



WHITE PAPER

What Your Peers are Saying about UC Automation

Survey Reveals Frustration Due to Excess Time Spent on UC Provisioning

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IT professionals expressed frustration over time spent on provisioning Unified Communications (UC) systems, according to a recent survey. Respondents, who are under pressure to cut IT costs, described spending up to a quarter of their time on UC user management. Many likened the experience to “being stuck in a traffic jam.” Streamlining of UC provisioning emerged as an attractive option, with respondents stating workflow automation could result in substantial cost savings and reallocation of time to more worthwhile tasks.

Survey Highlights:

- **UC provisioning is painful**—66% of respondents equate provisioning a large number of employees to painful experiences like having a root canal or being audited by the IRS.
- **IT teams spend a lot of time on provisioning**—A large majority of respondents reported that provisioning took up to 24% of their time.
- **Conflicting demands make provisioning work more burdensome**—While absorbed in provisioning tasks, IT staffers face the competing pressures of reducing costs while increasing ease of access to information.
- **IT pros want to automate as much as possible**—When asked for a preference on which UC systems to automate provisioning for, respondents expressed equally high levels of support for automating provisioning of collaboration tools, including: telephony, instant messaging, video conferencing and email.
- **Automation can lead to significant savings**—Respondents indicated that automated provisioning and user setup could save them up to 24% of their time.

Takeaway:

The findings strongly suggest that a majority of organizations surveyed believe automation would reduce IT team stress levels and costs, while enabling the IT department to allocate more time to strategically important projects. Clearly, medium to larger organizations should explore options for automating some or all of their provisioning of UC technologies.

DETAILED FINDINGS

The survey collected opinions from over 300 IT professionals, 87% of whom work at organizations with more than 1,000 employees (see detailed survey demographics below). The responses to the survey present a realistic picture of out-of-pocket costs—and opportunity costs—of the day-to-day struggle to keep up with UC provisioning. At the same time, the survey reveals a desire for provisioning automation and the benefits of the automation of provisioning.

Provisioning? Or a Root Canal?

Provisioning UC systems doesn't seem to be much fun. The survey asked respondents to match the feelings associated with provisioning a large number of users with other life experiences. Thirty-seven percent said provisioning was like "Being stuck in a traffic jam." Another 15% felt it was like "Banging my head against a wall," while 8% likened it to "root canal" and 5% to an IRS audit. In all, 66% of respondents equated large-scale UC provisioning with painful, tiresome experiences. Alternatively, only 22% percent claimed it was, "Not an issue."

Provisioning Takes Up a Lot of IT Team Time

How much time does the average IT person spend on provisioning? Asked, "What percent of your IT team's time supports provisioning or setting up new users?" 77% of respondents stated the work took between 1% and 24% of their time. Amazingly, 16% claimed it took 25-49% of their time.

These are big numbers. Consider the costs: 71% of respondents work in IT department with more than 50 people. If a 50-person department spent, for example, 15% of its time on provisioning, that would result in fully-loaded costs of about \$830,000 a year.¹

We Also Have to Cut Costs and Make Information More Accessible

IT staffers face competing demands for their time. Absorbed in provisioning tasks which can take up a quarter of their time or more, the IT team is simultaneously expected to achieve other objectives.

Respondents were asked, "In terms of IT initiatives, what is considered most important at your company?" On a scale of 1-5, they ranked the following initiatives in order of importance:

- Reducing costs—Scored 3.84
- Increasing service levels agreements (SLAs) for IT—Scored 2.48
- Automating IT team workflow—Scored 2.82
- Increasing ease of information access to users—Scored 3.14
- Reducing "mundane workload and increasing "strategic initiatives"—Scored 2.71

Reducing costs and increase ease of information access garnered the top scores. These priorities are theoretically in conflict with one another. It is hard to increase access while cutting costs, unless the IT department has automated enough of its processes to make providing access less expensive.

Let's Automate as Much as Possible

The survey asked, "What part of your communications user setup/provisioning would you automate if you could?" Respondents favored automating all four options with the same weighting. Automation of provisioning for instant messaging, video conferencing, telephony and email each received between 50% and 54% of votes (multiple choices allowed). This result suggests that automation is a general preference for IT, regardless of the specific technology. Various collaboration technologies appear to be equal-opportunity resource drains and in need of automation.

¹Based on average IT annual salary, plus benefits (Glassdoor Data)

Automating Provisioning Can Free Team Time for More Important Work

IT departments want to play a more central role in the business rather than being a provider of basic services. Thus, it's not surprising that two thirds of respondents felt that an automated UC software platform would allow them to allocate up to a quarter of their time to more critical work.

Respondents were asked, "If you had an automated UC software platform to support provisioning/user set-up, how much time would this save your IT team to work on more strategic projects?" Sixty-five percent answered that automated UC provisioning would save up to 24% of their time for more important initiatives. Twenty-one percent said it would save them between 25% and 49%, and 9% believed it would save between 50% and 74%.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS HIGHLIGHTS

Employee count	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% of respondents work at companies with more than 5,000 employees
Percent of employees who are part of mobile workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57% of respondents work at companies where between 1% and 24% of employees are mobile 26% work at companies with 25%-49% mobile employees
Percent of employees who are remote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% of respondents work at companies where between 1% and 24% of employees are remote 23% work at companies with 25%-49% remote employees
Number of people in IT dept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 71% work in IT departments with 50+ employees
Number of office locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 42% of respondents work at companies with 50+ office locations
Type of UC platform (multiple choices allowed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% use Cisco VoIP; 57% use Microsoft Skype for Business

CONCLUSION

This survey, which favored medium to large organizations, reveals a significant interest in automating the provisioning of UC and related technologies. IT professionals surveyed felt the work of provisioning was stressful, likening it to agonizing life experiences. Provisioning is a costly waste of IT personnel time. Conversely, UC provisioning automation promises to expand IT team availability for more strategic projects.

UC engineers facing experiences like those described in the survey might want to consider UC automation solutions. Done right, these technologies enable cost effective streamlining of the UC provisioning process. They can turn the traffic jam/root canal-like experience into something a lot more pleasant and productive.

To learn more about how the Akkadian Labs products can help with UC provisioning automation, visit www.akkadianlabs.com.



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