risk your deployment

- Single point of accountability, contact, and support
- Strong, innovation-powered, and proven cloud-native platform
- Hardened, time-tested migration strategy with simultaneous UC and CC deployment

Integrated solution for superior customer experience

- Feature extensibility across UC and CC to ensure consistent experience from the front desk to the back office
- A single governance, security, compliance, and data privacy policy for all business communications
- One set of integrations across UC and CC with a wide set of technology partners including deep integration with Microsoft Teams

Cost-efficient packaging for immediate ROI and low TCO

- Persona-based interfaces and packages with mix-and-match options
- Right-sized turnkey products to meet business needs without sacrificing features or added complexity
- Predictable, foreseeable costs with no additional software/ hardware upgrade or maintenance costs

Modern communications to power your business success

Customer Experience (CX) communications bring customer and employee experience together with contact centre, voice, video, chat, and APIs on one cloud-native platform. The 8x8® Platform for CX optimises omnichannel customer experience with data-driven insights while enabling robust employee engagement in a work-from-anywhere world.

8x8 erases the boundary between Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) and Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) to help organisations deliver modern communications experiences that drive revenue, cut costs, and optimise operations for the new world of work.

With one integrated platform for customer and employee communications, businesses can respond to customer inquiries faster while maintaining the context and content of each engagement as it progresses through the customer journey. 8x8 Work in Partnership with KCOM's is "capex-lite" and quick to deploy, with no additional hardware needed. Our dedicated team can get you up and running in a way that suits your needs and timescales with little to no disruption to your business.

8x8 Work in Partnership with KCOM's cloud-driven flexibility, simple per-user pricing, license mix and-match capabilities, and scalability mean your system grows with your business, allowing you to "invest once and use forever." XCaaS solves for what you need today and provides a clear and easy path for whatever is next.

Bonus

8x8 Work in Partnership with KCOM is back by a network and platform wide 99.999% uptime SLA that is unmatched in the industry and ensures peace of mind.

Get the UCaaS capabilities your teams need to be productive

Step 2:

Work better from anywhere

Work better together from anywhere Along with the nature, sector, and size of your organisation, the capabilities you require from a communications system also depend on the roles and responsibilities of individual teams.

As the responsibility for customer experience spreads throughout the organisation, it is not surprising to find that one size does not fit all when it comes to communication tools. Back-office knowledge workers can typically have general UCaaS capabilities.

They need to receive and place calls and chat messages and host video meetings to collaborate primarily with internal audiences and suppliers. But there is an exception in the back office—internal IT help desks. These teams also benefit from contact centre capabilities, such as advanced call handling and routing, insight into activity levels for managing or scheduling purposes, or even the ability to provide real-time training and coaching.

Leaders seek to deliver the right communications capabilities for everyone in the company. Look for a UCaaS solution that's highly customisable, with a range of service packages that you can mix and match according to the needs of different roles cost-effectively for your organisation. Simple per-user billing will allow you to switch employees from one package to another.

Whether or not your business currently relies on a contact centre, an excellent cloud-based UCaaS platform will allow that capability to be switched on quickly, with a full spectrum of digital channels, including voice, chat, email, and social media. Organisations searching for communications technology that bridges employee and customer experience gaps find that an integrated platform provides the highest reliability, security, and the best overall value.

Modernising communication experiences and powering business agility with 8x8 service plans to support company-wide communication needs.

UCaaS service plan and options

X2—All in one voice, video, and chat

The X2 plan is well-suited for most employees, offering one application for business voice, team messaging, and meetings.

Users can access the essential communication and collaboration capabilities through the 8x8 Work desktop or mobile app, web browser, or a desk phone, with unlimited UK calling.

Integrating 8x8 communications with your critical enterprise apps helps automate workflows and boost team productivity.

X4—Advanced calling handling and analytics

Includes advanced speech analytics and quality management to improve productivity and service quality.

