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UNIVERGE BLUE® CONNECT BRIDGE

Creating a Communications System Built for Hybrid Work:
Why moving to the cloud and adopting a hybrid work model
doesn't have to mean abandoning your current phone system



HYBRID WORKPLACES ARE THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF WORK



The modern workplace is evolving. Much of that is because the workforce desires flexibility. Working 9 to 5 in an office isn't the standard anymore. This shift was already in motion before the global pandemic accelerated it, and many offices have since proven it to be a success on a much larger scale.

Companies realize that providing employees choices about where they work doesn't impede productivity, it drives satisfaction. As a result, they are embracing the next evolution of work - hybrid workplaces.

"Almost every company, no matter the size, is working on creating a hybrid workplace."

Hybrid work models involve flexibility on where someone works, whether remote, on-site, or anywhere in between. However, this change creates challenges for businesses as they look for a seamless transition that keeps operations moving forward.

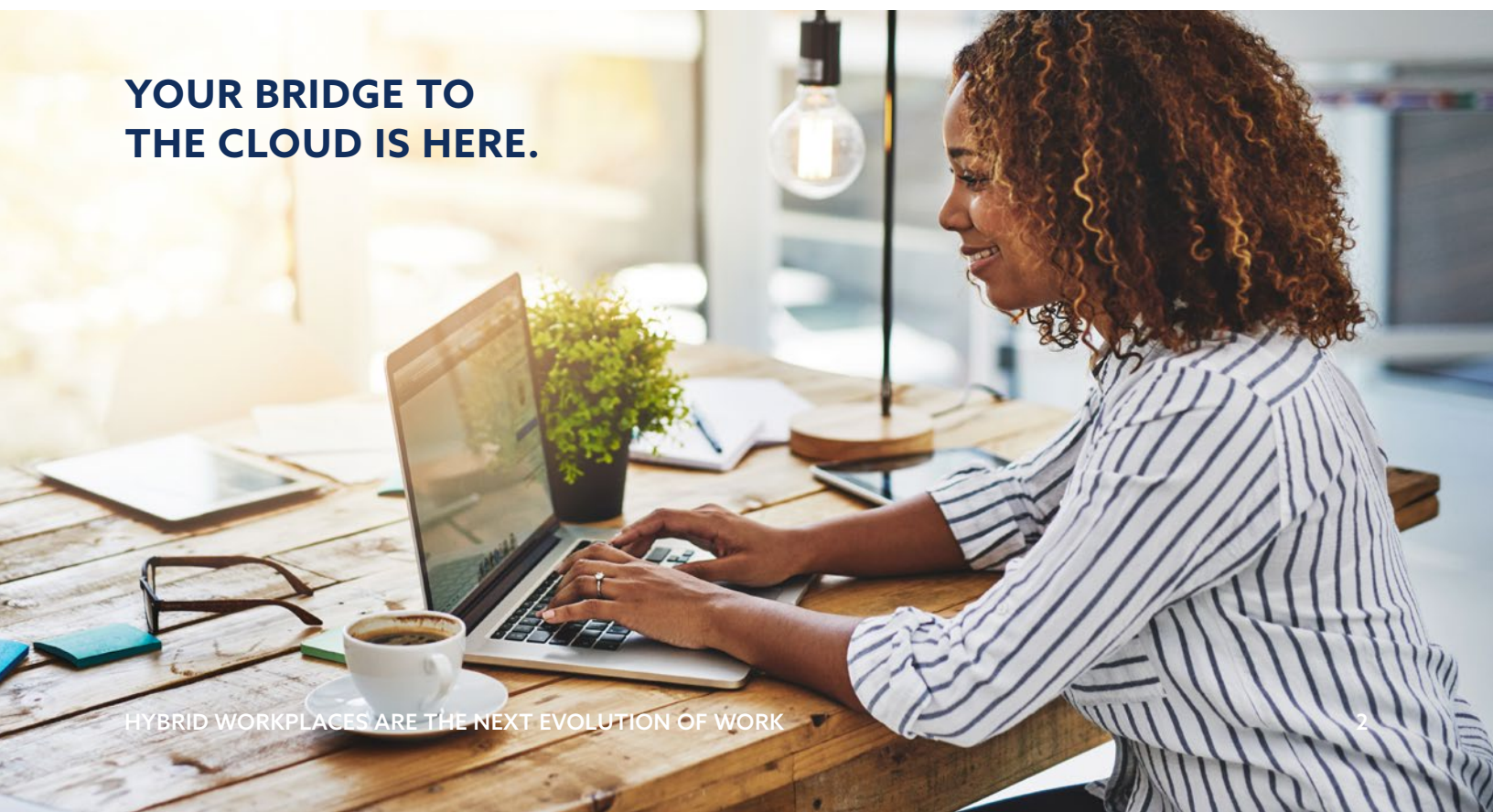
There are questions around culture changes, providing workers more autonomy, and retaining staff. One critical

