

Arkadin Brings Businesses into the Future with New Cloud Unified Communications Services and Digital Operations Strategies

Thomas Valantin, Jean-Pierre Dacher, Melanie Reversat, Nicolas Coudret, Zach Katsof, Hugues Treguier, and Nikki de Kretser

Abstract

As an NTT Communications company, Arkadin is at the forefront of digital cloud communications technologies. We are transforming and adapting rapidly to take advantage of new business opportunities in this fast growing and dynamic market sector. Several services were introduced and a new partnership struck in the past few months, which we believe will help enhance our market leadership and drive greater success for our customers.

Keywords: cloud, unified communications, digital workplace

1. Introduction

As an NTT Communications company, Arkadin is at the forefront of digital cloud communications technologies [1]. This is a fast growing and dynamic market sector that is expected to reach up to €30 billion by 2020—five times more than Arkadin’s traditional conferencing market, and we are transforming and adapting rapidly to take advantage of new business opportunities in this area.

Our product and operations teams are constantly searching for innovative technologies and business strategies to ensure our customers are prepared for the demands of a changing digital landscape and a new generation of workers. This is essential if we are to meet our goal of bringing them into the future through simple-to-use cloud collaboration services that enable a true digital workplace for greater productivity and return on investment (ROI).

In the past few months, we have launched services and established noteworthy partnerships that we

believe will help enhance our market leadership and drive greater success for our customers.

2. ArkadinVision smooths the transition from conferencing to unified communications

It is commonly known that today’s digital workplace requires collaboration tools that are more converged, integrated, and user-centric than those of previous generations. The continued popularity of BYOD (bring your own device), momentum for Skype for Business in enterprises, and the increasing use of video for vertical applications are key factors. As a result, we saw a need for a unified meeting service that would complement and integrate perfectly with our trusted partner solutions from Microsoft, Cisco, Vidyo, and BlueJeans.

ArkadinVision is our answer. Through a partnership with Pexip, we have designed a digital meeting platform to deliver an excellent customer experience that is unique to the market. The user interface offers

the highest level of simplicity and interoperability available today. Customers can easily connect anytime, anywhere, and across diverse endpoints. Whether they join from room systems, Skype for Business, or from a mobile device in one easy click, they will enjoy high quality video, audio, and screen sharing—all with a fresh modern look and feel. Moreover, they will have the convenience of one trusted supplier, a simple license model, and competitive, highly flexible pricing plans.

While our sweet spot is the mid-market, ArkadinVision can support any size business for all their audio, web, and video collaboration needs, especially as they transition from conferencing to unified communications (UC). ArkadinVision also serves as an evolutionary bridge to the digital workplace for our existing ArkadinAnytime and ArkadinAnywhere legacy customers who will be able to streamline multiple collaboration solutions under one license for added value and cost savings. For businesses that already have UC, ArkadinVision can supplement important features that may be inadequate or missing from their solutions.

Our guiding principle in development was to avoid common customer pain points that can lead to low levels of adoption. To circumvent this problem, ArkadinVision offers:

- A simple interface to make meetings more productive and enjoyable
- A limited user footprint that supports plug-in free Web Real-Time Communications (WebRTC)* browsers
- High quality high-definition (HD) audio on voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) and PSTN (public switched telephone network) dial in/out
- Pexip's highly available and scalable platform for high levels of performance and downtime
- Comprehensive training and onboarding programs

Customers participating in our trials are enjoying significant benefits that are driving high value collaborative experiences:

- Of customers trying our system, 47% have achieved high levels of adoption, compared to the 20–25% adoption range that is typical for most video meeting services.
- An impressive 97% of respondents have found the service easy to use, with many commenting on the high quality of the video.

ArkadinVision is available in Europe, North America, and Latin America and will be launched in Asia later this year.