Enable advanced call handling for receptionists with 8x8 Frontdesk and supervisory features like barge-monitor-whisper. Also, get audio calls and video meeting recordings and storage capabilities.

Accept no compromise on reliability, security, and compliance

Step 3:

Reliable business communications for your organisation's success and growth

In the real world, service level agreements (SLAs) are more than the sum of their parts, and organisations need to consider the reliability and resilience of cloud services to realize the full benefits.

8x8 focus on high availability across systems, people, and processes meaning there's no risk of a single point of failure across their 35+ geographic locations, providing reliability, quality of service, and local data residency. All integrated into KCOM's ultra reliable network we offer industry-leading reliability with a 99.999% uptime service level agreement (SLA) that covers uptime and call quality.

A single SLA guarantee and single point of accountability for all your business communications needs are critical for organisations, unlike standalone solutions or bundled communication options, which cannot credibly promise a single SLA nor operate under one standard policy for governance, security, and data privacy.

Our 99.999% uptime SLA across UCaaS and CCaaS is a major distinction in the industry. It is only made possible because 8x8 XCaaS is built on a proprietary, single vendor, integrated technology platform, enabling organisations worldwide to focus on driving their business forward by exceeding their employee communications and customer engagement objectives.

Security, privacy and compliance for everyone

8x8 has prioritized security and compliance certifications to meet the demanding needs of our customers across all industries.

With the industry's widest geographic coverage and over 300 patents covering diverse aspects of our services, infrastructure, UX design, and functionality, 8x8 has been a leader in cloud communications for many years. We maintain various industry-leading third-party compliance certifications, and our security program is designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of our customers' data.

We have created a top-down culture of security and compliance, including a commitment to secure architecture and development. As a result, national and multinational organisations in both the private and public sectors choose 8x8 to help them comply with strict standards, protect their reputations, and secure their customer data.



8x8 security features and compliance certifications include:

Security features	Compliance certifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure Coding practices including the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) and Common Weakness Enumeration (CWE) List• Fraud Detection• Secure Endpoint Provisioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cloud Security Alliance (CSA) STAR compliance• FCC Customer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI) compliance• Health Information Trust Alliance (HITRUST) compliance• Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance• STIR/SHAKEN• National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST 800- 53 R4) and Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) compliance• Accessibility support through WCAG 2.1 AA compliant user interfaces• Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) apply for data transfers between EU and non-EU countries• ISO 27001:2013 and ISO 9001 certified• Certified PCI-DSS 3.2.1 SAQ-D provider• UK Government G-Cloud supplier• UK Government Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation

