

Get Smart: Making a Choice for Analytics & Diagnostics for Workplace Communications & Collaboration

Selection Criteria and Analysis of Cisco Webex Control Hub

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to help readers make an informed decision about what's next in enterprise communications and collaboration. Topics include:

- a) a review of today's modern collaboration experience,
- b) an update on the market's current value proposition,
- c) perspective on the market leaders, and
- d) guidance on successful enterprise strategies for ensuring long-term business continuity.

While Cisco commissioned this study, the details provided in this report are unbiased and represent Wainhouse's perspectives on the topic. The reader should evaluate this insight, and all other technologies and solutions, against their own unique environment and enterprise requirements.

Why Read This?

Top risks of not actively managing enterprise communications



Poor service quality



Low user adoption



Service abandonment



Underutilization of workspace

While most organizations use the administrative management feature to provision and manage users, often features that control the user experience and enable optimal performance of apps and devices go unused.

The objective of this paper is to provide the reader with information critical to making an informed decision — which includes:

- a) context of today's third-party performance management tools versus a platform tool like Webex Control Hub,
- b) an update on the value proposition of Webex Control Hub, and
- c) guidance on successful enterprise strategies moving forward.

This paper provides an overview of the capabilities and benefits of actively managing the use and quality of your workplace communications and collaboration services. It combines our industry research with experience working with the enterprise and vendor community.

Unless indicated otherwise, all market data cited is sourced from the Wainhouse (WH) research database and Cisco.

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The IT Dilemma

Administrative tools for workplace communications have come “full circle” in the last 5-8 years.

Initially, solutions were a) workload-specific, b) deployed on-premises, and c) provided administrative tools specific to each solution — separate panes of glass to manage your PBX, video conferencing, messaging, etc. Many teams found these tools wanting — each provided basic provisioning and management features, but lacked features required to monitor, evaluate, and optimize the user experience. Not only was administration siloed to a unique set of skills, but so was troubleshooting and support.

Administrators had two primary paths forward: 1) maintain the status quo and accept the results, or 2) implement a third-party business intelligence (BI) analytics platform or a performance management solution — or both.

Third-party solutions certainly provided additional insights, but also incurred additional costs, required additional resources and expertise, did not always provide the security and privacy enterprises require, and introduced additional systems to manage — effectively adding another silo of specialized functionality. Roll it all together and most teams were relegated to the first path: accept the status quo.

As cloud-based calling and workplace meetings emerged as standalone services from different vendors, they introduced a host of challenges for these third-party solutions. Development focused on core administration and features first, and critical APIs second — APIs required for these solutions to deliver their value as a “single pane of glass.” While many vendors positioned the prem-to-cloud migration as progress, IT was left holding a growing bag stuffed with new, workload-specific platforms to manage. The datacenter may be cleaner, but the workloads are the same, the management experience is fragmented, and administration is still siloed and complex. Full circle, full stop.

As we enter the next phase of “cloud maturity,” a few vendors are rising to the top — providing true cloud-based, single-platform, full-featured solutions: calling, messaging, team collaboration, content sharing, video conferencing, and contact center apps all developed, managed, and maintained from a single vendor's cloud.

Naturally, these vendors have a vested interest in delivering a competitive user experience — but the competition has quickly turned to developing a competitive administration and enterprise experience as well. The leading enterprise clouds are extending the same value proposition for users (ease-of-use, quality, reliability), IT (management, support, security, compliance), and the enterprise as a whole (adoption, engagement, productivity, transformation).

The cloud is a natural enabler for this broad evolution, serving as a natural platform for service consolidation and a platform that allows for rapid service evolution. Agile development teams are pushing the gas and delivering features faster than before, leveraging at-scale horsepower and intelligence you will only find in a technology vendor's interconnected web of datacenters.

Workplace admin & control evolution

- 1 Multiple vendor admin tools to manage services
- 2 Third-party BI and performance management tools added in - only managed a % of the services
- 3 Workloads transition to a larger set of individual cloud-based services (new calling clouds+phone, meeting clouds+phone/video device/laptop, messaging clouds+laptop/mobile, storage clouds+laptop/mobile — the full circle)
- 4 Modern functional full-featured cloud-based platforms delivering all services & supporting all devices (evolutionary offshoot)

What's Your Option?

Hopefully, your chosen option is to provide the best experience for your users, leveraging solutions that deliver the greatest amount of insight and control for your IT staff.