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.co.uk/arkadin-unveils-arkadinvision-new-digital-meeting-space-simplicity-affordability>

Link to video: <http://vidyard.arkadin.com/watch/v42XspEt5aK1pFMX9hxTHM>

3. New Cisco services are tapped to give customers greater choice in UC and collaboration

As a technology agnostic company, we compete by offering customers a wide array of products for solving their unique cloud UC needs and supporting them with our trademark global, yet local approach to service. Cisco Spark is the latest addition to our full complement of UC services. This new era collaboration tool provides messaging, meeting, and calling services directly from the Cisco Collaboration Cloud. The highly secure, scalable, and easy to use service enables users to message, meet, or call anyone, anywhere, at any time, and from any device. Whether participants join from the new generation Cisco Spark Board, a room system, a desktop phone, or a mobile device, they all have the same meeting experience. Through a single click, they can turn a phone call into a video meeting, and with a simple swipe, a video call can be moved from a room system to a mobile phone and to another room system. Cisco Spark is available in a monthly, per user subscription service.

Cisco Spark is a new team collaboration application that lets teams work in virtual rooms. Within these rooms, team members can send instant messages (either in groups or one-to-one), share files, and make video calls. The solution called Cisco Cloud Connected Audio – Service Provider (CCA-SP), which has been branded Cloud Connected Audio – Arkadin, has also been added to our offering for optimizing WebEx meetings as a fully integrated solution offering audio, web, and video. It offers significant advantages: a predictable cost model, a hybrid audio environment, HD VoIP; the ability to leverage existing customer IP telephony networks, and a secure, scalable global cloud infrastructure. Arkadin is among the limited number of Cisco partners to offer and implement CCA-SP with a WebEx web conferencing platform.

All Cisco Spark and Cloud Connected Audio customers benefit from our locally administered, highly

* WebRTC: A standard of communications protocols and application programming interfaces that enable web browsers to use real-time voice, text, and video communications.

personalized support strategy, which gives Arkadin a compelling advantage in the industry.

4. Arkadin Managed Services for Skype Cloud Voice guides organizations through the voice transformation journey to achieve greater ROI with Microsoft Office 365

As Microsoft continues to roll out advanced Skype cloud voice capabilities, organizations are looking for a trusted voice partner with the expertise and experience to navigate the voice transformation journey. In close partnership with Microsoft, we are providing our newly launched Arkadin Managed Services for Skype Cloud Voice to help customers translate their cloud voice strategy into an action plan for success, while mitigating risk and the all too common pot-holes in voice transformation projects. The Microsoft Skype Operations Framework certified solution addresses planning, readiness, deployment, user enablement, and ongoing managed services. Customers benefit from cost and risk controls, simplified administration, increased security, an improved user experience and a highly skilled transformation team to guide users through the voice transformation journey. Arkadin announced the new service in conjunction with the Microsoft Ignite show in Orlando, Florida, in September 2017.

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.com/about-us/news-media/arkadin-announces-new-managed-services-office-365-enable-businesses-successfully>

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/zihSFJKJtmA>

5. Arkadin and Unify Square partner will accelerate global Skype for Business adoption

A new partnership with Unify Square, the leading provider of 24x7 cloud managed services for Skype for Business, will enable Arkadin to be the first UCaaS (UC-as-a-Service) provider to put user quality of experience at the heart of its platform. Arkadin Total Connect Enterprise, a set of business applications and services around Skype for Business across Microsoft Office 365 and Arkadin's global private cloud, will embed Unify Square's PowerSuite software and cloud managed services for ensuring exceptional monitoring and optimization.

"Quality of experience for the end user remains the cornerstone of a successful unified communications deployment in the enterprise world. Embedding PowerSuite into our platforms further elevates our focus

on delivering, and maintaining, a superior user experience," said Christophe Reyes, Managing Director, Unified Communications Service Line for Arkadin. He added, "Unify Square's exceptional monitoring and optimization of Skype for Business will ensure our users stay at the heart of our partnership."