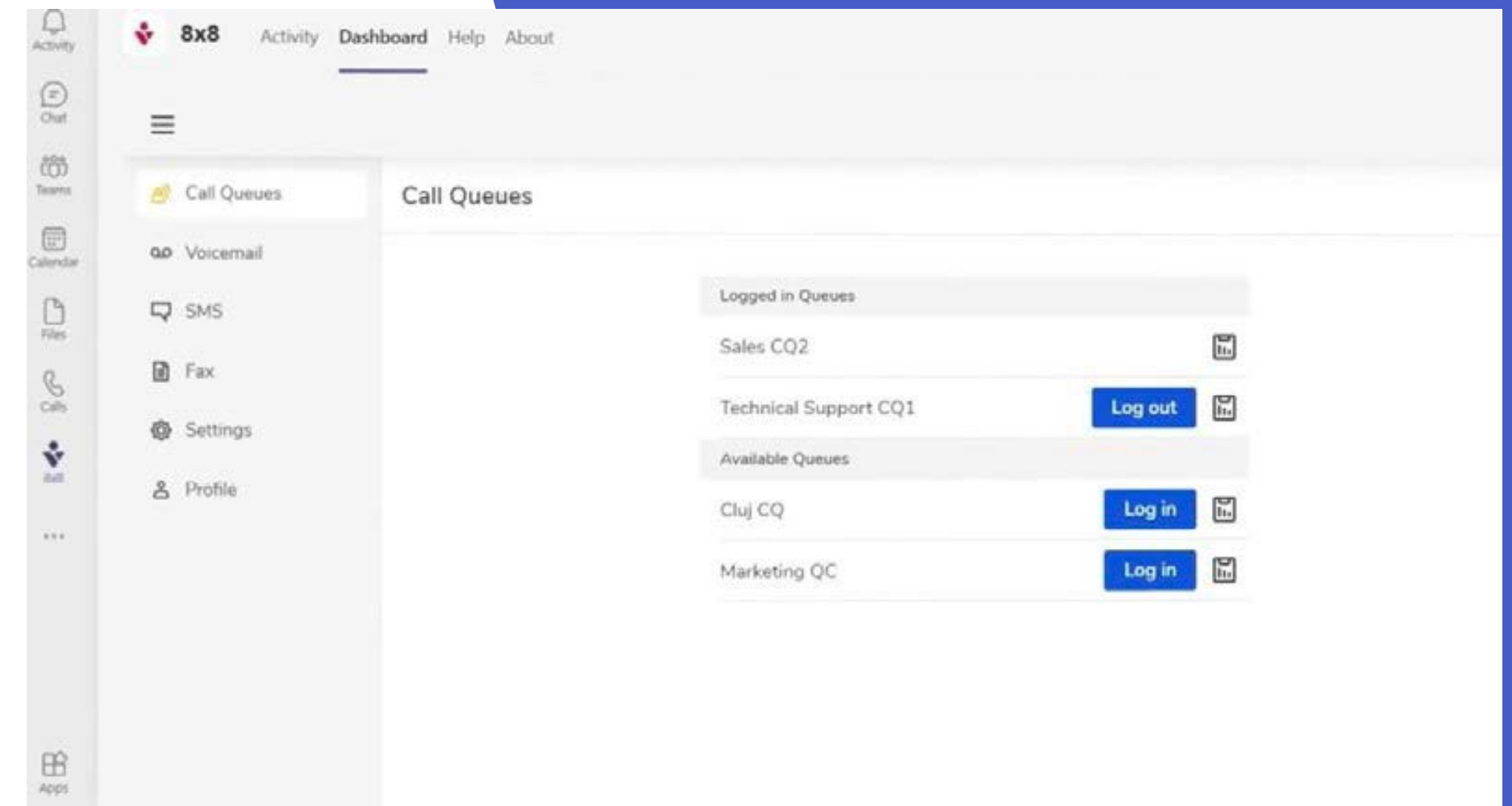
Look for an open platform with native business app integration

Step 4:

Work better from anywhere

Deploying a new unified communications platform shouldn't mean changing what works for your business or giving up any apps and systems that already serve you well. Your new system should be compatible with vital third-party apps in a way that enhances their effectiveness within your business.

Our integration-friendly architecture and Ecosystem of Technology Partners makes it easy to leverage pre-built integrations or use APIs to support additional integration possibilities for users who work and spend most of their time in productivity and business apps. 8x8 integrates with over 40 of the most commonly used and industry-leading CRMs, ERP, WFM, helpdesk, and productivity applications.



Given the rise in popularity of collaboration apps like Microsoft Teams, the 8x8 Platform for CX also extends into Microsoft 365 to enable external calling from any Microsoft Teams endpoint.

8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams gives organisations all the benefits of a global enterprise communication solution and enhances the customer experience through additional functionality such as supervisor barge/ monitor/ whisper, business messaging through eFax and SMS/MMS, legacy hardware support, and more. This saves time and money without the hassle of managing multiple communications vendors or complicating the Team's user experience.