However, that's not so easily achieved for most enterprises. Underpinning the challenge is the Enterprise Reality:



Cloud Calling vs. On-Premises PBX:

20% Cloud
80% On-Prem — with many in a hybrid environment between the two



Calling Solutions:

Average enterprise supports 2+ different PBX solutions



Messaging & Team Collaboration Solutions:

2+ different UC solutions



Meeting Solutions:

Average enterprise supports 4+ different meeting solutions

This fragmented and complex environment drives the IT dilemma — more to manage, more to maintain, and more challenge in delivering a high-quality, secure, and reliable user experience.

Looking out over the competitive landscape of administrative and control solutions, there is a horizontal fragmentation of vendors, and a vertical fragmentation of tools.

Focusing on maintaining and optimizing workplace communications, IT tends to fall into one of two camps:

- a) fix it when it breaks (reactive support), or
- b) ensure it never breaks (proactive optimization).

The problem with the “fix it when it breaks” strategy is that it ignores the total picture:

- a) Most organizations have services that are under-deployed — they lack insight into who uses different workloads and how frequently
- b) Quality issues push some users to unsanctioned apps and devices — IT lacks diagnostics that uncover underlying and ongoing quality issues, with no ability to “discover” data shared across these channels
- c) Room-based video conferencing is either underutilized or overutilized (ignoring social distancing governance) — without room analytics and reporting, your organization could unknowingly put employees at risk

“Ensuring it never breaks” requires a thoughtful, comprehensive, uniquely-featured, and proactive approach.

Ultimately, the optimal solution boils down to service consolidation on a platform that delivers an excellent user experience, enables IT to manage and optimize the service, and meets enterprise cost and compliance requirements — avoiding a Frankenstein-style mash-up of disparate solutions.



All organizations don't like paying for what they don't use — so, solving the “active users” problem seem logical.



All organizations prefer a service that works optimally — where everyone can see and hear one another without interruption — clearly, monitoring and proactively managing the quality of services seems smart.



No organization wants to put anyone at risk — therefore, conference room use, and capacity intelligence seems, well, intelligent.

The Takeaway

Think: Consolidate, Integrate, and Automate.

How Do You Know if Your Workplace Communications Vendor Has a Thoughtful, Comprehensive, & Uniquely-Featured Control Service?

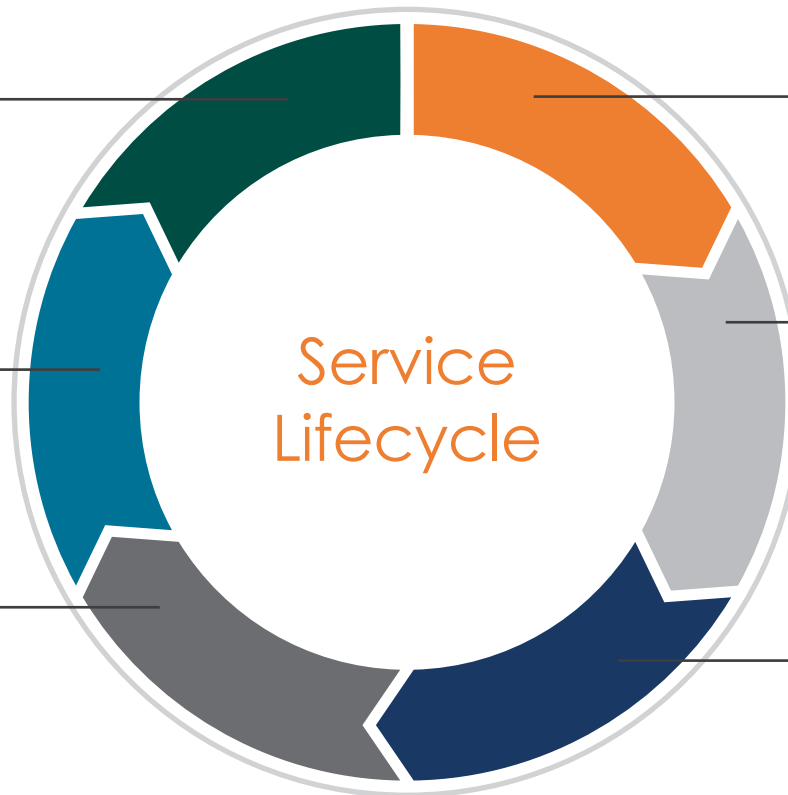
Most teams look at two key variables when evaluating solutions: cost and user experience. This approach ignores the administrator's experience and can introduce risk and deliver lower quality than the enterprise is willing to accept.

