

# Intelligent Communications Experience: Unifying Collaboration and Contact Center for the Era of AI Agents

*One Unified approach to Communications and Customer Engagement*

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**Issue:** What is Intelligent Communications Experience and how can enterprises utilize them?

How will humans and AI agents leverage a communications platform for employee and customer engagement?

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## SUMMARY

Driven by the demand for seamless customer journeys and AI agents, the historical separation between Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) and the Intelligent Contact Center (ICC) is collapsing into a new, AI-integrated category called the Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX). This research note defines how ICX combines voice, video, collaboration, and contact center functionalities, analyzes the market forces driving its adoption, and provides a strategic roadmap for enterprises looking to compete in the age of AI.

### Key Takeaways:

1. More robust, integrated communications are needed in the enterprise for both humans and AI Agents.
2. This new category consolidates, Calling, Messaging Video meetings, Communications APIs and Contact Centers into on unified market.
3. Human interactions, Blended interactions and pure Agent interactions will be able to automate business processes in ways not imagined in the past.

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## Executive Summary: Intelligent Communications Experience

The historical separation between internal collaboration tools and external customer engagement systems is collapsing. For decades, enterprises have managed Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) and the Intelligent Contact Center (ICC) as distinct stacks, often bought separately.

However, the demand for seamless customer journeys and the rise of sophisticated AI agents as active participants in the workforce have necessitated a new category: the Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX). This shift represents one of the most significant transformations in enterprise technology, moving away from fragmented tools toward a single, unified architecture designed to serve a blended workforce of human and digital labor.

## Market Forces Driving Convergence

The transition toward the ICX is accelerated by a convergence of three powerful market forces. First, customer expectations have fundamentally changed; they now demand immediate, contextual, and seamless service across any channel—a standard that siloed systems cannot meet. Second, the rapid maturation of Generative AI has enabled the deployment of sophisticated AI agents capable of managing complex workflows and interacting with human nuance.

Finally, intense competitive pressure makes managing disparate communication systems an inefficient model in a market that rewards speed and integration. Modern business leaders are increasingly moving away from evaluating feature lists and are instead demanding integrated, outcome-focused platforms that deliver measurable business outcomes, such as improved customer retention and accelerated operational speed.

## Architecture of the Intelligent Communications Experience

An ICX is defined by four integrated layers that create a cohesive environment for all internal and external engagement:

- **Core Capabilities:** A blended suite of omni-channel communications capabilities including:
  - enterprise-grade voice,
  - high-definition video meetings,
  - persistent chat and messaging that ensures context is never lost as conversations move between channels.
- **The ICX Engine:** The evolution of the contact center into a dynamic hub for the entire organization, utilizing orchestration and routing to direct tasks to the most appropriate resource, whether in the front or back office.
- **From APIs to Intelligent Experiences:** In the beginning, Communication APIs (CPaaS) revolutionized the market by providing developers with the raw digital plumbing needed to embed voice, video, and text directly into applications. However, because it was strictly a developer-first tool, it required heavy coding, constant maintenance, and dedicated engineering sprints just to update a simple customer SMS notification. Today, the Model Context Protocol (MCP) establishes a standardized architectural framework that replaces custom integration code with a universal AI-to-

data interface. By enabling AI Assistants and Agents, to securely connect with enterprise repositories out of the box, MCP reduces development timelines from months to days, transforming former integration bottlenecks into scalable operational advantages.

- **The AI Fabric:** A pervasive intelligence layer woven into every function, powering conversation intelligence, real-time coaching, predictive analytics, and the automation of routine workflows.
- **The Agentic-Channel:** A new interaction model that natively supports a blended workforce of human employees and AI agents, treating digital labor as first-class participants.

### Strategic Implications for the Enterprise

The most profound implication of the ICX is the emergence of a workforce where human and digital labor collaborate seamlessly. AI agents are no longer passive assistants; they are autonomous actors capable of initiating calls, participating in meetings, and managing customer interactions from inception to resolution. This shift enables high-impact use cases across industries, such as autonomous sales development systems that qualify leads without human intervention or AI-assisted patient journeys in healthcare that reduce administrative burdens.

While deep CRM integration is essential, enterprises increasingly reject single-CRM lock-in. The most strategic ICP vendors provide CRM-agnostic architectures that support multiple systems (Salesforce, ServiceNow, Microsoft Dynamics, Zendesk, HubSpot, etc.) with equivalent depth of integration. This is critical for:

- Multi-brand enterprises with different CRMs per division
- M&A scenarios requiring CRM consolidation flexibility
- Industries (manufacturing, healthcare) where specialized CRMs dominate

Organizations that fail to consolidate their communication stacks will face a significant competitive disadvantage, as knowledge silos prevent AI agents from accessing the cross-functional data required to perform effectively.

### Strategic Roadmap for Adoption

Adopting an ICX is a strategic journey that requires a phased approach to ensure operational stability while capturing the value of automation. Phase I focuses on platform consolidation to eliminate technical debt and data silos by unifying UCC and ICC stacks. Phase II introduces human augmentation, deploying the AI Fabric to provide real-time assistance and coaching to the existing workforce. Phase III represents the full realization of the model: the activation of autonomous AI agents that operate with secure identities and communication privileges identical to human employees. Enterprises must prioritize vendors demonstrating a unified vision and deep, native integration of agentic systems to succeed in the age of AI.

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## **Introduction**

The modern enterprise is burdened by fragmented communication silos, which separate internal collaboration tools from customer-facing contact center systems. This legacy architecture obstructs the flow of critical knowledge and hinders the development of next-generation, AI-powered applications. To innovate, both human employees and autonomous AI agents require a unified way to access communication channels and the advanced capabilities of the contact center engine. This research note introduces the category called Intelligent Communications Experiences.

An Intelligent Communications Experience is an integrated suite that unifies voice, video, collaboration, and contact center functionalities upon a single, foundational layer of artificial intelligence and automation. By collapsing the divide between traditionally separate Unified Communications and Collaboration (UCC) and Intelligent Contact Center (ICC) stacks, the platform creates a cohesive environment for all internal and external engagement. This unified approach is a direct response to market demands for more seamless and efficient communication workflows.

Critically, the ICX is architected to serve a blended workforce of both human and digital labor. The rise of sophisticated AI agents as active participants, rather than passive tools, necessitates a platform that can manage them as first-class users within all communication flows. This new model treats human and AI workers as collaborators, enabling a level of automation and efficiency that was previously unattainable.

The adoption of this model enables a new generation of sophisticated use cases, from AI-assisted Telehealth patient journeys to fully autonomous sales and service systems. The shift to a common platform for managing all employee and customer engagement represents one of the most significant transformations in enterprise technology. This research note will define this new category, analyze the market forces driving its adoption, and provide a strategic roadmap for enterprises looking to compete in the age of AI.

## **The End of Silos: Why Unified Communications and Contact Centers Must Converge**

For decades, enterprises have procured and managed internal collaboration tools and external customer service technologies as distinct, non-communicating stacks. This siloed approach is no longer sustainable. It creates fragmented customer experiences, where an interaction that begins in the contact center cannot be smoothly escalated to a subject matter expert in the back office. This operational disconnect introduces friction, drives up costs, and hinders the organization's ability to present a single, unified face to its customers.