In addition, our contact centre is solution certified for Microsoft Teams, which offers the best of both worlds. It enables contact centre agents using 8x8 Contact Centre for Microsoft Teams to simplify customer engagement workflows using Teams by connecting agents with experts when needed. Both solutions leverage the same streamlined deployment system that enables organisations to quickly improve employee productivity and the customer experience.

No more toggling between apps lets your teams stay in the flow and get more done with their favorite business apps.



Make sure every mode of communication truly delivers

Step 5:

Not all UCaaS solutions are created equal

With the global economy and workplace undergoing radical restructuring, you need tools that spur productivity and creativity while setting you apart in customers' eyes.

The best UCaaS platforms offer dynamic, easy-to-use features that make customer and employee experiences as efficient and effortless as possible, allowing you to harness advanced technology and elevate your business performance.



Modern communications to power your business success

8x8 Work in Partnership with KCOM is a cloud-based app that brings together business telephony, video meetings, and team messaging on your desktop PC, smartphone, or web browser to offer a single, unified experience. Employees can communicate and collaborate with co-workers, customers, and suppliers securely and with complete confidence, building meaningful business relationships and inspiring customer trust.



Voice and telephony

Powerful enterprise-class PBX and cloud calling capabilities:

- Local DID number
- Unmetered national calling plans
- Informal call queues
- Internet fax Flexible call flow rules

Video meetings

Unleash your employees' creative energy and productivity with intuitive and robust video and audio conferencing:

- Secure, browser-based video collaboration for maximum versatility and mobility
- The ability to host, manage, and attend video conferences from your mobile or desktop with up to 500 meeting participants
- Personal meetings URLs for each employee
- Intuitive user interface
- Integration with Microsoft Outlook and Google Workplace for easy calendar scheduling and invitations
- Live streaming via YouTube capabilities
- Guest access without additional plug-ins
- Whiteboarding
- Live transcription
- Advanced moderation controls
- Meeting polls
- Emoji reactions
- Breakout rooms
- Post-meeting summary and highlights

Chat and team messaging

Flexibility and versatility are vital in a messaging app, particularly if you have multiple locations spread across the world. 8x8 chat and team messaging features include:

- Instant chat and group messaging access for all employees
- Public and private collaboration rooms
- Secure file sharing, @mentions, and the ability to follow and unfollow rooms
- Shared document shelf for easy access
- AI-based chat summarization

Unified administration

8x8 offers unified administration capabilities for license management, number porting, provisioning, and configuration changes. 8x8 unified administration features include:

- Role-based access controls to easily set permissions for administrators and users
- Multi-site support to automate quick site setup from any location
- User provisioning interface to create users, assign devices, and configure features for users
- Flexibility to set up independent and site-based cost centres
- Granular access to subsets of the system for better control, compliance, and security
- Simplified administration for all endpoints
- Access and audit configuration change history
- Mobile Admin, a composed experience built specifically for admins on-the-go, for easy access to everyday tasks and visibility into system health

Don't let valuable data go to waste

Step 6:

Enable better decision-making and faster customer responsiveness

High-performance businesses lead the way in generating value from advanced analytics and data. Your UCaaS platform must be capable of consolidating data from all your communication tools and presenting it in actionable performance metrics. This is even more important if your platform includes contact centre functionality, so you can uncover trends and understand customer sentiment for improved service excellence.

Get actionable business insights using advanced analytics

Collating information from multiple communication tools makes data-driven decisions time-consuming and resource intensive. The 8x8 platform offers aggregated analytics across all your cloud communications.

Usage trends and valuable insights help you understand how different UCaaS tools are used across the organisation and effectively boost adoption to maximise productivity gains. With 8x8, you get accurate, customisable data from all your communication channels in one easy-to-use tool.

