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Unified Office CEO
Ray Pasquale



Coriant CEO
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Unified Office CEO Talks Choices, Disruption, Innovation

Ray Pasquale, CEO and founder of managed services provider Unified Office, is a communications industry veteran. Having been a leader at such companies as Ascend, Cascade, Lucent, and Sonus, Pasquale has had a front-row seat as the networking space evolved over the years.

INTERNET TELEPHONY recently interviewed Pasquale about his career, his personal interests, his work at Unified Office, his thoughts about the Internet of Things, and what's next for him and his company.

Tell us more about your background in communications and networking.

I've spent the last 20 years as a technology entrepreneur with extensive sales and customer engineering experience as well as holding various executive positions within high growth technology companies. These companies were instrumental in the building of the internet in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

I was an early member of Sonus Networks and helped to found its worldwide professional services practice in addition to performing pre-sales business development functions. Prior to Sonus I was a key technical leader and sales consultant for Cascade Communications' worldwide sales organization. During my tenure, Cascade was purchased by Ascend Communications. Ascend, a leader in remote access technologies for the internet market, was subsequently absorbed by Lucent in a merger in 1998.

When you're not working, how do you like to spend your time?

I enjoy playing piano and drums, writing music, and cooking as well as trying to play golf.

What led you to establish Unified Office?

I saw an opportunity in the VoIP communications market that needed to be addressed. There was a lack of quality, reliability, and innovation necessary to continually adapt to fast-changing consumer and business cultural trends. I wanted to reinvent that market much in the same way Steve Jobs reinvented the music player market back in 2001 with the introduction of the iPod and, of course, then the iPhone.

Over the past 20 years or so, the market has been dominated by companies that have created disruption mainly from a lower pricing perspective. These companies universally failed to spot developing cultural and sociological trends ushered in by the advent of smartphones, search engines, and social networking. These trends were aided by the ubiquitous buildout of high-speed broadband networks with rapidly increasing bandwidth coupled with decreasing pricing. This paved the way for a whole new era of how companies work and how consumers behave.

In short I wanted to build a reliable, dependable, and flexible communications hybrid premises and cloud hosted service provider that worked on behalf of your business. My goal was to develop a VoIP/UC service that worked. It also had to be fully extensible, highly configurable with a feature set that would never be obsolete and could adapt to the ways by which you wanted to work. In addition, it had to work on the device of your choice anywhere in the world you happened to be, and on a service platform that could be configured to continually adapt with the speed of the market.

What is the core solution from Unified Office?

At its core lies our hybrid premises and cloud communications software-defined network, our Highest Quality Routing Protocol coupled with our VoIP/UC service offerings. This unique transmission network architecture allows us to deliver a VoIP/UC communications managed service and Visual Performance Suite with non-stop business continuity, real-time executive control, and real-time operational effectiveness.



Unified Office CEO Ray Pasquale



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Tell us more about the Highest Quality Routing Protocol. Our HQRP network obviates the need for using expensive legacy techniques and circuits such as T1 lines or MPLS tunnels. It is largely through this platform that we are able to transmit real-time applications like voice and video at a fraction of the cost of current offerings. Our VoIP and UC communications services with real-time analytics help businesses generate more revenue and profitability in highly competitive markets such as the quick serve restaurant market.

Unified Office recently expanded to address the Internet of Things. Tell us about what you're offering on the IoT front. Our Total Connect Now Operations Performance Suite, or TCNOPS, is an Internet of Things-based operational performance suite that enables quick serve restaurants and other small and medium businesses to dramatically improve their operational performance and effectiveness.

TCNOPS integrates alerting and reporting functions for business-critical information into our industry leading Total Connect Now communications platform with its Visual Performance Suite advanced analytics offering, and cloud-based resilient service architecture.

TCNOPS extends beyond simple real-time basic monitoring to proactive and predictive analysis, which can eliminate component failure before it becomes a problem. Unified Office uses the same highly reliable, secure broadband connection to deliver and report business-critical information as it does for its Total Connect Now business communications system.

