

Topics: Collaboration, Mobile**Issues:** Who are the collaboration providers and how will they evolve?
How will enterprises leverage mobile ecosystems to gain a competitive advantage?

Cisco Makes Jabber Free, Sets Stage for UCC Battle with Microsoft Lync

Summary: On April 18th, Cisco announced it would make Jabber, its UCC client, free for existing Cisco customers. The move may set a precedent in the UCC industry.

Event: At its Partner Event in San Diego, Cisco announced that it was making Jabber unified communications and collaboration (UCC) client and server licenses free for current Cisco UCM on-premise customers, including all workers, not just ones with IP phones. It also announced a new streamlined partner program.

Analysis: As the battle for UCC shifts away from IP phones toward PCs and tablets, Cisco is making a strategic move to establish Jabber as the Enterprise UCC client, at the same time that Microsoft makes a big push with its Lync 2010 offering.

Cisco and Microsoft both own a share of the IT budget, but as applications use more VOIP and video, a new battleground has opened for ownership of instant messaging, presence and Web meetings, also referred to as UCC.

In August 2011, Microsoft made Lync part of its Core and Enterprise CAL offerings. It has been making a strong push to enterprises to standardize on Lync, arguing that enterprises already pay for it as part of the CAL license. This essentially represents an effort to control a market segment via licensing.

Aragon Research has found in discussions with numerous enterprises that while many of them are evaluating Lync, most of their deployments are still in a pilot phase.

For Cisco, the timing could not be better for a move like this. By making Jabber free to its existing customers, Cisco counters Microsoft's Lync licensing move.

The battleground for adoption of either Cisco Jabber or Microsoft Lync may well be determined by openness, interoperability and partner solutions enabled by leveraging the APIs that both firms offer with their products.

Aragon Research predicts that this move to a free UCC client may set a precedent in the industry, and that others, like Alcatel Lucent, Avaya, IBM, Polycom and Siemens, need to follow suit or end up getting lost in the shuffle.

The big area to watch is mobile support. Microsoft has been slow to embrace other mobile operating systems like Apple iOS and Google Android, while Cisco and others such as IBM have embraced both platforms.

Aragon Advisory: Enterprises need to carefully evaluate desktop and mobile UCC offerings. The challenges include:

- Setup and configuration
- Multi-OS support
- Mobile support
- Voice and video quality
- Global scalability, either on-premise or in a public cloud

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Enterprises should evaluate both Cisco and Microsoft offerings with the understanding that voice and video quality on PCs and mobile devices may not always be as high as that of dedicated systems.

Mobile support alone could be the deciding factor in some enterprises' decision criteria.