

MARKETING
UCAAS

BEST PRACTICES



Introduction

As a service provider, the needs of your customers are always changing. Keeping up with new technologies is therefore important for both retaining customers and closing new deals. These days, many enterprises of all sizes are increasingly turning to Unified Communications (UC) services to improve their efficiency and profitability.

Through our award-winning Unified Communications platform, Axxess Networks makes it easy for service providers to choose, bundle and sell the UC services and feature sets that their clients need. However, we also know growing revenue is about more than simply plugging in a UC service and expecting it to sell itself. Service providers need both a solid internal marketing plan and reliable support from the Unified Communications provider they choose.

The goal of this e-book is to provide you, the Service Provider, with a blueprint of the best practices to consider when marketing your services.

Here, we will cover:

- Identifying Target Audiences
- Branding and Value Propositions
- Creating a Marketing Plan

Don't stress if any of these topics are unfamiliar to you. By the end of this e-book, you will be ready to embark on a strategy for revenue, reinforcing your position within the MSP landscape.

"If people like you, they'll listen to you, but if they trust you, they'll do business with you."

- Zig Ziglar



Understanding Your Target Audience

Identify Pain Points

The first step in undertaking a successful marketing campaign is to identify the pain points of the individuals and companies you are currently serving as well as those to whom you are trying to market your services. This will help you decide what messages and marketing strategies to employ later.

As a service provider, you likely already know the main reasons why many businesses are seeking UC and Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) solutions. From enhanced employee productivity and flexibility to cost control and improved customer service, the benefits of UC and UCaaS are compelling. That's why in 2016, the market grew 32.1% in terms of installed users and 30.6% in terms of revenue. Moreover, Frost & Sullivan analysts expect the double-digit growth rates to continue through 2023.

Knowing the general benefits of UCaaS solutions, however, is not enough to sell your services successfully. The audience of potential customers is just too large to broadcast the same message and get results. At Axxess Networks, we know no two customers are exactly alike. Each business we serve has unique needs and challenges to resolve. This is the same with prospective customers.

Persona Targeting

Persona identification is a useful technique for understanding the needs of your potential customers and how you can best formulate a response to them.

Ask yourself this question: As a service provider, what type of organization does my business excel at supporting quickly and efficiently? If you have already been operating for a significant length of time, you might already know this. If you do not, answering this question will illuminate the type of individual you are likely to encounter at an organization you are hoping to establish a contract with.

At bigger organizations, service providers are likely to interact with executives like Chief Information Officers or Chief Technology Officers. These individuals are often well-versed in the competitive landscape. They will care about your reputation and your ability to handle disasters at any time of the day.

Creating Unique Value Propositions

Once you have identified your target audience, the next step is to create your company's value propositions. These will directly link back to your identified personas. An effective value proposition is a statement that positions your company and service as the answer to someone's problems.



As a service provider, you are offering similar products or services as other providers. As a result, your single greatest differentiator could be the type of experience a potential client might have with you. Although technical specifications can support your marketing efforts, unique and pleasant experiences create the memories that customers want to come back for.

Common problems your potential customers are facing:

- Reduction of in-house IT staff
- Growing application complexity
- Increasing number of remote workers
- Hardware breakdown
- New, data-intensive technologies

Service provider's offering quality UCaaS solutions are uniquely positioned to solve these problems. In fact, Nemertes Research recently surveyed US IT professionals about their organizations' plans for managed services.

The top services of interest included the following:

- IP telephony
- Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)
- Security
- Network monitoring
- Storage, backup and disaster recovery
- Managed Unified Communications

Knowing the challenges your potential customers face and their interest in acquiring UCaaS services should motivate you to create and deliver value propositions that will resonate with your target audience. Once you have completed this step, you are now ready to formulate your action plan!



Creating a Marketing Plan

The marketing plan is where you get to take all the research and strategizing you have done over the last two steps and put it into action. You know the needs of your customers as well as your value propositions. Now is the time to pick the combination of marketing tools that will deliver results.

A marketing plan formalizes all the ways in which you will interact with potential customers to nurture them along the customer relationship life cycle. You can conceptualize these interactions as touch points designed to influence your target audience into taking a certain action. Breaking the customer relationship life cycle down into four phases, we get the following ACTS model:



Awareness

Educate customers about the existence of your company and services.



Consideration

Provide enough information via enough touchpoints for potential customers to consider purchasing from your company.



Transaction

The customer formalizes their decision to partner with your organization.



Satisfaction

A satisfied customer becomes a loyal one over time. This is important because loyal customers have great potential to recommend your business to other organizations facing familiar changes.

At this point, you might be asking yourself: What specific marketing mechanisms can I deploy to move potential customers through the ACTS customer relationship lifecycle?

As service provider, you have two general categories of marketing devices at your disposal: inbound and outbound. Think about inbound marketing as a process of pulling individuals and companies toward your company by providing meaningful content that aligns with their interests. In this way, you are organically attracting pre-qualified inbound traffic that you can eventually convert and close.

Outbound marketing, on the other hand, is more of a push technique. With this type of marketing, you are taking a message and pushing it to your target audience in the hopes that they will listen and convert into leads. This approach is much broader than inbound marketing because your message may not be aligned to the needs of everyone who receives it. Nonetheless, each method can have a place in your marketing strategy.

Here are examples of both inbound and outbound marketing practices:

Inbound Marketing	Outbound Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free resources (infographics, e-books, downloadables, etc.) • Blogs & Articles • Webinars • Social Media Supporting Content • Website Landing Pages & Subscriptions • Email Campaigns • SEO & Keyword Targeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold Calling • Direct Mail (brochures, postcards, coupon books, etc.) • Trade Shows & Event Sponsorships • Press Releases

Inbound Marketing

For service providers looking to implement an inbound marketing strategy, reference the research and planning you have done on your customer personas. Then, create content that answers common potential questions from these individuals. For example, if you are targeting larger companies and people in executive positions, you could write a blog post or host a webinar on how UCaaS reduces management complexity, reduces the high costs of traditional phone systems and opens new opportunities for workforce collaboration. Combine this effort with social media and landing page support, and you can effectively draw interested executives from your content to your sales team.

Outbound Marketing

Some outbound marketing tools should have a place in your overarching strategy. Attending or sponsoring industry events is a great way to improve your visibility. As well, advertising online and through social media paid posts can help you widen your reach to more companies and individuals in your area. However, all this costs money; furthermore, market research demonstrates that, in an increasingly competitive market, you may have to spend more to see more. As well, the benefits you gain from paid outbound marketing efforts can disappear as soon as you stop investing. As a matter of best practice, make sure to concentrate on building the strong, organic following your business needs through the inbound marketing approach.

At Axxess Networks, we're more than technical experts in Unified Communications - we are your all-in-one platform providers that give you everything you need as a service provider. Part of our mission is to help our partners grow their businesses and become more profitable by promoting their own brand with our platform. Our award-winning platform gives you a suite of UC-enabled services and feature-sets.

If you're looking to use Unified Communications to drive revenue and enhance your business, take advantage of our diverse expertise.

Visit our website or reach us at 800-360-2000!