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.co.uk/about-us/news-media/arkadin-and-unify-square-partner-accelerate-global-skype-business-adoption>

6. SmartStart is a game changer in solving user adoption headaches for UC services

One of the long-standing challenges of selling online collaboration tools to enterprises is user adoption. Traditional onboarding takes as long as four weeks. Arkadin set out to significantly shorten this time to minimize the disruption caused by business changes and to get users up and running quickly and efficiently. The problem was tackled through the creation of a best-in-class end-user product onboarding portal called SmartStart. The objective was to give end users a more personalized experience and far more control over the process, which is not possible with many traditional onboarding strategies.

The easy and intuitive four-step portal has everything required for the onboarding journey in one easily accessible place that can be accessed from any mobile device and customized based upon each user's personal preferences. It is powered by Oracle Eloqua, Vidyad, and the open source Orchard CMS (content management system) (**Fig. 1**).

Vidyad enables us to see which videos stored across the SmartStart microsite are being consumed by our customers, which sections of the videos they are finding the most valuable, and the identities of the people who have been watching the videos (**Figs. 2 and 3**). Because video assets are the most expensive asset used with the SmartStart program, the use of Vidyad is key for us to understand which videos are most popular and which format the users engage with the most so that we can ensure that future videos are created in the most cost-effective manner for maximum ROI.

Link to SmartStart for ArkadinVision: <https://smartstart.arkadin.com/vision/home>

7. Metrics show onboarding is reduced from 4 weeks to less than 10 minutes

Beta customers who navigated through to the SmartStart site were measured to determine their

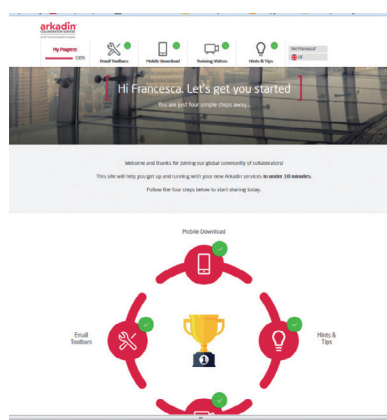


Fig. 1. A *splash screen* greets the user with a personalized greeting and a progress display. It includes a progress indicator in the top navigation bar as well as the “trophy” status.

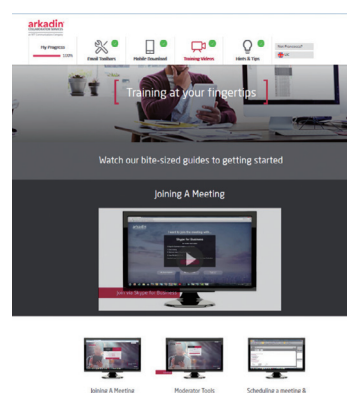
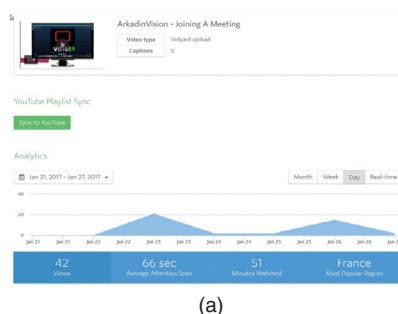


Fig. 2. Training videos are hosted in Vidyard and embedded into the SmartStart portal. Viewing information is tracked and sent to Eloqua. When all videos have been watched to completion, the status is updated in Eloqua and reflected across the portal.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 3. (a) Screen shot of video engagement over time and (b) user-specific video consumption. User behavior information is shown here with an anonymous user's details for privacy reasons.

completion rates. The site average was 5.21 pages per session, which is very good. The metrics show a high level of engagement with the site, with users leaving the site on average after 5 minutes 45 seconds. This means that the users are engaging with the site and taking what they need from their visit, and it proves that we can reduce the onboarding period of the end users from 4 weeks to less than 6 minutes on average.

In the beta trials for ArkadinVision, adoption rates toppled industry norms. The average end-user adoption rate reached 40%, which is significant considering the average for similar video conferencing services is a paltry 24%, and Arkadin users were able to onboard in less than 10 minutes. SmartStart played a critical role in achieving these results.