The convergence of UCC and ICC is now a strategic necessity. The implication for enterprises is the need to move beyond a best-of-breed component strategy and toward a single, integrated platform. This unified approach creates a cohesive communication fabric that connects every employee to each other and to every customer, eliminating the artificial barrier between internal and external interactions.

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## **The Perfect Storm: AI, Customer Demands, and Shifting Markets Driving Change**

The shift toward the Intelligent Communications Experience is being accelerated by a convergence of three powerful market forces. First, customer expectations have fundamentally changed; they now demand immediate, contextual, and seamless service across any channel they choose a standard that siloed systems cannot meet.

Second, the rapid maturation of Generative AI has made it possible to deploy sophisticated AI agents that can manage complex workflows and interact with human nuance, moving far beyond the capabilities of simple chatbots.

Finally, intense competitive pressure requires a new level of organizational agility and operational efficiency. Managing disparate communication systems is an inefficient model in a market that rewards speed and integration. The implication of this perfect storm is that adopting an ICX is no longer an optional upgrade but a mandatory evolution for competing in the age of AI.

## **The New Workforce: AI Agents as First-Class Participants in Enterprise Communications**

The most profound driver of the ICX is the emergence of a new, blended workforce composed of both humans and AI agents. AI agents are rapidly evolving from reactive assistants into autonomous actors capable of executing complex business processes. They are becoming primary users of communication systems, capable of initiating calls, participating in team meetings, and managing customer interactions end-to-end. This requires a fundamental rethinking of how communication platforms are designed.

The traditional model, built exclusively for human users, is obsolete. The critical implication is that platforms must be architected with AI agents as first-class participants, providing them with secure identities, communication privileges, and the ability to collaborate seamlessly with human colleagues. Enterprises must develop a formal strategy for incorporating these digital workers into their communication workflows, planning for how they will interact with both customers and employees.

## Defining the Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) – Key Components

An Intelligent Communications Experience is defined by the integration of four distinct layers: a foundation of core communication channels, an advanced engine for managing interactions, a pervasive intelligence fabric, and a new user channel designed for a blended workforce. Each layer builds upon the others to create a single, cohesive system for modern enterprise communication and collaboration.

### Core Capabilities: Blending Voice, Video, Messaging, and Collaboration

The foundational layer of an ICX comprises a fully integrated suite of core communication and collaboration tools. This includes enterprise-grade voice, high-definition video meetings, and persistent team messaging, all integrated into a single user experience. Native mobile integration that extends UC/CC capabilities to smartphones via network-level convergence (eSIM, VoLTE), not just mobile apps. This enables true ‘work from anywhere’ for distributed workforces while maintaining enterprise PBX features, compliance, and centralized management. By unifying these essential channels, the platform provides a consistent and seamless environment that eliminates the friction of switching between disparate applications for internal and external communication.

This unification is critical because it creates a single source of truth for all interactions, whether with customers or colleagues. It ensures that context is never lost when a conversation moves from a chat to a call or a video meeting. For the enterprise, this means improved productivity, faster decision-making, and the ability to present a single, professional identity across all points of contact.

### The ICX Engine

The traditional contact center evolves into the **Intelligent Communications Experience Engine**, which acts as the hub for all complex, goal-oriented interactions across the enterprise. At its heart are sophisticated **orchestration and routing capabilities** that intelligently direct tasks and conversations to the most appropriate resource.

#### Note 1: The Key Components of ICXICX

The high-level components of Intelligent Communications Experience include:

- Core Capabilities: Blending Voice, Video, Messaging, and Collaboration
- The ICX Engine (formerly known as Contact Center)
- Communication Automation: APIs and Integration
- The AI Fabric: Integrating Generative AI, MCP and Analytics
- Agentic-Channel: A Platform for Humans and Digital Labor

This engine is no longer just a destination for customer service inquiries; it is a dynamic resource for the entire organization. The strategic implication of this shift is the dissolution of the barrier between the front and back office. An issue can be seamlessly escalated from a customer-facing agent to a subject matter expert in another department, with all context and history intact. This allows the organization's expertise to be leveraged in real time to solve problems, creating a more agile and responsive enterprise.

## The Evolution of Enterprise Engagement: From APIs to Intelligent Experiences

The journey of enterprise communications is a story of continuous abstraction—moving from complex, developer-heavy tools to intelligent, proactive ecosystems.

In the beginning, Communication APIs (CPaaS) revolutionized the market by providing developers with the raw digital plumbing needed to embed voice, video, and text directly into applications. However, because it was strictly a developer-first tool, it required heavy coding, constant maintenance, and dedicated engineering sprints just to update a simple customer SMS notification.

As businesses demanded more agility, relying solely on developers became a bottleneck. This gave rise to Communication Automation Platforms (CAP). CAP took the raw power of CPaaS and wrapped it in visual, low-code/no-code interfaces. By democratizing app development, it empowered business users and operations teams to orchestrate omnichannel campaigns, design workflows, and update communication logic on the fly. It shifted the focus from writing code to designing business processes.

Today, the historical separation between internal collaboration tools and external customer engagement systems is collapsing. Driven by the demand for seamless customer journeys and the rise of AI agents as active participants in workflows, a new category is emerging: the Intelligent Communications Platform (ICP) or Experience (ICX). In this new era, CPaaS and Communication Automation no longer act as standalone solutions. Instead, they have been absorbed to serve as the foundational connectivity layer—the omnichannel engine that powers a much grander architecture designed to support a blended workforce of human and digital labor.

Note that connectivity in this era will evolve as MCP and Agent to Agent Protocols evolve. Communication process automation via APIs will be a catalyst to developing new hybrid workflows.

## The AI Fabric: Integrating Automation, Analytics, and Generative AI

Underpinning the entire platform is a comprehensive **AI Fabric** that integrates automation, advanced analytics, and Generative AI across all functions. This intelligence layer is not a separate module but is woven into every component of the system. It powers features ranging from conversation intelligence and real-time agent coaching to predictive analytics and the complete automation of routine workflows.

This pervasive AI does more than just enhance existing features; it enables the platform to be predictive and adaptive. The system can anticipate customer needs, identify process bottlenecks, and provide data-driven insights to leadership. By infusing intelligence into every interaction, the AI Fabric transforms the ICX from a reactive communication system into a proactive platform for business optimization.

The most sophisticated ICP implementations leverage network-layer intelligence in addition to application-layer AI. Network-aware capabilities—such as SIM-swap detection, silent authentication, device reputation scoring, and Quality-on-Demand routing—provide a security and performance foundation that pure-software platforms cannot replicate. This is particularly critical for financial services fraud prevention and healthcare identity verification, where network signals provide ground-truth data that application logs alone cannot deliver.

### The Agentic-Channel: A Platform for Humans and Digital Labor

Finally, the ICX introduces a new model for interaction that Aragon calls the **Agentic-Channel**. This paradigm moves beyond traditional omnichannel to natively support a blended workforce of human employees and AI agents, often referred to as digital labor. The platform is specifically architected to treat AI agents as first-class participants, enabling them to communicate, collaborate, and execute tasks on par with their human counterparts.