element to all these things is alleviating pain points around communication and collaboration solutions. Without these fundamental tools in place, employees can sit in silos, feel disengaged, and be less productive.

Preparing for the hybrid workforce will depend greatly on the tech stack you adopt. User-friendly systems that keep people connected will be a significant investment moving forward. Technology leaders understand this need. A survey found that [72 percent plan to invest in tools for virtual collaboration](#).

However, you may not need to invest substantially to meet these needs. Companies with existing NEC phone systems have a great opportunity to keep their current solution and seamlessly integrate it with cloud-based unified communications tools.

YOUR BRIDGE TO THE CLOUD IS HERE.



WHAT IS A HYBRID WORK MODEL?

A hybrid work model typically means that employees have flexibility in where they work, either at the office or at a remote location. Companies maintain their physical building spaces while also enabling connections for those not in the office.

Implementing a hybrid work model can go two ways:

- › **Complete flexibility:** Workers choose where and when they want to work and have autonomy.
- › **Structured:** Employees stick to a schedule of days they'll work in the office and remotely. This can correlate with specific activities or department needs.

In either case, one of the essential elements for all workers to be successful is communication, both internally and externally. Processes and systems need to be in place to enable a seamless and flexible environment for both employees and employers.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS ARE CRITICAL

Employees need to be able to connect and collaborate to get work done. Their productivity and ability to work together rely on their ability to communicate.

[Research by Microsoft® and LinkedIn®](#) found that the shift to remote work disrupted communication and collaboration. With thoughtful technology, however, this gap shrinks.

Additionally, communication with customers is equally important. They require multiple options and communication avenues to ensure a positive customer experience. To achieve this, you need an omnichannel approach that allows customers to interact with you in whatever way is best for them, whether via phone, email, chat, or in person.

Implementing new technology is a major project. But it doesn't have to be complicated. That's why we developed this whitepaper to help you navigate this process to find the right path for your business, employees, and customers.

THE TRANSITION TO HYBRID: TRENDS SHAPING THIS NEW DYNAMIC

Survey after survey keeps telling us that the in-office workplace is a thing of the past. Offices are not obsolete, but most companies admit that remote work didn't cause any collapses of infrastructure, operations, or productivity.

In fact, **83 percent of employers and 71 percent of employees** call remote work a success!

Allowing for remote flexibility is good for business and retaining high-value employees. They have different expectations now, with **92 percent of employees** requesting to work remotely at least one day a week.

So, how do you manage a hybrid workforce and all their communication and collaboration needs? Regardless of where your employees sit, they should have the same experience with access to the technology required to do their jobs well.

Next, we'll look at the communications options for a hybrid workplace model and how on-premises NEC users can leverage their existing platform to be the ideal solution for hybrid teams.

WHAT ARE THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS FOR THE HYBRID WORKFORCE?

With the old model of work, everyone assumed that people had to be in one space. In that system, on-premises solutions made a lot of sense since voice was also the primary mode of communication. This setup worked decades ago, but it doesn't fit a hybrid workforce or modern business operations. That virtual hybrid workspace should provide employees with the ability to use a multitude of communications tools to stay connected with colleagues and customers – and work from wherever life takes them.

STANDALONE COLLABORATION SERVICES BECAME THE QUICK FIX

To keep up with the needs of the workforce during the pandemic, businesses with on-premises phone systems turned to standalone collaboration services for video conferencing, chat, and file sharing / backup. Their intent was to empower employees to stay connected and quickly collaborate and maintain productivity moving forward. While this approach may have worked for the short term, as a long-term solution, there are many drawbacks. Leveraging multiple disparate systems cause productivity and efficiency challenges. Lack of integration results in these standalone tools living in silos, leading to significant issues for the business at the user level.

