

BUYER DECISION GUIDE · 2026

UCaaS or CCaaS: Which Do You Need?

Two quotes, a price difference of three or four times per person, and one question that settles it. Plus the hybrid arrangement almost nobody gets quoted.

Unified communications connects **a named person to a named person**. Contact centre software distributes **a queue across people who are interchangeable** for that call. Those are different problems, and a product built for one does the other badly. Feature lists will not tell them apart, because both list routing, reporting, AI and mobile apps.

■ The line, by assumption rather than feature

	Unified communications	Contact centre
The caller wants	A person, by name or role	The business, for a purpose
Success is	That person answers or takes a message	Somebody capable answers, quickly
Nobody free	Voicemail, or it rings elsewhere	Queue, or an offered callback
Who decides who answers	The caller, by dialling	The system, by skill and availability
Staffing	People have jobs; the phone is part of it	People are rostered against forecast demand

The question, in two parts

1. Do callers ever wait, knowing they are waiting, because everyone able to help is busy? 2. When they do, is it fine that any qualified person answers? Yes to both means you have a queue. No to the first means you need better ring groups and an after hours path, not a licence. No to the second means contact centre software will fight you, because routing that ignores relationships is exactly wrong for a business built on them. The most common honest answer is *sometimes*, and that answer means hybrid.

■ Six signs you have outgrown a phone system

- People hold regularly and nobody knows for how long.
- **You cannot say how many callers gave up yesterday.** That number measures lost revenue directly.
- The same question arrives by phone, email and web form with no shared history.
- Somebody senior is doing routing with their voice. It stops working when they take leave.
- **You roster based on expected call volume.** The clearest structural sign of all.
- "How is today going?" takes a day to answer.

Two signs that look convincing and are not

Call volume alone: six hundred calls a day to named account managers is still not a queue. **Headcount alone:** forty people each answering their own phone is a phone system, while four sharing one number against a service target is a contact centre. Vendors qualify on both because they are easy questions, and neither describes the shape of the work.

Where it gets sold and is not needed

The situation	What it actually needs
Three calls arrive at once between 8:30 and 10.	A ring group, overflow, and probably an AI answer. Not twelve licences.
Somebody wants to know what the phones are doing.	The report your current system probably already has. Ask first.
After hours calls go nowhere useful.	Opening hours and a defined after hours path. Nothing to do with queueing.
Support has a queue, the other forty people do not.	Hybrid licensing. This is the most common overspend we see.

The hybrid split, by business

Business	Contact centre seats	Standard seats
Medical or dental, 25 staff	3 to 5 on reception and bookings	All clinical and admin
Wholesaler, 60 staff	6 to 10 on orders and enquiries	Warehouse, sales, finance
Property management, 40 staff	4 to 6 on maintenance	Named property managers
Professional services, 80 staff	0 to 2, often none	Everyone. Callers want a name.
Service provider with an SLA, 50	12 to 20 on support	The rest of the business

Do it in this order, or you will over licence

- 1 Fix the basics.** Real hours, an after hours path, two people in every ring group, one published number. A surprising share of queue problems end here.
- 2 Measure for a month.** Offered, answered, missed, abandoned, by hour. You cannot size a queue you have never counted.
- 3 Take the repetitive volume out first.** What AI or self service resolves should never be sized into the queue.
- 4 Licence what remains, and only that.** Then review quarterly for a year.

Before you sign, ask these

Which capabilities are already in the standard phone system (make them mark the list). Is it one platform or two products joined (ask to watch a transfer from a queue to a non-queue person). Can licensed and unlicensed users share one directory and numbers. How fast can a seat move up or down. What does a supervisor see live (ask for a screen, not a description). And which country holds the recordings and transcripts, for how long.