Wildix

Business Communication Solutions in Manufacturing

Building Value, Efficiency and Innovation in the UK Market

2025

Executive Summary

This white paper examines the current landscape of UK manufacturing and the key role that advanced telephony solutions play in overcoming today's challenges. With the fallout from Brexit causing an estimated £130 million lower GVA and critical shortages in skilled workers, the industry is still experiencing the aftermath of the June 2016 vote.

Additional pressures from the pandemic and the gradually increasing focus on decarbonisation (along with large spikes in energy prices) are also creating long-term concerns for the sector.

Yet despite this, there are increasing opportunities for home-grown UK manufacturing, with numerous top-end products being produced within the UK and Ireland. By adopting advanced manufacturing processes and boosting these with advanced telephony solutions, manufacturers can reduce costs, increase productivity per worker and build skills within the organisation.

This paper explores the challenges facing the industry, the transformative potential of **cloud-based business communications** and how Wildix's innovative solutions — integrating APIs, chat, video, voice and more — can help bridge the gap between office operations and the production floor. Additionally, emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and AI are analysed for their roles in enhancing process automation and improving operational efficiency. This ebook makes a strong case for manufacturers to embrace advanced telephony solutions as a strategic enabler in today's competitive market.

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1. Overview of UK Manufacturing

The UK manufacturing sector has historically been a cornerstone of the economy, contributing significantly to industrial output, exports and employment. Despite its longstanding reputation for engineering excellence and innovation, the industry now faces transformative challenges. Rapid technological advancements, global competition and evolving market demands necessitate the adoption of digital solutions that improve communication, streamline operations and foster greater integration across all levels of the production process.

Manufacturers are under increasing pressure to modernise legacy systems and adopt new technologies that enhance operational efficiencies. In particular, advanced telephony solutions — where disparate communication tools are integrated into a seamless ecosystem — offer a promising avenue for boosting productivity and collaboration.

2. The Impact of Brexit and Economic Contraction

Brexit Fallout

The decision of the UK to leave the European Union in June 2016 has had far-reaching consequences for the manufacturing sector. Economic reports have highlighted that the **UK economy is almost £140 billion smaller** than it would have been in a non-Brexit scenario. Among the many sectors affected, manufacturing has experienced significant disruption:

- **Supply Chain Instability:** The uncertainty of post-Brexit trade agreements has led to tariffs, delays and increased costs.
- **Investment Retraction:** Reduced investor confidence has affected funding opportunities for modernisation and expansion.
- **Recruitment Shortages:** Despite approximately **1.55 million people being unemployed** in the UK, there aren't enough workers with the skills needed entering the industry.

Economic Contraction and Its Repercussions

Naturally, the global pandemic also created a contraction in the economy, with manufacturing being especially affected. This created significant delays, and large parts of the economy were effectively shut off for several months.

Other issues such as the Ever Given blocking the Suez Canal for over a week in 2021, costing the global economy around £45 billion, and the substantial increases in energy prices have significantly hindered domestic manufacturing.

The overall issues with the UK economy have forced manufacturers to re-evaluate their cost structures and operational methodologies. The need for efficiency is paramount. With less capital available for large-scale investments, businesses are increasingly looking toward digital transformation to maximise returns on smaller, more strategic investments.

3. Current Challenges in UK Manufacturing

Recruitment Shortage

Despite a noticeable decline in job availability following Brexit, the manufacturing industry continues to experience a shortage of skilled workers. A critical factor in this challenge is the reduced ability to **recruit workers from the EU**, a shift that has exacerbated the talent gap. This shortage is particularly significant as advanced manufacturing processes demand a workforce that is adept with both traditional skills and new digital competencies.

Operational Silos

Manufacturing environments are traditionally segmented into different operational silos — separating the administrative offices from the production floors. This divide creates communication barriers that can lead to inefficiencies, misaligned priorities and delays in decision-making — **IDC Market Research** states that companies can lose up to 30% in revenue annually due to inefficiencies resulting from incorrect or siloed data. The need for a unified communication system that bridges these gaps is increasingly apparent.

Legacy Systems and Technological Integration

Many manufacturers continue to rely on outdated hardware-based communication systems. These legacy systems are not only expensive to maintain but also inflexible when it comes to integrating with modern software solutions. This rigidity hinders the ability to leverage real-time data and hampers agile decision-making processes.