Figure 1: The Intelligent Communications Experience architectural graphic.

## Defining the Forecast for ICX

The Intelligent Communication Platform market is expected to grow from \$152.13 Billion in 2025 to \$251.83 Billion in 2031 with a CAGR of 10%.

The detailed forecast goes over these assumptions. While there is saturation of communications services and overlap, Aragon expects to see consolidation and up to 40% of the market to be a replacement. The demand for spending on AI Agents could see this forecast grow at a higher rate in the later years of this period. See Figure 2.

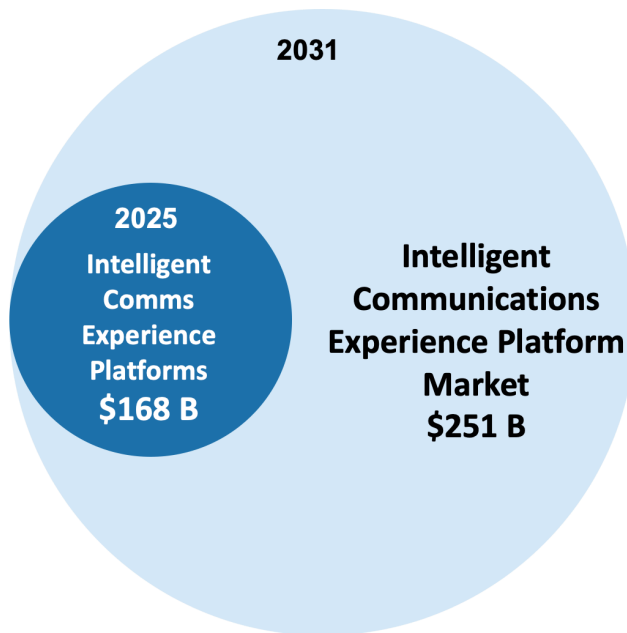


Figure 2: The forecast for the ICX Market 2025-2031 in Billions.

### Note: 1 RingCentral Overview

### Note 2: RingCentral Products and Services

### Trends Forcing the Shift to Intelligent Communications

The transition toward the Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) is driven by a fundamental change in how enterprises perceive the value of their communication technology. As artificial intelligence matures, organizations are no longer content with maintaining siloed tools for internal chat and external support. The following trends highlight the market forces mandating this shift toward a unified, intelligent architecture.

## Business Leaders Demand Integrated, Outcome-Focused Platforms

Modern business leaders are increasingly moving away from evaluating technology through the lens of narrow software categories or feature lists. In 2026, the priority has shifted toward platforms that deliver measurable business outcomes, such as improved customer retention and accelerated operational speed. This demand is fueled by a growing intolerance for the friction caused by fragmented systems, which often results in lost context and delayed decision-making. Leaders now view communications as critical infrastructure that must be always-on, consistent, and unified across all channels to meet the rising expectations of both employees and customers.

The implication of this trend is that vendors who continue to sell isolated point solutions will struggle to remain relevant. Enterprises must prioritize investment in platforms that can prove their value through specific, repeatable use cases rather than speculative AI potential. This shift forces a "proof-over-novelty" mindset, where the success of a communication strategy is judged by its ability to orchestrate clear and faster human experiences that anticipate user needs in real-time.

Enterprises must demand independently verified ROI metrics from ICP vendors, not vendor-supplied anecdotes. Critical proof points include:

- Documented AHT reduction from AI augmentation
- Agent retention improvement from reduced workload stress
- Measurable CSAT improvement
- Time-to-value metrics for platform deployment

Vendors offering only 'beta' AI capabilities or unproven autonomous agents should be deprioritized in favor of those with production-deployed, customer-validated AI delivering measurable outcomes today.

### Note 2: RingCentral at a glance.

RingCentral is a global leader in AI-powered customer engagement, delivering an integrated platform for business phone, SMS, contact center, workforce engagement management, video collaboration, and messaging. Founded in 1999 and headquartered in Belmont, California, the publicly traded corporation serves business clients across global markets.

- **Location:** Belmont, California,
- **CEO:** Vlad Shmunis
- **Website:** Ringcentral.com

### Note 3: RingCentral Capabilities and Services:

RingCentral provides an integrated cloud communication stack engineered to streamline employee collaboration and customer interactions. The platform embeds artificial intelligence across voice, video, messaging, and contact center environments.

Key Capabilities include:

- Unified Cloud Communications (RingEX - Message, Video, Phone)
- Cloud Contact Center Solutions (RingCX, RingCentral Contact Center)
- Autonomous Voice & Digital AI Agents
  - AI Receptionist / AIR Pro
  - AI Virtual Assistant (AVA)
- AI Conversation Expert (ACE)
  - Conversation intelligence and coaching insights
- Open platform ecosystem of 140,000+ developers and 500+ prebuilt integrations, including top CRMs like Salesforce, HubSpot, and Zendesk

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## **The Inefficiency of a "Best-of-Breed" Approach in an AI-Powered World**

The long-standing strategy of selecting "best-of-breed" point solutions for UCC and ICC is proving to be a significant liability in the era of AI. Managing disparate communication stacks creates "knowledge silos" that prevent AI agents from accessing the cross-functional data they need to perform effectively. When communication tools do not share a common foundation, the "GenAI divide" widens, leaving organizations stuck with isolated pilot projects that fail to deliver bottom-line impact. This fragmented architecture is not only more expensive to maintain but also hinders the deployment of advanced multi-agent systems that require seamless interoperability.

The "best-of-breed" approach creates measurable organizational tax:

- Average enterprise maintains 8-12 communication/collaboration tools
- IT teams spending time on integration maintenance vs. innovation
- Knowledge silos prevent AI from access organizational context needed for effective automation
- Security vulnerabilities increase exponentially with each vendor added

Enterprises must recognize that a unified platform is now a prerequisite for AI-driven efficiency. The move toward a single, integrated stack allows for a cohesive "AI Fabric" that can be woven into every interaction, providing consistent governance and security that a modular approach cannot match. Failure to consolidate these stacks will lead to operational friction and a significant competitive disadvantage as rivals leverage unified platforms to automate complex, high-value workflows at scale.

## **The Rise of Communications-Enabled Business Processes**

Communications are evolving from the "end" of a business process to an active, real-time participant in the process itself. This trend, known as Communications-Enabled Business Processes (CEBP), involves stitching communication channels directly into the systems and workflows where work actually happens, such as CRMs, ERPs, and even specialized industry tools. In 2026, this integration is essential as organizations seek to automate "agentic" workflows—in which AI agents can initiate calls, participate in meetings, and manage customer journeys end-to-end without human intervention.

The primary implication for the enterprise is the necessity of a "platform-first" mindset for every new business initiative. By treating communications as an orchestrated experience rather than a document-centric output, companies can guide customers and employees through complex processes with zero friction. To capitalize on this, organizations must re-evaluate their provider portfolios and prioritize vendors who demonstrate a clear, integrated ICX architecture that supports both human and digital labor as first-class participants.