In order to evaluate the administrator's experience between solutions, it is helpful to understand the various stages of the Service Lifecycle that enable IT to achieve their goals:

6. **Optimization** Often the missing link, thanks to the "fragmentation reality" — and the intuitively obvious "business crossover" category. Are you able to track utilization and adoption? Does this require a solution-specific tool and/or workflow? Do you have a process to translate service analytics into business benefit?

5. **Management** Standard but often tactical — another candidate for Consolidate, Integrate, and Automate. Does your solution represent a separate pane of glass? Is it managed by exception, or does IT "live" within the solution's management frame?

4. **Support** The next, often undervalued, stage. The more familiar IT is with the solution, the better their support will be. Does the solution require unique skills and training? Does it enable end-user self-support? Does it integrate with existing tools and process? Can you automate notification, ticketing, and other support workflows?



1. **Service Configuration** is always the first step — your security and user experience start and end with the right tenant-level settings. Does your new solution align with IT's skillset and availability?

2. **Provisioning** Authenticating, and authorizing users is next — manual process invariably results in delays, misconfiguration, and user friction. Does your solution align with existing provisioning solutions? Can you integrate and automate? Does it support existing 2fA policy and process? When a user leaves, are they disabled automatically, or does IT need to remember to turn off access?

3. **Awareness** User communication and training. Does your system provide user training and awareness of services and features?

Most in-place communication solutions provide their own proprietary configuration, provisioning, and management engines, with a light support and minimal optimization experience, while third-party control and performance management solutions generally focus on support and optimization. In both cases, service quality and optimization features fall into three categories:

- Real-time service information — insight into what's going on
- Historical user, app, and device performance information — trend analysis
- Troubleshooting & optimization — resolving support requests and reconfiguring for trouble prevention

Include the following critical features and capabilities for insight, analysis, and solution capabilities in your evaluation:



Cloud-based administrative portal — the cloud offers benefits to both IT and the users — delivering broad access, rapid feature expansion, and providing detailed information, insight, and action faster and better than on-premises admin services



Depth and detail — deep insight past the obvious “up/down” and “latency/packet-loss/jitter” metrics (table stakes) — look for details including workload-specific experience, PC resource utilization, application types, device mix, and peripherals used — with user, site, and geographic segmentation



Access and action — historical AND real-time analytics, giving support resources access to in-progress events and integrated tools to take action to remediate trouble

Why Consider Cisco Webex Control Hub for Reporting, Analytics, & Diagnostics?

The Webex Control Hub is available to all Webex administrators – log into admin.webex.com and you'll see the Webex Control Hub identified in the upper left of your screen. As a native service, the Webex Control Hub delivers IT with a centralized, single pane of glass capable of supporting all phases of the Service Lifecycle, from Configuration through Optimization.