Worse, these systems rarely work adequately with mobile devices, resulting in reliance on sales and marketing giving out personal mobile phone numbers or needing a company-issued device.

Global Competition and Innovation Pressures

UK manufacturers are facing heightened competition from international markets where innovation cycles are shorter and technology adoption is faster. To remain competitive, UK manufacturers must embrace digital transformation, integrating robust communication systems that support rapid innovation and adaptability.

4. The Role of Unified Communications

Advanced telephony solutions are often referred to as unified communications. This is more than just a buzzword — it's an essential component of modern business infrastructure, particularly for manufacturing.

> *Unified communications systems integrate voice, video, messaging and conferencing into a single platform that facilitates efficient collaboration across disparate teams and geographical locations.*

Breaking Down Communication Barriers

Unified communications dissolve the traditional silos between departments. By connecting the office and the production floor through a single communication platform, manufacturers can ensure that all teams remain informed and aligned. This is critical for real-time problem-solving and maintaining productivity, especially in environments where rapid response times are vital.

Enhancing Operational Efficiency

An integrated business communication system streamlines workflows by reducing the time lost in transitioning between different communication tools. For manufacturers, this means less downtime and a more agile operational environment where decisions can be made quickly and efficiently.

Security and Compliance

Modern UC systems come equipped with advanced security features that protect sensitive manufacturing data. With cyber threats on the rise, safeguarding intellectual property and operational data is critical. A unified approach helps in enforcing consistent security policies across all channels of communication.

5. The Future of Cloud-Based Communications

Cloud-based communications are rapidly reshaping how industries communicate. Unlike traditional hardware-based systems, cloud solutions offer scalability, flexibility and cost efficiency — key benefits that are particularly attractive in the current economic climate.

The Shift from Hardware to Software

Traditional telecom systems rely heavily on physical hardware that requires significant capital expenditure, regular maintenance, and eventual replacement. In contrast, software-based telecom solutions delivered through the cloud provide manufacturers with:

- **Cost Savings:** Reduced upfront investment and lower ongoing maintenance costs.
- **Scalability:** Easily adjustable service levels that grow with your business needs.
- **Flexibility:** The ability to integrate with various software applications through robust APIs, ensuring seamless communication across platforms.

API Integrations and System Connectivity

One of the standout advantages of cloud-based communications is the ability to integrate with other business systems via application programming interfaces (APIs). These integrations facilitate:

- **Real-Time Data Exchange:** Connect production systems, ERP solutions and customer management platforms seamlessly.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** By linking disparate systems, manufacturers can create a cohesive environment that improves visibility and streamlines decision-making, with the communications platform at the heart of it.
- **Future-Proofing Operations:** As new tools and technologies emerge, API integrations ensure that your communication system remains adaptable and capable of meeting evolving business needs.

Internet of Things (IoT) and Communications

The promise of IoT has been discussed for decades, yet its full potential is only now beginning to be realised. Unified communications provide a critical backbone for IoT implementations in manufacturing by:

- **Enabling Real-Time Monitoring**

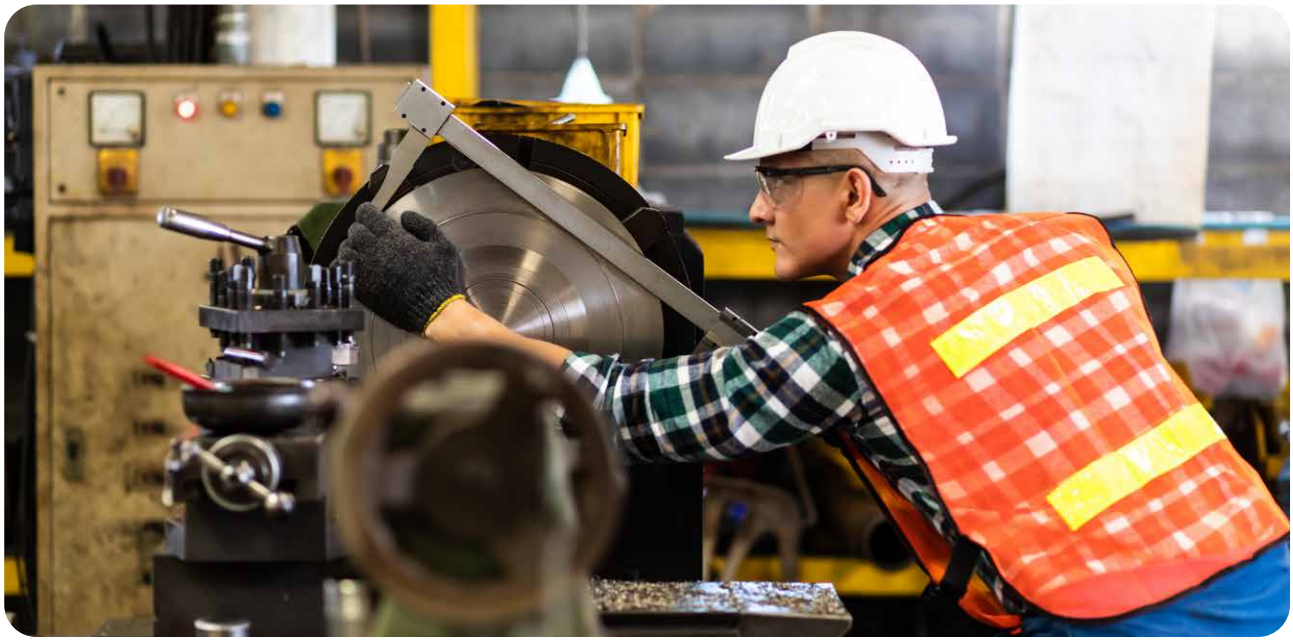
  Sensors and connected devices can relay information instantly to central dashboards via communications systems.

- **Facilitating Predictive Maintenance**

  Early detection of issues through constant communication between devices and operators can prevent costly downtime, with alerts potentially being sent to headsets for immediate actioning.

- **Improving Overall Efficiency**

  IoT systems can automate routine tasks and optimise production processes, leading to better resource management and enhanced productivity.



6. Integrating IoT and AI in Manufacturing

The Rise of Artificial Intelligence

From predictive analytics to automation, AI has the potential to revolutionise every aspect of the production process. According to a **McKinsey report**, only 12% of respondents from manufacturing businesses are actively using AI as of 2024. This presents a tremendous opportunity for early adopters who are willing to leverage AI-driven insights for competitive advantage.

Enhancing Autonomy and Efficiency

By incorporating AI into business communications systems, manufacturers can:

Automate Routine Tasks: From scheduling maintenance to managing inventory, AI can handle repetitive tasks with minimal human intervention.

Improve Data Analytics: AI-powered analytics offer deeper insights into operational inefficiencies, allowing for more informed decision-making.

Streamline Communication: AI can assist in routing calls, prioritising messages, and even transcribing conversations in real-time — enhancing overall communication efficiency.

AI-Powered IoT Integration

Combining AI with IoT further amplifies the benefits. Intelligent systems can analyse data from a myriad of sensors to detect anomalies, predict equipment failures, and optimise production schedules. This convergence of technologies leads to more autonomous manufacturing environments where decisions are data-driven and operations are finely tuned for maximum efficiency.

7. Why Wildix is the Ideal Unified Communications Partner

Wildix offers a comprehensive suite of business communications solutions designed specifically with manufacturers in mind. With a focus on delivering robust, scalable, and flexible communication platforms, Wildix provides manufacturers with the tools they need to navigate today's challenging business environment.

Seamless Integration Through APIs

Wildix stands out due to its strong emphasis on integration. The platform's open API architecture allows for seamless connectivity with existing enterprise systems. This means that manufacturers can integrate Wildix with their ERP, CRM and IoT platforms, creating a unified ecosystem that enhances operational efficiency.

Comprehensive Communication Tools

Wildix's solution set goes beyond traditional telephony:

Chat, Voice and Video: Ensure that all forms of communication — from quick text messages to high-quality video conferencing — are supported.

Collaboration Tools: Integrated chat and video conferencing reduce the isolation between production floors and office environments, promoting a more unified company culture.

Mobile and Headset Compatibility: In dynamic manufacturing environments, mobile devices and headsets are often more practical than fixed phones. Wildix solutions are designed to support these modalities, ensuring that workers on the production floor can communicate effortlessly with administrative teams.

Breaking Down Operational Silos

One of the persistent challenges in manufacturing is the divide between office-based staff and production workers. Wildix addresses this issue by offering a unified platform that connects everyone, whether they are in the boardroom or on the production floor. By using headsets and mobile solutions, employees can stay connected, receive real-time updates and collaborate more effectively.