It is not just the end users who are benefiting. Customers tell us their information technology (IT)

departments are not as burdened with support questions since their employees can be directed to the portal for questions. Thus, IT decision makers are experiencing a more immediate ROI from their purchase. In addition, it will ultimately make it possible for Arkadin to reduce the amount of onboarding communications that we send to our customers via email by enabling the microsite to replace these emails. This is a major step forward for Arkadin, as it enables us to manage over-communication by email with an efficient tool that still has Eloqua as its backbone.

The portal is offered in Arkadin's new ArkadinVision digital meeting service [2] and in the company's other proprietary services, including ArkadinAnytime (audio) [3] and ArkadinAnywhere (web conferencing) [4].



Fig. 4. Screen shot of online customer notification portal.

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.com/about-us/news-media/arkadin%E2%80%99s-smartstart-game-changer-solving-user-adoption-headaches-unified>

8. Achieving world-class operations drives our customers' digital transformation journey

To ensure our customers experience the best cloud communications services and a seamless user experience, we are focusing on three operations initiatives:

- (1) Alignment with the expectations of our customers

Findings from our semi-annual customer survey are used in program development to ensure client needs are being addressed. Current priorities include a focus on voice quality and customer communications. We monitor the quality of audio streams to gain a continuous view of customers' voice experiences on a global basis, which helps us to optimize voice traffic in conjunction with carriers. Our online customer notification portal enables us to proactively notify customers on the status of our infrastructure and any service issues in real time. For example, the report details any recent outages (**Fig. 4**).

- (2) Key performance indicators and measurement

Our key performance indicators and measurement tools identify how well we delivered on the requested levels of performance. Arkadin launched a 'four 9s' program to establish a bar for availability and downtime targets on infrastructure for our internally developed services such as ArkadinAnytime (audio), ArkadinAnywhere (web conferencing), and ArkadinVision (digital meetings).

- (3) Product development

We have adopted development and operations (DevOps) principles to enable a more integrated and agile way of bringing our products to market. This powerful methodology for product development will ensure we have the most efficient workplace culture and processes in place to build, test, and release our services rapidly and reliably, and that we are well positioned to respond to customer feedback. Arkadin-Vision was launched using DevOps for the first wave of this program. In the second wave, we will integrate more DevOps activities and further automate testing and deployment processes.

9. Digital cloud communications services and digital operations strategy results in prestigious awards

Our strategy for bringing our global clients into the future with simple-to-use cloud collaboration services that enable a true digital workplace for greater productivity and ROI is resulting in prominent awards.

- (1) Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific ICT Awards

Arkadin was recognized as the 2017 Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Collaboration Service Provider of the Year for the fifth consecutive time (**Fig. 5**). In commenting on the award, Zi Ning Chong, Research Analyst, ICT Practice - Asia Pacific, at Frost & Sullivan, said: "In a highly competitive and commercialized market, Arkadin maintained its customer-oriented strategy and continued its profitable revenue growth in 2016. To strengthen the interoperability between collaboration technologies, the company further elevated the strategic partnerships with Microsoft and Cisco, notably with the launch of

Arkadin Total Connect, providing a fully integrated UC ecosystem with voice-enabled Office 365, Cisco CCA-SP, and Cisco Spark solutions. To stand out in the crowd of collaboration service providers, Arkadin's diversified UC service portfolio and direct-touch Go-to-Market strategy helped the company to further improve its customer retention rate and win new customers across the region. Also, we expect the latest digital meeting space, ArkadinVision, which is being launched in the Asia Pacific region this year, will offer an impetus for the growth of streamlined collaboration in the near future."

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadinapac.com/about-us/news-media/ntt-communications-and-arkadin-honored-frost-sullivan-asia-pacific-ict-awards>



Fig. 5. 2017 Frost & Sullivan Asia Pacific Collaboration Service Provider of the Year.