- Conversation insights from the front desk to the back office
- Quick and easy-to-deploy speech analytics with ready-to-use reporting
- Easily customisable evaluation forms and auto-notification based on scoring thresholds
- Ability to focus on different groups and departments
- Tracking for adherence to best practices and compliance with in-house or industry-specific processes
- Integration with automated workflows
- Ongoing data and feedback on the health of your communications network

You deserve custom deployment that takes days, not weeks

Step 7:

Proactively plan for a successful UCaaS deployment

Every organisation is different, and you should expect your UCaaS solution provider to help design your system, plan your roll-out, and embed enhancements.

A deep understanding of your current and future business vision should drive the UCaaS deployment, so it's important to take the time to plan the foundations of a successful roll-out meticulously.

Planning, figuring out your goals and drivers, and assessing your business needs are the first and most important steps of any new UCaaS deployment.

De-risk your migration and accelerate tech adoption

Over the years, we've developed and hardened the methodology to upgrade even the most complex installations to the 8x8 XCaaS platform. We understand not every one of your locations may be ready to move to your new 8x8 solution at the same time. We collaborate with our customers to develop a comprehensive phased go-live approach. Whether it's five offices or thousands of retail sites, we will develop the right strategy for you.

Support that goes above and beyond to resolve issues fast

Now, more than ever, effective communications mean effective business. That is true for customer engagement, customer experience, and for your teams' productivity and efficiency.

With this in mind, you need a UCaaS provider committed to ensuring your system's ongoing performance. That means round-the-clock support to ensure all aspects of your platform and your business operate at their full potential.

KCOM and 8x8 constantly monitor our respective networks, making proactive adjustments to ensure consistent voice quality and service availability. Meanwhile, we offer 24/7/365 support for any issues.

All of this is backed up by our service level agreements for voice quality, system uptime, and response time.

Your 8x8 always-on support team provides:

- 24/7/365 support
- Automatic upgrades to ensure you have the latest version of our technology
- A dedicated Account Manager
- Access to the 8x8 Knowledge Base for the latest product capabilities and best practices
- Training material to help your teams get the best from 8x8 Work in Partnership with KCOM

UCaaS Buyers' Checklist

Use this checklist to see how UCaaS vendors stack up

UCaaS tools help drive significant changes in the way people work. Beyond the basics of offering voice calls, video meetings and chat, your chosen UCaaS solution should include a range of essential features you need to empower every employee, delight every customer, and power business agility. This checklist will help you benchmark the critical business communications features and functionality you need.

Features	Description	8x8	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
Self-owned IP and proprietary platform	Have complete control over product roadmap and strategy and the ability to quickly incorporate the voice of the customer inputs and market trends into the roadmap as the sole controllers of their product destiny	●		
Uptime SLA	Reliable global communications from a single vendor with 99.999% platform-wide SLA	●		
Security and compliance	One unified data residency policy, security, privacy, and compliance framework for the entire UC and CC platform	●		
Single point of accountability, contact, and support	A true single vendor solution versus billing and reselling agreements and bundles with blurred accountability and patchy support	●		
Industry-leading solution with proven deployment success	A hardened, time-tested migration strategy with simultaneous UC and CC deployment with right-fit implementation options to meet your business needs and customer references to prove the same	●		

Features	Description	8x8	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
Flexible licensing model	Persona-based mix-and-match licensing options for lower total cost of ownership and cost-efficient packaging for faster return-on-investment	●		
Composed, personalised experiences	Composed, personalised experiences for key organisational roles to boost user productivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Knowledge workers● Frontdesk staff and receptionists● Contact centre agents and supervisors● Administrators on the go	●		
Unified administration	Provision, configure, manage, and monitor all your communications with one administration interface	●		
Single integration framework	Easily connect popular business apps, and help your teams achieve new levels of productivity without complexity or cost	●		
Microsoft Teams integration options	Deep out-of-the-box Microsoft Teams integration options for UC and CC users which supports user interface preferences	●		
Platform-wide analytics and AI	Conversation insights from the front desk to the back office for UCaaS users	●		



Deliver five-star customer and employee experiences from the front desk to the back office.

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