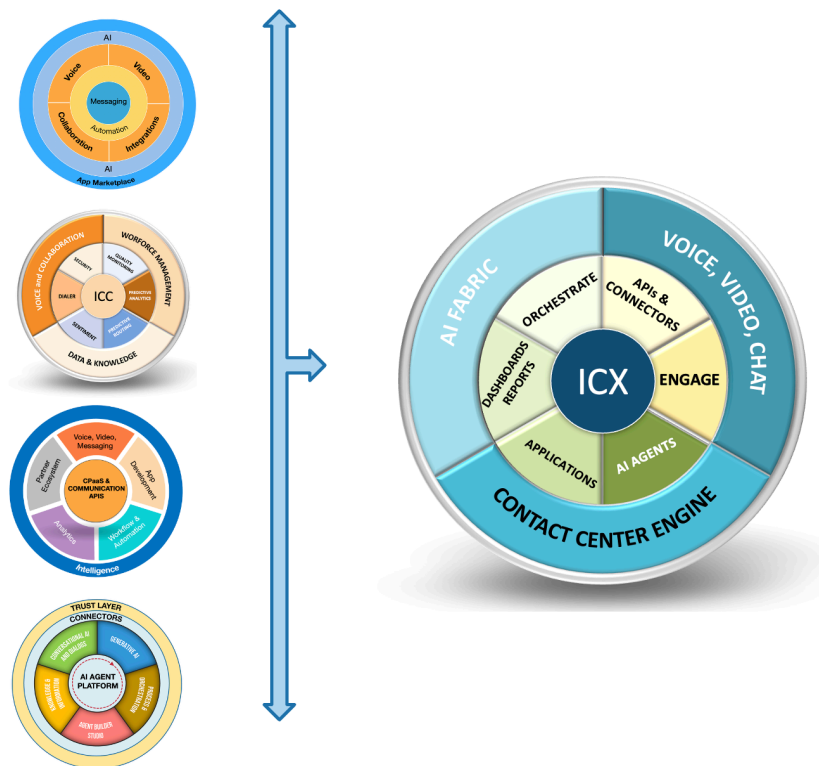


Figure 3: Three of the big parts of ICX are leveraging omni-channel communications, contact center orchestration and humans and AI-based agents.

## Secure UC&C—Deploying a Comprehensive Security Footprint

The need for a secure communications environment has never been greater. There are some fundamental principles that need to be incorporated into a secure UC&C platform. It starts with the foundational understanding that security must be at the forefront of any communications and collaboration offering.

When assessing UC&C vendors, enterprises should evaluate whether vendors have implemented and embraced Secure Development Lifecycle (SDL), what options they provide for controlling data residency, how transparent and proactive they are in communication about security issues, as well as whether they support true end-to-end encryption of your data. Enterprises should ask for the specific security and data privacy certifications they have, including how often they are recertified. Also, enterprises should ask, do they run their services in third-party data centers, or leverage third-party software for their solutions, do they provide security and privacy certification from these third parties.

Because the need is significant, the platform approach that integrates a number of these applications tends to be a simpler and easier route to go. However, the reality is that in large enterprises, there will be multiple vendors involved, so a set of security standards for UC&C needs to be developed and multiple layers of security considered.

Enterprises will want to evaluate their infrastructure for its distribution of endpoints and its potential vulnerabilities. Depending on the industry and the breadth of enterprise infrastructure, it may be necessary to rely on a series of different providers to mix and match key capabilities.

Larger enterprises may want to consider employing penetration testers to audit the network for potential entry points or sites of insecurity. When deploying a security footprint, the planning stage is critical, and enterprises must be able to proactively gauge where their largest security flaws lie before moving forward with the deployment of UC&C and making new technology investments.

The types of security standards and risk management frameworks included will be very dependent upon the unique environments within an enterprise, and which of their applications are running in the public cloud, including things like HITRUST and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) for healthcare, FedRamp for government organizations, or ISO and NIST in general.

### **Be Proactive about Agentic Identity and Security -**

For AI Assistants and Agents, Agentic Identity and Security will also be needed. While this is a new segment in overall security, the nature of ICX Platforms means that they will need to have both identity and agent security built in, either native or an integration. There are six aspects to AISP that Aragon defined. See Note 1.

### **The Need for Secure Meetings**

Not only do meetings need to be secure, but they also need to ensure that the identity of each user can be verified. The meeting needs to offer encryption capabilities and secure ways of accessing meetings. Most often, identity breakdowns—stolen passwords are one of the most common ways that meeting security is compromised.

Enterprises need to be aware that their video meetings can be accessed through backdoors if their network has been compromised. Zoom, for instance, has been known to have been downloaded via corrupted installers, which led to backdoor access to hackers. Not only can meeting content be accessed through these kinds of

### **Note 4: The Six Pillars of Agentic Identity and Security**

#### **The Six Pillars of AISP:**

1. **Agent Identity and Access Management:** Verifies agent identities and grants access dynamically, using ephemeral credentials and just-in-time permissions scoped exactly to the immediate task.
2. **Data and Knowledge Protection:** Prevents unauthorized access to critical data and establishes memory guardrails for past actions.
3. **Agent Operational Integrity:** Monitors behavior to detect and prevent tampering, off-topic drift, and malicious manipulation.
4. **Agentic Governance, Risk and Compliance:** Detects risks and stops unauthorized behaviors, ensuring agents act as trusted digital entities.
5. **Policy Engine with Runtime Enforcement:** Enforces security policies in real-time, ensuring AI agents operate strictly within predefined guardrails at every moment of execution.
6. **Human Oversight and Accountability:** Ensures every action taken by an AI agent is traceable back to its originating human user or the organizational policy that authorized it.

vulnerabilities, but employees can find themselves on the receiving end of much more serious forms of cyberattack, ranging from keyloggers or webcam spies to making the enterprise computer an active threat within a botnet.

If an enterprise associate is affected by a vulnerability in one sector, it has the potential to spill over into collaboration. If security is not taken seriously, vulnerabilities from the personal lives of employees can spill over into the workplace. If an employee's email is phished, for instance, this attack could be used to gain access to video conferencing platforms, further cementing the hacker's foothold in the enterprise.

## **Video Encryption**

Vendors need to be able to prove to enterprises that they can also encrypt the video transmission itself. There are different levels of encryption for video calls. Given the nature of some calls done by executives as well as product teams, the most secure form of encryption that leverages E2EE and Transport Layer Security (TLS) is needed.

It is important to note that when full E2EE is deployed, not all meeting features can be supported by all providers. Some enterprises will have to make a selection between more comprehensive encryption capabilities and a full collaboration feature set. In general, we would caution enterprises to take encryption very seriously and to carefully analyze the offerings of potential providers to assess what the right investment is.

## **Calls—The Need for Secure Calls**

Just as with video, voice calls need to be secure and, in many cases, encrypted. Hackers can gain access to a meeting via voice and listen in on calls through either admin privileges or through a compromised account or other means.

Any service level agreement needs to ensure that the service provider itself has no rights to listen in to calls placed by the enterprise or by individuals who are employed by the enterprise.