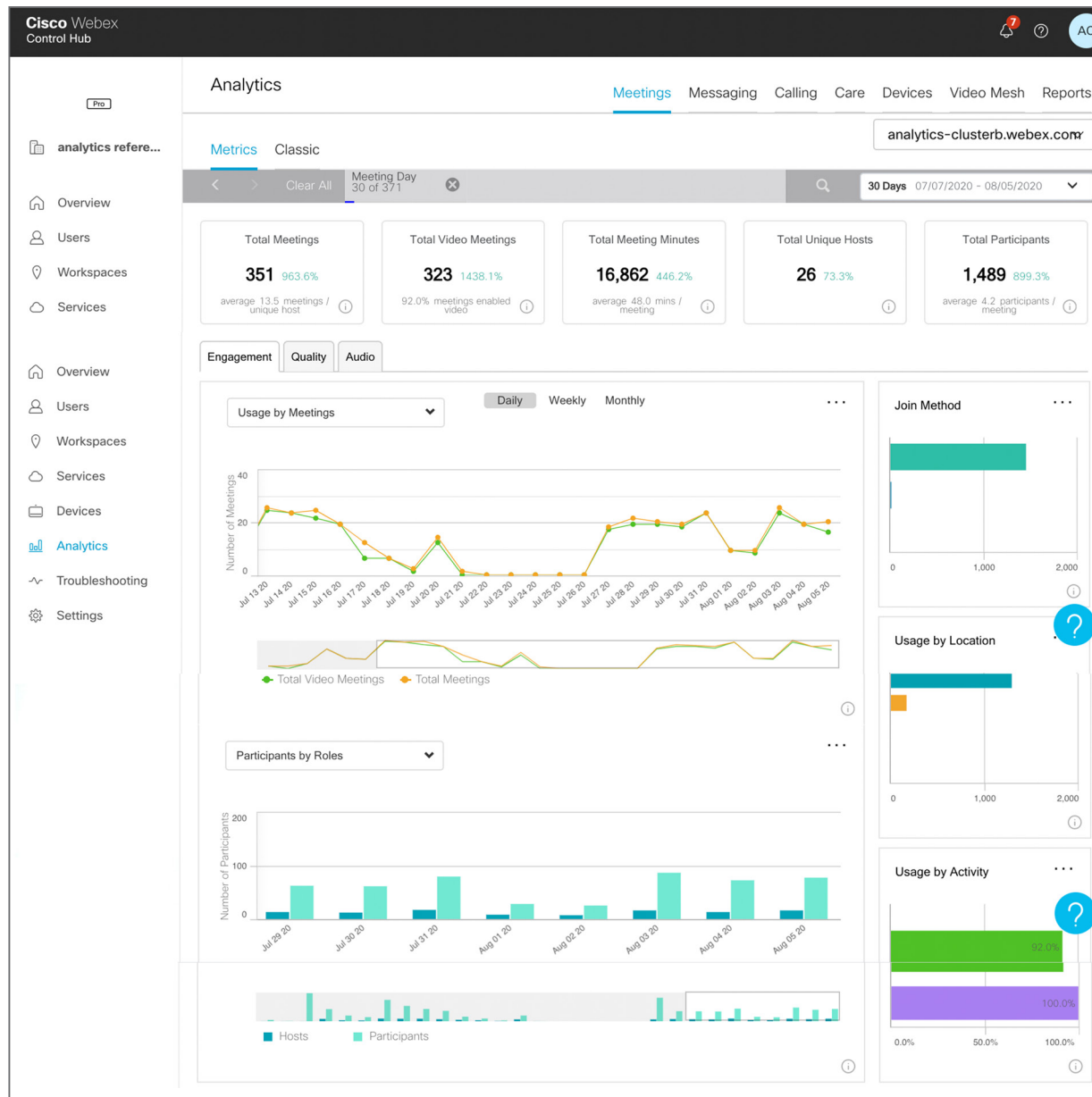
The veteran Webex admin is already intimately familiar with the Webex Control Hub's Configuration and Provisioning feature-set — but may not be aware of the Hub's Support and Optimization experience. Cisco has expanded the Hub's functionality with a focus on deep analytics, interactive reports, and detailed insight to enable both real-time support teams and service managers to deliver more value to their organization.

At a top level, Cisco has developed the Webex Control Hub with four primary drivers in mind:

- 
Improve — both service quality and overall user experience with actionable insight to drill down and fix issues in the company or guest environment, including insight into how a user joins a meeting, how they connect, peripherals, and underlying network health
- 
Secure — ensure apps and devices are secure end-to-end and the use thereof is in compliance with corporate and local government requirements
- 
Drive Adoption — thorough analytics into how your organization uses services — encourage use of services that drive productivity, e.g., see exactly what % of your participants turn on video, user recordings, and share in meetings
- 
Optimize resources, e.g., see exactly how your video room endpoints are being utilized, whether home or office devices

The Webex Control Hub's Support and Optimization experience is segmented into three primary feature-sets:

- 1) **Real-Time Diagnostics** — delivering real-time insight for ongoing Webex Meetings — join/exit times, quality of experience across voice and video, and host and data sharing analytics
- 2) **Advanced Diagnostics & Troubleshooting** — drill down into specific meetings to view clients, join method, packet loss, latency, jitter, CPU usage, and more
- 3) **Historical Trend Analysis** — providing business insight into user adoption and engagement, historical quality of service, calling metrics, Webex Teams engagement, and device utilization
- 4) **Reports** — Meetings and Teams data can be exported in CSV format, then sliced, diced, and analyzed as needed



Webex Control Hub screenshot

Underneath the hood, you'll find a host of features within each of these primary segments:



Prebuilt graphs and trend analysis — on historical data (up to a year) across all services with insight on adoption, quality, and resources utilization