EMPLOYEES AND BUSINESSES FACE CHALLENGES WITH SHORT-TERM FIXES

SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS DON'T DRIVE EFFICIENCY OR COHESION FOR USERS

- Using multiple standalone solutions for collaboration can impact efficiency and be costly to maintain.
- Users find it cumbersome because they must switch between applications, and they have multiple logins. This creates a disjointed user experience.
- When technology doesn't alleviate pain points but creates new ones, employees will be less likely to use and rely on it. It becomes a barrier, not an enabler.

BUSINESSES SEE HIGH COSTS WITH STANDALONE SOLUTIONS

- Using many applications often means juggling many vendors and bills.
- The solutions become too complex, and integration may not be possible, so your IT team has responsibility for many applications.
- Additionally, you spend more time training employees on multiple solutions and applications.

Collaboration and communications tools need to solve all modern-day work problems, no matter where employees sit. A scalable, flexible solution allows you to provide consistent work experiences regardless of where they are.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS SHIFTED

Business communications needs are different than they were during the in-office work era. While businesses had to pivot to address communications and collaboration quickly, many did so in haste; hence, the standalone applications model.

Now, you need business communications tools that address current and future work models. Futureproofing the work model will be a priority for every business that wants to grow and thrive.

And the best part? There's a way to do it while leveraging your investment with your existing NEC phone system.



EXTEND YOUR EXISTING PHONE SYSTEM CAPABILITIES WITH UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE FROM NEC

An integrated communications solutions needs to support a hybrid work model and meet the communications requirements of a distributed workforce. Optimally, the ideal solution would be one that meets all your communications requirements and makes the best financial sense for your business.

Up until now, your only options were to continue doing what you are doing utilizing your existing NEC phone system and disparate applications or abandon your on-prem investment and move to a completely different solution.

NEC recognized the need to provide "better" options to meet the needs of our customers in this new work environment. That's why we created UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE. This new option extends your existing NEC phone system investment with cloud-based

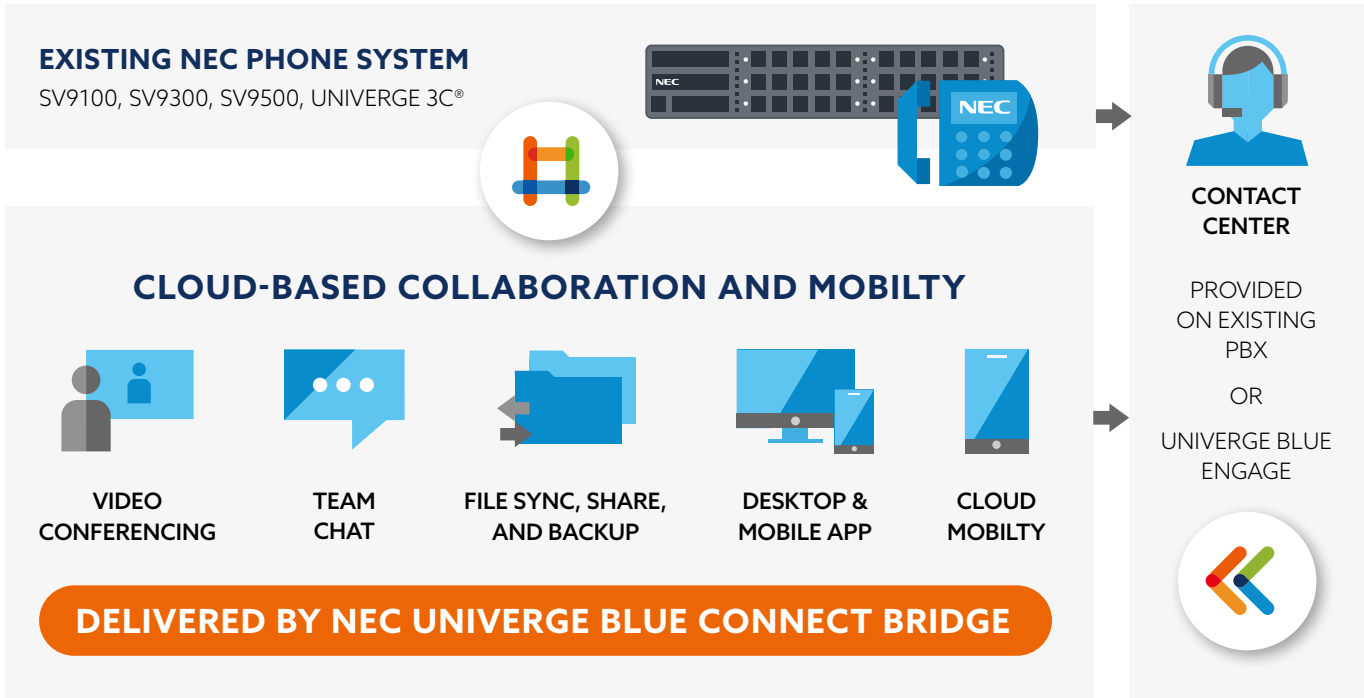
communication tools via desktop and mobile apps. This creates a seamless, all-in-one communications experience - while simultaneously creating a path to the cloud.