## **Chat—Encryption**

Chat, which now goes by team collaboration, was formerly called instant messaging. For years, many free chat services were listened to by third parties. Just as with voice and video, enterprises need to ensure that all text, voice, or video-based chat sessions are secure and encrypted. Enterprises also take into consideration whether UC&C providers rely exclusively on TLS encryption of data in transit, which in some cases can be subject to exposure through man-in-the-middle (MITM) attacks, or whether the providers have the capability to encrypt messages and files prior to sending over the TLS connection, thereby eliminating the possibility of a successful MITM attack.

Aragon recommends that service level agreement specifically call out the fact that the service provider has no rights to listen in or record calls for development purposes.

## The New Users: Securing and Enabling Human and AI Agent Collaboration

The defining characteristic of the Intelligent Communications Experience is its capacity to support a diverse, blended workforce. In this new paradigm, the user base is no longer restricted to human employees; it now includes autonomous AI agents that require the same level of connectivity, identity, and security as their human counterparts.

The need for an integrated category is partly due to the fact that Agentic Systems will look to leverage ICXs both for knowledge access and the omnichannel communications capabilities. For Agentic Systems, trying to have agents navigate a myriad of best-of-breed solutions creates unnecessary complexity, which isn't that much different than what humans face today with the SaaS bloat that exists in many enterprises.

## From Assistants to Autonomous Actors: The Evolution of Agentic AI Agents in the Workplace and the Frontline

AI agents are rapidly advancing from passive tools that answer questions to autonomous actors capable of executing complex business processes. These digital workers are becoming first-class participants in communication flows, with the ability to initiate voice calls, join video meetings, and manage customer interactions from inception to resolution. This shift is particularly impactful on the frontline, where AI agents can handle routine procedural tasks, allowing human workers to focus on high-value exceptions and personalized service.

The implication of this evolution is that communication platforms must be architected to manage digital labor as an integrated part of the workforce. Enterprises can no longer treat AI as an add-on feature; they must provide these agents with secure identities and the necessary communication privileges to operate alongside humans. This requires a fundamental rethinking of licensing, governance, and security models to ensure that every participant in a conversation—whether biological or digital—is validated and accountable.

## Use Cases for a Blended Workforce: How Humans and Agents Will Work Together

The synergy between human intelligence and AI automation creates a new range of operational possibilities across the enterprise. By pairing human roles with AI counterparts, organizations can achieve a level of scale and responsiveness that was previously impossible.

| Human Role             | AI Agent Counterpart    | Collaborative Use Case                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sales Representative   | Sales Development Agent | The AI “SDR” agent identifies and qualifies leads through autonomous outreach, scheduling meetings only when a prospect is ready for a human conversation.                         |
| Customer Support Agent | Resolution Agent        | The AI agent handles initial troubleshooting and data gathering; if the issue remains unresolved, it escalates to the human agent with a full transcript and recommended solution. |

|                            |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Healthcare Provider</b> | <b>Patient Intake and Telehealth Journeys</b> | The AI agent manages intake, follows up on post-visit instructions, and monitors patient data, alerting the provider only when clinical intervention is required. |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 1: Three key use cases for ICX.

The primary implication for business leaders is the need to develop a formal strategy for agentic collaboration. This involves identifying specific workflows where digital labor can remove friction and planning for how these agents will hand off tasks to humans without losing context. Organizations that successfully integrate these blended teams will see significant gains in productivity and the ability to deliver superior experiences to both employees and customers.

Given the many use cases across industries, we have compiled a list of the impacts of select cases and rated them as human-led, autonomous, or augmented (hybrid). Note, there are many other use cases by industry, but these have a high degree of repeatability across industries. See Figure 4.

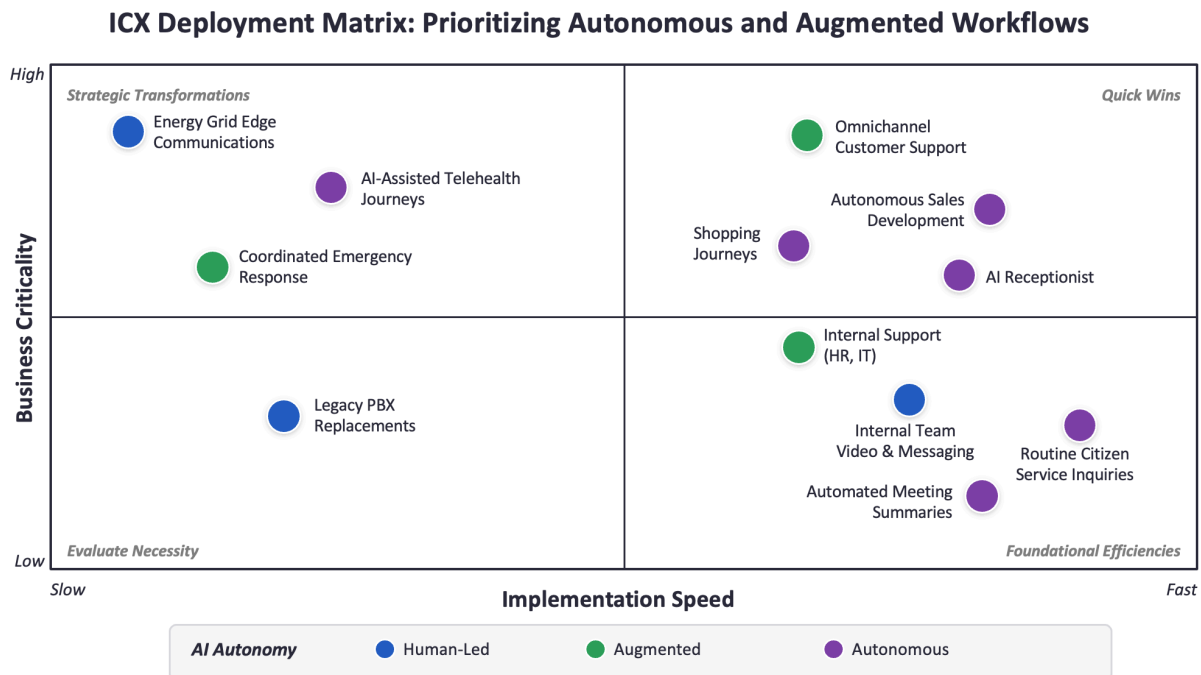


Figure 4: Prioritizing Autonomous and Augmented ICX Workflows (Source: Aragon Research).

### Three Scenarios That Justify the Need for ICX Now

The shift toward an Intelligent Communications Experience is a practical requirement for industries facing extreme pressure to deliver immediate, high-accuracy outcomes. By unifying core communication with an advanced engine and an AI fabric, organizations can solve long-standing operational bottlenecks.

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## **Healthcare: The Rise of Telehealth and AI-Assisted Patient Journeys**

In the healthcare sector, the disconnect between patient portals, video consultation tools, and back-office scheduling systems often leads to fragmented care. An ICX allows for a seamless, AI-assisted patient journey that begins with an autonomous agent handling intake and symptom checking. This agent can then transition the patient to a live video consultation with a provider, while simultaneously surfacing relevant history from the knowledge lake to the clinician's dashboard in real-time.

The implication of this unified approach is a dramatic reduction in administrative burden for clinical staff and a higher level of patient engagement. When communications are integrated into the clinical workflow, providers can focus on care delivery rather than navigating disparate software stacks. For healthcare organizations, this represents a shift toward a model where technology anticipates needs throughout the entire care cycle.