Drill down — and filtering from the high-level graphs enabling data exploration



Historical Reports — at both summary business use levels and down the to low-level detail getting with activity per participant



Troubleshooting tools — for live and historical meetings at a similar level of detail leveraged by Cisco's internal support teams, empowering IT admins to discover root-cause issues in their environment to control without calling Cisco, e.g., laptop resource or network bandwidth issues



Call-by-call details — view audio and video quality, join time, client version information, peripheral information, and overall quality of service



Notifications — quality of service alerts for VIP meeting participants, quality thresholds, and duration of threshold breach



KPIs — surface actionable insights on quality metrics, e.g., by OS, join method, connection type



Live-meeting admin join — allows IT to experience quality issues and offer assistance



Root-Cause Analysis — e.g., inadequate laptop resources, poor quality headsets, etc.



Deep Diagnostics — e.g., participant details: OS, browser, HW make & model, mic, speaker, camera, headset



Workspaces — attribute each space in your office to a “workspace” – offering analytics on device user, occupancy count, and even ambient/background noise



APIs — for integration and automatic data access to preferred business tools

Cisco Webex Control Hub Implementation

Cisco's development team is expanding the Control Hub experience following three core guiding principles:

- **Easy** — intuitive, graphical single pane of glass for all Cisco workplace communication and collaboration services and devices
- **Comprehensive** — complete business insight across a broad range of services including calling, meetings, messaging, devices, and contact center services
- **Complete** — manage both cloud and on-premise deployments via Webex Edge and Hybrid Services

As noted, the Webex Control Hub is available to all existing admins with a paid Webex license. The Webex Control Hub's functionality can be expanded with the purchase of an add-on Pro Pack license. The Pro Pack unlocks additional features:

- **Security Enhancements** — hybrid on-prem key management and custom security settings
- **Expanded Compliance** — expanding standard 90-day historical data to unlimited, with additional retention policy and legal hold features
- **Analytics** — increasing 90-day basic reporting to 13 months, and adding detail to drill-down and discovery reports

Further Considerations & Next Steps

Consider a proactive approach to ensuring workplace communication continuity, quality, and optimization.

This can only be achieved when the IT administrators and users have easy-to-access, clear, and deep insight into use patterns, root-cause analysis of quality issues (proof), and remediation tools.

Too many enterprises try to manage complex environments with tools that are too simple, not suited to the task, or don't offer a complete solution.

The trend toward cloud-based workplace communications creates new opportunities for greater quality services and control — that remain up-to-date and in contact with connected apps and devices.

Today's modern cloud communication vendors have a vested interest in maintaining and improving the experience for IT and users.

When offering control and performance management services, these vendors also have more insight and control over quality — they developed the apps and devices.

- What's the risk of doing nothing?
 - Service abandonment by users to unsanctioned apps and devices — creates issues of security, compliance, and cost

- What's the benefit of using?
 - Delights users and IT alike — ensuring workplace communications are optimized to meet or exceed expectations

The Takeaway

Consider a proactive approach to ensuring workplace communication continuity, quality, and optimization.

About Wainhouse Research

Wainhouse provides in-depth research and analysis that helps you gain a clear perspective on the market, technology, and services for workplace communications and collaboration. Wainhouse analysts are industry experts in enterprise voice, video, team collaboration, and streaming applications, services, and devices. Our expertise is backed by one of the most comprehensive data sets and models in the world. Our domain expertise and market data combine to deliver in-depth forecasts, enterprise insight, and objective product evaluations that frame the industry's current state and anticipated direction. Services include syndicated market insight, custom research, and sales enablement. Content and additional detail is available at <https://insight.wainhouse.com/Home/NewReports> and <https://www.wainhouse.com/intro>



About the Researchers

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William A. Haskins, Senior Analyst and Partner. Located in Denver, CO, Bill spearheads Wainhouse's strategic focus on unified communications products and services. Bill has over 15 years of experience supporting, delivering, and designing converged collaboration services in a global communications environment. He has authored multiple white papers and articles detailing the keys to a successful UCC implementation and delivered various UCC presentations, highlighting his experience integrating collaboration solutions into business process and enterprise applications. Prior to joining WH, Bill served as Director, Unified Collaboration at Global Crossing (later Level3), leading a team of product line managers and application developers responsible for service development, marketing, P&L, customer experience, and product road mapping. Bill holds a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Colorado, and an MBA from Colorado State University.

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