Here's how CONNECT BRIDGE works and what to expect:

- You keep your existing phone system and phone numbers. Users can place, receive, and manage calls using their computer softphone or mobile device – so their NEC phone number goes wherever they go.
- Cloud solutions, including video conferencing, chat, and file sharing /backup, are layered to create one comprehensive, integrated business communications system.
- Users can utilize the system from desktop and mobile apps, so wherever your team goes, the new turnkey communications hub goes too.
- With flexibility around communications and collaboration, a hybrid workforce can connect no matter where individuals are.
- Users have the same communications experiences regardless of where they work.
- Collaboration remains the same between employees, whether full-time on-site, partially in the office, or completely remote.



Turn every place into a flexible workspace with **UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE.** Your **BRIDGE to the Cloud!**



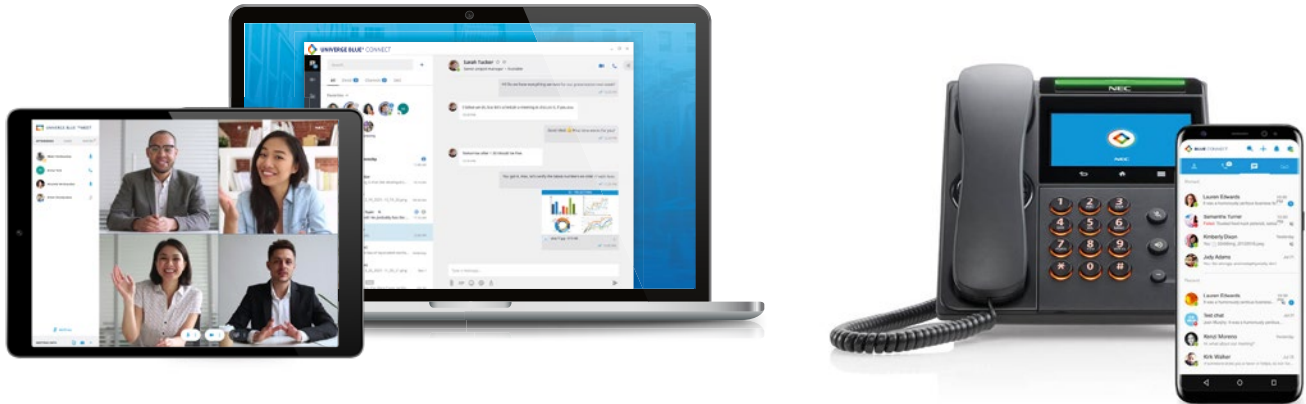
While collaboration tools such as chat, video conferencing, file sharing, and file backup are essential communication tools, the center of business communications still remains the same: it's the business phone system. Take your existing NEC phone system into the modern era, making it accessible wherever you go.

CONNECT BRIDGE empowers organizations with existing NEC phone systems by extending the calling capabilities via desktop and mobile apps to wherever employees are – be it at home, in the office, and anywhere in between.

CONNECT BRIDGE ensures that your existing phone system investment is protected and remains the center of your business communications. It also provides your employees with the flexibility they need to work from wherever.

- **Incoming Calls:** Rather than delivering calls to a desk phone, the CONNECT BRIDGE apps deliver calls simultaneously to a user's laptop, tablet, or mobile device – so they can take their business phone with them, wherever they go.

- **Outgoing Calls:** With access to their entire corporate directory and the ability to add contacts, employees can place calls using their business phone number from any device with the CONNECT BRIDGE apps installed.