## **Revenue Ops: Creating Autonomous Sales Development Agentic Systems**

The traditional sales model is being disrupted by the ability to deploy autonomous sales development agents that manage top-of-funnel activity without human intervention. These agents utilize the ICX's advanced communication engine to initiate outreach across various channels, qualifying leads based on real-time interactions. Because the platform treats these agents as first-class users, they can navigate scheduling tasks and hand off prospects to human account executives with complete context and history intact.

This implies that the future of sales is perfected through the orchestration between human expertise and digital labor. Enterprises that adopt an ICX can scale sales operations without a linear increase in cost. The focus for leadership must shift from managing activity volume to optimizing the agentic-channels that drive high-quality human conversations.

## **Government: Coordinated, Multi-Channel Emergency Response and Citizen Services**

Public sector agencies are moving toward ICXs to manage the complexity of modern citizen engagement and emergency response. A unified platform allows for coordinated communication where an emergency call can trigger automated alerts and initiate video feeds for first responders. For routine citizen services, AI agents can provide consistent, validated information sourced from a central knowledge lake.

The implication for government agencies is the ability to provide transparency and responsiveness while managing limited resources. By collapsing silos between departments, the ICX ensures citizens receive a unified experience regardless of which agency they contact. This transition is essential for building public trust and ensuring critical services are accessible, secure, and efficient.

## **The Industries That Will Benefit Most from Intelligent Communications**

The transition to an Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) is not uniform across the market; instead, it is catalyzed by the specific operational pressures and customer demands of key sectors. For these industries, a unified approach to engagement is a strategic imperative for

maintaining a competitive edge in the 2026-2031 timeframe. See Figure 5.

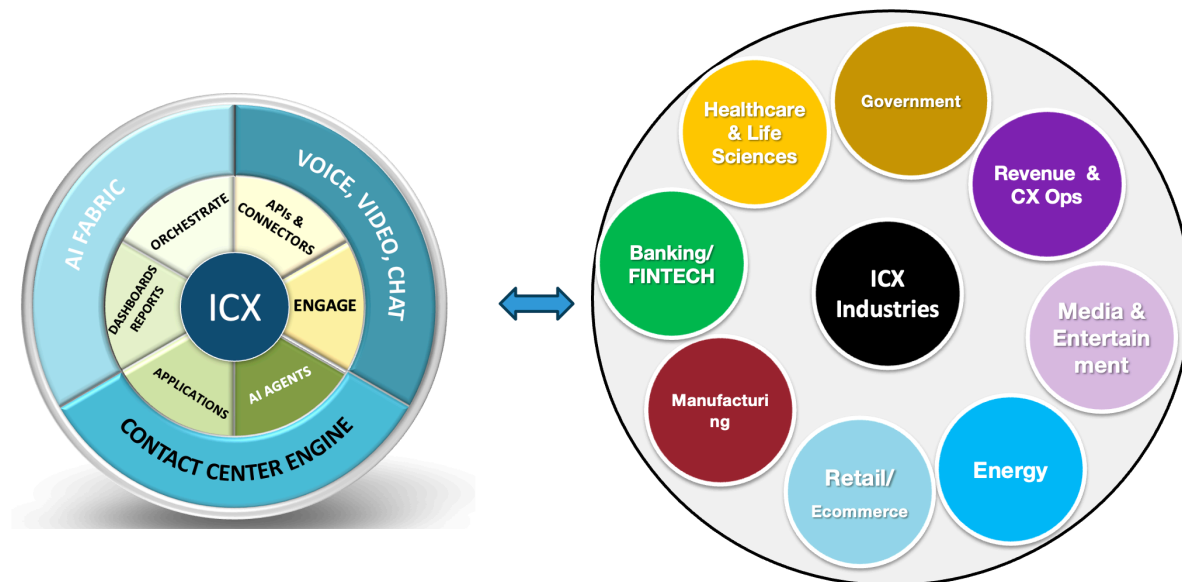


Figure 5: Industries that will benefit from ICX.

## Banking and Financial Services

In the financial sector, the legacy "best-of-breed" strategy—managing disparate tools for mobile banking, customer support, and internal compliance—is becoming a primary bottleneck to operational speed. These fragmented systems create systemic rigidity, forcing employees to navigate multiple platforms to resolve a single client issue and leading to "knowledge silos" that prevent real-time data sharing. As the industry moves toward frictionless interoperability and instant settlement (T+0), these artificial boundaries between business units result in lost context and delayed decision-making.

The transition to an Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) streamlines these processes by unifying voice, video, and AI-driven messaging into a single enterprise fabric. This approach simplifies usage for bankers and clients alike, allowing a mortgage inquiry to transition seamlessly from an AI Agent to a secure video consultation without repeating data. Security for communications and collaboration, both for transmission and for identity, remains a critical need.

Furthermore, the platform-first model enhances security by providing a unified "AI Fabric" that can monitor all real-time interactions for fraud and regulatory risks, ensuring compliance is built into the communication flow rather than added as a separate, manual step.

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## Healthcare and Life Sciences

For healthcare, the shift to intelligent communications is defined by the rise of "patient-centric" ecosystems. ICXs allow for the integration of telehealth, remote patient monitoring, and clinical documentation into a single flow. This reduces administrative friction, enabling clinicians to focus on care rather than navigating siloed software. In life sciences, these platforms accelerate the clinical trial value chain by facilitating real-time data sharing and collaboration among researchers worldwide.

Healthcare organizations are also increasingly hindered by a "best-of-breed" approach that separates patient portals, telehealth tools, and back-office documentation systems. This fragmentation causes administrative friction, as clinicians must juggle siloed software while attempting to deliver care, often leading to inconsistent patient data and care gaps.

In healthcare, many hardcoded communication platforms lack flexibility and are hard to update. In 2026, the complexity of managing these disconnected tools often slows down the patient journey, causing delays in scheduling and intake that can negatively impact health outcomes.

Adopting an ICX collapses these journeys into a single, patient-centric ecosystem where telehealth, remote monitoring, and clinical documentation are integrated into a continuous flow. By simplifying the interface for both patients and providers, the platform reduces the burnout associated with navigating disparate software stacks. This unified architecture also provides superior security and trust signals by ensuring all clinicians and AI agents operate within a consistent, validated data environment, making it easier to meet strict healthcare privacy regulations at scale.

## Government (State and Federal)

Public sector agencies frequently struggle with legacy infrastructures composed of niche, expert-led tools that cannot communicate across departments. This best-of-breed sprawl leads to "knowledge silos" that cripple coordinated emergency responses and create frustrating, fragmented experiences for citizens seeking basic services. When departments operate on non-communicating stacks, it is impossible to present a unified face to the public, eroding community trust and slowing down critical aid processing.

The ICX approach simplifies government operations by providing a single, integrated platform for all internal and external engagement. This streamlined environment allows for coordinated, multi-channel responses where an emergency call can trigger automated alerts and share real-time video feeds with first responders simultaneously.

By centralizing communications on a single communication architecture, agencies gain more robust security and control, utilizing AI-powered virtual agents to handle routine tasks while human staff focus on high-priority citizen needs.