What is the relationship between unified communications and the IoT?

There are lots of use cases that I can think of. However, many of these relate to the operational functions of the service provider and not specifically to the end user in ways that would be obvious to them.

These include functions like the reporting of operating metrics and diagnostics that can allow a provider to isolate and predict faults in their network and the devices connected to it. This can help increase uptime and allow the provider to be more proactive in sparing techniques and on-site repair, for example.

There are also likely to emerge important opportunities in the health care market that aren't directly tied to UC specifically but

rather to connected terminals with intelligence designed into them. Machines have important information to convey, as do humans. And that requires the same dependable and reliable transmission of their conversations. Both can be unified into a common communications experience.

Tell us about how some of your customers are using the Unified Office IoT offering.

Our initial offerings will be to our QSR customers such as Dominos. It's really important for these businesses to know in real time information regarding temperature variations with their refrigeration equipment. They also want to be able to automate other functions, like making sure doors are locked, various lighting has been turned off, and ambient temperature is under control. They are highly regulated by local health department agencies and need to demonstrate reliable processes to assist them with compliance.

Our TCNOPS IoT service does just that. It's also important that this information be incorporated into a single reliable managed service platform. For example our TCNOPS IoT service layer is incorporated into our real-time Visual Performance Suite business intelligence service that is already widely deployed across the QSR market in the U.S. and makes use of the same reliable transmission network (HQRP) that our VoIP and UC services also use.

Our primary mission is to provide our customers with the communications services that allow them to keep up and adapt to continually changing consumer and business trends.

What's next for Unified Office in terms of your product portfolio?

Our IoT platform will be evolving to include the addition of new services such as bacteria detection on food surfaces as sensors for pathogens are perfected.

But that's just one example of what we have in store.

Our primary mission is to provide our customers with the communications services that allow them to keep up and adapt to continually changing consumer and business trends. Our real-time analytics and business intelligence services platform will continue to evolve and will incorporate such things as new AI techniques that will help businesses obtain further operational insights. By incorporating such information as little data, we can create predictive analysis that extends from the scheduling of labor to customer behavioral trends.

Ultimately, we will be integrating with labor, inventory management, and point-of-sale systems so that our customers get a 360-degree view of their businesses.

What can you tell us about your other opportunities in the pipeline?

We continue to expand our reach into the services segment of the SMB marketplace. Our QSR business, particularly with Domino's, continues to expand rapidly. And our general SMB market is expanding rapidly via the TeamLogic IT channel and others as well.

We are beginning to see tremendous interest from the hospitality segment (hotel chains) and other service verticals such as automobile dealerships. Controlling our growth remains our primary challenge and will remain so for the foreseeable future. We will remain laser-focused on creating extreme value for our customers.

What is Unified Office's go-to-market strategy?

We want to give channels and other partners the opportunity to offer relevant, game-changing solutions to their customers. Where there is no obvious channel to a particular market segment, we

will create one. We've done that already in the QSR marketplace by partnering with Graybar, Arrow, VTech, and others.

Our partners really love a recurring revenue managed service, especially one with non-stop business continuity like Unified Office, whose service architecture provides churn rates in the sub 1 percent annual rate vs. other hosted providers whose churn rates run anywhere from 15 to 20 percent annually. That means that when our partners win customers, they keep those customers for many years.

It's really not about technology for the sake of technology anymore. One could argue that it never truly was. We are undergoing a dynamic cultural revolution in how consumers and businesses purchase goods and services and how business workflow is organized. Technology should merely be a tool to help them adapt and react to these fundamental market forces.

Unified Office, with its channel partners like TeamLogic, is able to help businesses of all types adapt. It's not about a one-size-fits-all solution. Technologies need to adapt to suit the needs of businesses and consumers – not the other way around. **IT**

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