MORE BENEFITS OF UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE

When analyzing if the product is right for your company, you'll see many benefits. Rather than managing point solutions from multiple touchpoints, which leads to more costs and additional resource needs, UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE centralizes critical collaboration tools. And they are from a provider you already trust with your business communications – NEC. Let's look at some of the key benefits you can realize with UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE.



PRODUCTIVITY AND CONNECTIVITY

By combining all the tools into one, your employees can be more productive. The integration of chat, text, video conferencing, screen sharing, file sharing, and file backup with your existing NEC phone system delivers greater productivity and easier collaboration.

Additionally, the app brings mobile phones into the communications bubble – allowing employees to manage calls using their NEC phone number from their iOS or Android device – so they can keep their personal numbers private and be reachable wherever they go.



REMOVE ON-PREMISES LIMITATIONS

You've already invested in your NEC phone system, but there can be limitations around flexibility and mobility if it's on-premises. UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE removes these limitations while ensuring you can extend the capabilities of your NEC solution. You and your workforce can use communication tools from wherever.



SAVE ON TECHNOLOGY COSTS

Disparate systems can potentially eat up a lot of budget. With UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE, you may find cost savings. No need for investment capital into new hardware or software or maintenance of equipment. The CONNECT BRIDGE apps automatically update, so employees always have access to the latest and greatest communication and collaboration features.

You receive a single bill from one vendor, and costs are by user count, not lines. Crazy simple.



EASY SETUP AND MANAGEMENT

UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE consolidates management of voice and data into one network. Setup and management are easy for admins and don't require provider support. Administration of the system happens from one web-based portal.

Further, the system is user-friendly. Your team won't need hours of specialized training. The CONNECT BRIDGE apps are easy to deploy; all you need to get employees up and running in no time is an internet connection.



MIGRATION ON YOUR SCHEDULE

This solution transforms your existing phone system into a communications and collaboration hub for employees working in the office, remote, and anywhere in between. It offers businesses a path to migrate to the cloud on their terms.

With UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE, there is no pressure to migrate to a full UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) solution. If at any point your business decides to migrate to a full version of UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT, our team will help you do this and, most importantly, with no change to your user experience.



YOUR BRIDGE TO THE CLOUD

In just a few steps, you can begin your journey to the cloud. This phased approach allows you to control your migration and prepare you for the next generation of workplace communications and collaboration.

STEP 1: Integrate CONNECT BRIDGE with your existing NEC phone system to provide cloud communications and collaboration tools to your workforce.

STEP 2: As you bring on new employees (in-office or remote) or move existing employees to work remotely, they will be on a cloud solution. Yet, they are still able to communicate and collaborate with those working in the office.

STEP 3: When you are ready to migrate all your communications to the cloud, we will migrate your existing NEC phone system workload to the full version of UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT. All users' experiences will stay the same when migration is complete.

Moving to cloud-based phone and communications systems can be overwhelming. There are often doubts about security, ownership, and management. However, not moving to the cloud puts you at a disadvantage in the competitive landscape. If you want to reduce risk and costs while increasing productivity and flexibility, this approach to adopting the cloud addresses those needs.



ABOUT NEC

NEC, a leader in information and communications technology, has been in operations for over 122 years and holds over 47,000 patents. The company is dedicated to providing industry-leading solutions for modern business needs. We are enabling new approaches in the delivery of communications and IT services, and deliver scalable tactics and smart innovation.



ABOUT UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE

The platform is a fully integrated cloud-based UC solution for any size business. It combines your existing NEC phone system with chat, video conferencing, screen sharing, file management, and file backup. All these tools live in one ecosystem that's easy to deploy, manage, and scale.

The CONNECT BRIDGE concept allows companies to retain their existing NEC phone system and layer in a cloud of other tools. They can also migrate fully to the cloud through a staged approach.



HOW NEC HELPS BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

By understanding today's work environment, NEC designed UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE to meet those requirements regarding communications and collaboration. We created the platform to give businesses more flexibility and options for structuring their communications platforms.

With UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE, you'll get faster, more reliable, and financially manageable cloud services through one provider - NEC. As a result, you'll experience less complexity and better integration.



LEARN MORE ABOUT UNIVERGE BLUE CONNECT BRIDGE

Are you ready to evolve your communications tools and boost productivity while decreasing costs? Contact us today to learn more about this new solution offered by NEC.