## Manufacturing

In manufacturing, the persistent challenge of building collaboration between information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) is often exacerbated by a reliance on fragmented software tools. These best-of-breed silos within sales, engineering, and production lead to

duplicated efforts and a stifled ability to respond effectively to market volatility. Without a single source of truth, teams work with inconsistent data, slowing down decision-making in high-stakes environments like production planning and supply chain optimization.

Additionally, security requirements may mean that a SaaS only approach may not always meet the needs given remote factories and country-based sovereign cloud requirements.

An ICX modernizes the factory floor by stitching these disparate data points into a unified, orchestrated experience. By treating communications as an active participant in business processes—a trend known as Communications-Enabled Business Processes (CEBP)—manufacturers can guide employees through complex workflows with zero friction. This integrated approach improves security by moving from siloed controls to a "secure-by-design" architecture that protects the entire communication lifecycle, from mobile-first frontline interactions to global supply chain updates.

### **Energy**

The energy sector is facing extreme pressure to modernize legacy infrastructure while balancing high-risk operational environments that are most often remote and need to rely on edge-based communications and collaboration. Relying on a best-of-breed strategy for grid management, remote monitoring, and field communication often results in operational bottlenecks where critical data is trapped in disconnected systems. This fragmentation limits the effectiveness of AI, as digital agents cannot access the cross-functional information required to autonomously adjust power flows or predict equipment failure.

By migrating to an Intelligent Communications Experience that supports Multi-Cloud and Edge Computing, energy firms can unify their UCC and ICC stacks upon a common foundation with deployment options. This consolidation simplifies use for field technicians and control center operators, providing crystal-clear 4K video and low-latency voice, even in remote areas, via private 5G slices.

The shift toward a unified platform also ensures quantum-resistant encryption and biometric authentication, providing the high-level security necessary to protect critical national infrastructure from escalating cyber threats.

### **Media and Entertainment**

In the media and entertainment industry, the reliance on best-of-breed point solutions for communication often results in fragmented workflows that hinder the creative process. Communications and collaboration are the fundamental lifeblood and cornerstone of the industry, yet managing diverse, specialized roles—from directors and editors to legal and marketing—through disconnected stacks creates massive inefficiency. These silos slow down the real-time decision-making required to align creative visions, often leading to costly delays and miscommunications that jeopardize a project's timeline and budget.

An ICX approach streamlines these complex, multi-departmental projects by ensuring they are completed on time, within budget, and to a high creative standard. Because projects are team sports, this unified environment simplifies usage and provides a proactive way to align visions

and foster innovation. The platform-first model offers better integration and security for sensitive intellectual property, allowing creative professionals to focus on managing logistical challenges and creative output rather than navigating disparate software.

### Retail and E-Commerce

Retailers that rely on a best-of-breed strategy often find themselves stuck with isolated digital pilot projects that fail to deliver a consistent omnichannel experience. Fragmented systems for mobile, desktop, and in-store communication create a "GenAI divide," where AI agents lack the cross-functional data needed to guide customers through a seamless buying journey. This operational disconnect leads to friction at the point of purchase, resulting in abandoned carts and lost customer loyalty.

An ICX serves as the engine for "intelligent commerce" by unifying all customer touchpoints into a single, cohesive engine. This approach simplifies the shopper's experience, allowing for dialogue-driven engagement that anticipates needs in real-time. Beyond streamlining sales, the platform-first mindset improves inventory security and supply chain visibility by weaving a consistent "AI Fabric" through every interaction, ensuring data remains secure and governed across the entire enterprise.

### The Category—The Phased Approach to Adopting Intelligent Communications Experiences

Adopting an Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) is a strategic journey that requires moving beyond the management of siloed technologies to the orchestration of a unified, AI-driven ecosystem. A phased approach is recommended to ensure operational stability while capturing the value of digital labor and advanced automation. See Figure 6.

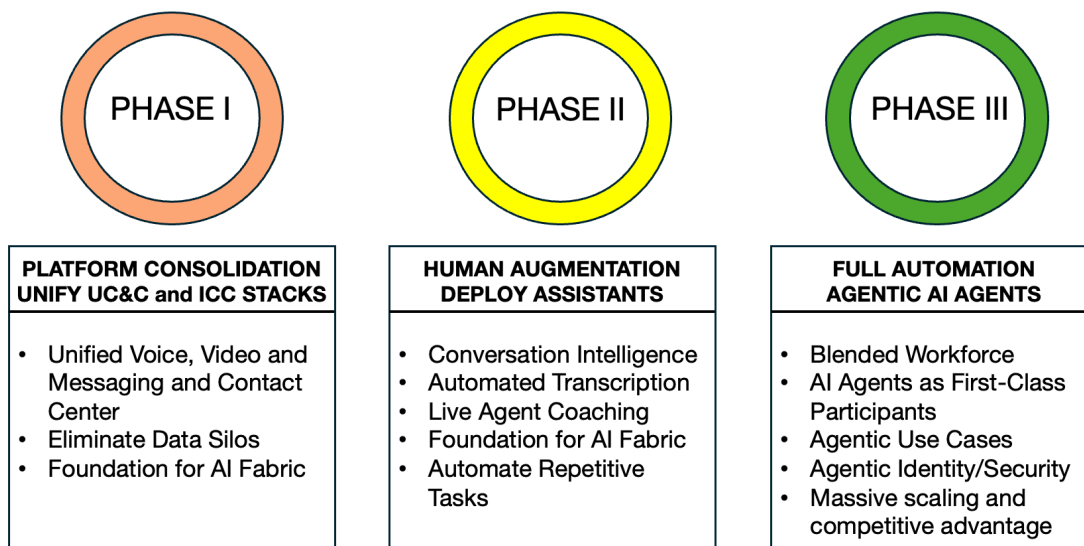


Figure 6: A phased approach to ICX and leveraging a blended workforce.

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### **Phase I: Platform Consolidation—Unifying UCC and ICC Stacks**

The initial phase focuses on collapsing the artificial divide between internal collaboration (UCC) and external customer engagement (ICC). Organizations should prioritize migrating to a single, integrated suite that unifies voice, video, messaging, and contact center functionalities upon a common cloud architecture. This unification creates a single communication fabric across the enterprise, ensuring that context is preserved when a customer interaction is escalated to a back-office subject matter expert.

The primary goal of Phase I is to eliminate technical debt and data silos. By establishing a single source of truth for all interactions, enterprises lay the necessary foundation for the AI Fabric that will power future automation.

### **Phase II: Human Augmentation—Deploying AI Assistants and Coaching**

Once the unified infrastructure is in place, the focus shifts to augmenting the capabilities of the existing human workforce through pervasive intelligence. In this phase, enterprises deploy the AI Fabric to provide real-time assistance, such as conversation intelligence, automated transcription, and live agent coaching.

During Phase II, AI manifests primarily as a supportive partner. For example, AI-powered Co-Creators can assist L&D teams in rapidly drafting training content, while Learning Coaches analyze performance data to proactively suggest personalized development paths for employees. This phase increases organizational productivity by automating repetitive administrative tasks and providing data-driven insights directly within the flow of work.