Enhanced Security and Compliance

Manufacturers must protect sensitive data and intellectual property. Wildix's unified communications platform incorporates advanced security protocols to ensure that all communications remain secure and compliant with industry regulations. This focus on security is particularly critical in an era where cyberthreats are increasingly sophisticated.

International Calling

Wildix has its own calling solution that gives you international calls to more than 200 countries and territories. Businesses can easily connect international offices, talk to clients worldwide and ensure seamless communications using local numbers. These numbers can be used via the mobile app, too, providing always-on connectivity wherever it's needed.

8. Use Cases for Unified Communications in Manufacturing

Use Case 1: Real-Time Production Monitoring

Scenario:
A major automotive manufacturer employs a network of sensors across its production lines to monitor equipment health, production rates and quality control metrics.

Solution:
Using Wildix's cloud-based unified communications system, production managers receive real-time alerts via mobile devices and headsets. Integrated API connections link sensor data with communication tools, allowing managers to convene an instant video call with maintenance teams when anomalies are detected. This immediate response minimises downtime and improves overall production efficiency.

Benefits:

- Faster incident response
- Reduced downtime and maintenance costs
- Enhanced collaboration between production and maintenance teams

Use Case 2: Bridging the Office-Floor Divide

Scenario:
A leading aerospace components manufacturer struggles with a cultural divide between its administrative offices and the production floor. Important production updates and strategic decisions are delayed due to fragmented communication channels.

Solution:
By deploying Wildix's unified communications platform, the company integrates chat, video conferencing and voice communications into one seamless system. Workers on the production floor use headsets to receive critical updates and participate in virtual meetings, ensuring that both management and production teams are aligned in real-time.

Benefits:

- Improved interdepartmental communication
- Timely decision-making
- A unified corporate culture that reduces operational silos

Use Case 3: Supply Chain Coordination and Logistics

Scenario:
A manufacturer dealing with complex supply chains is often challenged by delayed communications and misaligned logistics. Coordinating with multiple suppliers and logistics partners across different regions results in inefficient workflows.

Solution:
Wildix's API-driven integration allows the manufacturer to connect its unified communications platform with supply chain management software. Real-time data exchange ensures that all stakeholders are immediately notified of any changes or disruptions. Video conferences and group chats facilitate quick troubleshooting and coordination, ensuring that supply chain operations remain fluid.

Benefits:

- Streamlined supply chain coordination
- Reduced delays in production
- Enhanced visibility and accountability across the supply network

Use Case 4: AI-Powered Quality Control

Scenario:
A precision engineering manufacturer is looking to improve its quality control process, which currently relies on manual checks and delayed reporting, leading to inefficiencies and increased rework.

Solution:
Leveraging AI within its unified communications system, the manufacturer deploys an AI-powered tool that integrates with production sensors and cameras. The system analyses data in real-time and automatically flags any deviations from quality standards. Alerts are immediately communicated to quality control teams through Wildix's platform, prompting instant corrective measures.

Benefits:

- Enhanced quality assurance
- Reduction in manual inspections
- Increased production efficiency and reduced waste

9. Conclusion and Call to Action

The challenges facing the UK manufacturing sector are profound and multifaceted — ranging from economic contractions exacerbated by Brexit to persistent recruitment challenges and outdated communication infrastructures. In this rapidly evolving landscape, embracing digital transformation is not just an option but a necessity.

Unified communications, particularly those built on cloud-based platforms, represent a critical evolution in how manufacturers can bridge the gap between disparate teams, streamline operations, and drive efficiency. By integrating comprehensive communication tools, robust API connections, and next-generation technologies such as IoT and AI, manufacturers can future-proof their operations and remain competitive in a global market.

Wildix's solutions are uniquely positioned to address these needs. With a focus on seamless integration, versatile communication modes (including chat, video and voice), and a commitment to breaking down operational silos, Wildix empowers manufacturers to overcome the challenges posed by an ever-changing economic and technological landscape.

Manufacturers across the UK are encouraged to re-evaluate their communication strategies. The integration of unified communications is not merely an upgrade — it's a strategic investment in the future of manufacturing. Wildix stands ready to partner with you to streamline operations, foster collaboration between the office and production floor, and harness the power of AI and IoT for smarter, more efficient production.

Scan the QR code below to book a demo of Wildix today, and position your business for long-term success.

wildix.com/uk/manufacturing-call-us