### **Phase III: Full Automation—Activating Autonomous AI Agents and Digital Labor**

The final phase represents the full realization of the ICX model: the activation of a blended workforce where AI agents operate as first-class, autonomous participants. These digital workers move beyond reactive assistance to initiate and manage complex business processes from end to end.

In Phase III, the platform natively supports the Agentic-Channel, where AI agents are granted secure identities and communication privileges identical to human employees. This enables advanced use cases, such as fully autonomous sales development systems that qualify leads and schedule meetings, or healthcare assistants that manage complete patient intake and post-visit monitoring. The implication of Phase III is the achievement of massive operational scale and a significant competitive advantage through the seamless collaboration of human and digital intelligence.

## **What happens to Existing Legacy Markets?**

### **The Vulnerability of Best-of-Breed Providers and the Ensuing M&A Race**

The shift toward the Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX) significantly exposes the limitations of the traditional best-of-breed strategy. For years, enterprises preferred to select the "best" individual tools for collaboration and the "best" for contact centers, but in an AI-driven market, this fragmentation has become a strategic liability.

### Why Best-of-Breed Providers Are Exposed

The primary weakness of the best-of-breed model is the creation of knowledge silos that cripple the effectiveness of generative AI. For AI agents to function as autonomous actors, they require seamless, cross-functional access to data that resides in both internal collaboration stacks and external customer-facing systems. Best-of-breed providers, by definition, operate in one of these two worlds, making it difficult for them to offer a unified AI Fabric that covers the entire enterprise.

Managing disparate systems creates a divide where organizations are left with isolated pilot projects that cannot scale because the underlying communication infrastructure is not unified. As business leaders demand integrated, outcome-focused platforms, standalone tools are being viewed as inefficient and costly to maintain.

Phase II represents the highest-ROI stage of ICP adoption, where AI augmentation delivers immediate, measurable business outcomes without the governance complexity of autonomous agents. Leading enterprises are achieving:

- 30-40% reduction in Average Handle Time
- 50%+ decrease in agent training time
- Real-time fraud prevention at point of interaction
- Automated quality assurance for 100% of interactions

Organizations should plan to remain in Phase II for 18-36 months while building organizational readiness for Phase III, as autonomous agent governance frameworks, liability models, and regulatory compliance are still emerging.

### The Force Behind a New M&A Race

The realization that a unified platform is a prerequisite for AI success is triggering a massive wave of Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A). Vendors that previously specialized in only one area are now racing to acquire the missing pieces of the ICX puzzle to stay competitive.

- **Filling the Capability Gaps:** UCC providers are looking to acquire contact center providers, while contact center vendors are seeking out collaboration and AI specialist firms. This is driven by the need to offer a single, cohesive communication fabric that connects every employee and customer.
- **Acquiring the AI Fabric:** The M&A race is not just about communication channels; it is about acquiring the intelligence layer. Major players are acquiring AI startups focused on conversation intelligence, agentic workflows, and automated coaching to infuse their platforms with native AI capabilities.
- **Survival of the Fittest:** As the historical separation between UCC and ICC collapses, the market is moving toward a handful of mega-platforms for small and medium enterprises as well as for the large enterprises. Small or mid-sized best-of-breed providers that lack the capital to build or buy their way into a unified architecture are becoming prime acquisition targets or risk becoming irrelevant.

The implication of this M&A race is a rapidly consolidating market where the survivors will be those who can provide a single, integrated environment for a blended workforce of humans and

AI agents. Enterprises must be cautious; choosing a best-of-breed vendor today may mean dealing with the disruption of an acquisition or a sunsetting product tomorrow.

## How to Get Started with Intelligent Communications Experiences

Transitioning to an **Intelligent Communications Experience (ICX)** requires a strategic departure from traditional procurement methods. Enterprises must move away from a "best-of-breed" approach and toward a unified architecture designed for a **blended workforce** of humans and **digital labor**.

### Deployment Model Flexibility:

Enterprises should evaluate whether ICX vendors support multiple go-to-market models.

### Re-Evaluating Your Provider Portfolio with a Platform-First Mindset

Enterprises should begin by auditing their current communication and contact center vendors to determine if they offer a truly integrated vision. A **platform-first mindset** requires prioritizing vendors that have collapsed the divide between **UCC** and **ICC** into a single, cohesive engine.

- **Audit for Integration:** Evaluate whether existing providers offer a unified "AI Fabric" across both internal and external engagement.
- **Scrutinize AI Roadmaps:** Buyers must look for deep, native integration of **Generative AI** and **Agentic systems** rather than superficial, bolted-on features.
- **Consolidate for Efficiency:** Choosing a single, integrated platform reduces technical friction and creates a consistent environment for all interactions.
- **Prepare for Change:** Organizations must be prepared to move away from incumbent providers if their roadmaps do not support a unified, agent-based future.

### Identifying Initial Use Cases for a Combined Human-Agent Workforce

The most effective way to adopt an ICX is to identify high-impact workflows where humans and **AI agents** can collaborate immediately. Identifying these initial touchpoints allows the enterprise to test the **orchestration and routing** capabilities of the new platform in a controlled environment.

- **Overall Secure Communications and Collaboration for the Enterprise:** While this seems basic, it is really strategic. While there may be differences in divisions, having one communications stack going forward will make it easier to secure and easier to use for both humans and agents.
- **Agentic Outreach:** Deploy **AI agents** to manage top-of-funnel sales activities, such as qualifying leads, and seamlessly hand them off to a human professional.
- **Frontline Support:** Use **Intelligent Assistants** to handle routine procedural tasks, allowing human workers to focus on high-value exceptions and personalized service.
- **Omnichannel Triage:** Implement agents that can manage initial customer inquiries across any channel and escalate complex issues to human experts with full context intact.
- **Administrative Augmentation:** Leverage **L&D Content Creation Assistants** to automate repetitive content drafting while human designers focus on high-level curriculum architecture.

Starting with targeted use cases allows the organization to develop a formal strategy for incorporating digital workers into their communication workflows. This phased adoption ensures that security, identity, and hand-off protocols are established before scaling to full automation.

### **Aragon Advisory**

- Enterprises must stop evaluating UCC and ICC technologies in separate silos. They should build a unified strategy and demand a consolidated platform vision from their providers.
- Develop a formal strategy for incorporating AI agents not just as tools, but as integral members of communication workflows. Plan for how they will interact with customers and employees.
- Prioritize vendors that demonstrate a clear, integrated ICX architecture that supports both human and agent-based use cases. Scrutinize roadmaps for deep integration of AI, not just superficial features.

### **Bottom Line**

The convergence of communication, collaboration, and contact center technology is inevitable and is giving rise to the Intelligent Communications Experience. This is no longer just a trend; it is the future of how business gets done. AI Agents and Digital Workers are becoming primary users of these systems, making a unified platform essential for efficiency, security, and innovation. Enterprises that fail to adapt will be outmaneuvered by competitors who leverage ICXs to deliver superior customer and employee experiences. With the need for a common way to manage communications and engagement for employees and customers, the shift to Intelligent Communications Experiences represents one of the most significant transformations in enterprise technology.