(2) Communications Solutions Product of the Year 2017

ArkadinVision was recognized for exceptional innovation by global integrated media company TMC (**Fig. 6**). "Congratulations to Arkadin for being honored with a Communications Solutions Product of the Year Award," said Rich Tehrani, Chief Executive Officer, TMC. "ArkadinVision is truly an innovative product and is amongst the best solutions brought to market in the past 12 months that facilitate business transformation in voice, data, and video communications."

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.co.uk/about-us/our-awards/arkadin-vision-digital-meeting-space-receives-prestigious-industry-awards>



Fig. 6. TMC Communications Solutions Product of the Year 2017.

(3) 'Best-in-Biz International' Award

Arkadin's newly launched SmartStart end-user onboarding portal received a Gold award in the Best New Product Feature of the Year category from this prominent global awards organization (**Fig. 7**). "We created SmartStart in partnership with Oracle Eloqua to create an onboarding journey that is fully automated and personalized to help improve our customers' experience in solving the vexing problem of low user adoption," says Nikki de Kretser, Vice President, Marketing, at Arkadin. "SmartStart not only helps users to get started quickly and easily, it removes the hassle faced by the IT group tasked with embedding these new digital transformation technologies. We're thrilled to have this recognition for our efforts."

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.co.uk/about-us/our-awards/arkadin-vision-digital-meeting-space-receives-prestigious-industry-awards>



Fig. 7. Best-in-Biz International Award.

(4) Stratus Awards for Cloud Computing

Arkadin is recognized as a visionary and innovator leading the cloud revolution in collaboration for enterprises, with offerings that are differentiated and uniquely adding value to our daily lives (**Fig. 8**).

Link to press release: <https://www.arkadin.co.uk/about-us/our-awards/arkadin-named-global-leader-2017-stratus-awards-cloud-computing>



Fig. 8. Stratus Award for Cloud Computing.

References

- [1] D. Jaubert, "Arkadin: Global Unified Communications & Collaboration Champion in a Dynamic Digital Workplace," NTT Technical Review, Vol. 14, No. 9, 2016.
<https://www.ntt-review.jp/archive/ntttechnical.php?contents=ntr201609gal.html>
- [2] Website of ArkadinVision,
<https://www.arkadin.co.uk/services/video-conferencing/arkadinvision>
- [3] Website of ArkadinAnytime,
<https://www.arkadin.com/solutions/audio-conferencing>
- [4] Website of ArkadinAnywhere,
<https://www.arkadin.com/solutions/web-conferencing>

Trademark notes

All brand names, product names, and company names that appear in this article are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners.


Thomas Valantin

Chief Commercial and Transformation Officer, Arkadin.

In his role as Chief Commercial & Transformation Officer (CCTO), Thomas Valantin is responsible for Arkadin's transformation program and global sales strategy and sales operations. He joined Arkadin in November 2011 following a career in international sales management with high-tech and telecom companies in Europe and Latin America, which included 12 years in the video conferencing industry at Polycom, Tandberg, and Cisco Systems. He graduated from the International Business School of Paris Chamber of Commerce and holds an MBA from ESIC Madrid in International Business Trading.


Zach Katsof

Director of Unified Communications, Americas, Arkadin.

As Director of Unified Communications, Americas, Zach is leading Arkadin's UC efforts for the Americas. He joined Arkadin in June 2006. Zach has a bachelor's degree in political studies from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario and an MBA from the Georgia Institute of Technology.


Jean-Pierre Dacher

Chief Technology and Information Officer, Arkadin.

Jean-Pierre joined Arkadin as Chief Technology & Information Officer (CTIO) in 2016 and is responsible for leading product, development, operations, and information systems. He has 30 years of international business experience that includes roles in engineering planning, and product and project management with enterprises such as Hewlett Packard, SAP, Business Objects, and Murex, where he was chief operating officer. He holds an engineering degree from Ecole Nationale d'Electronique et Radio-Electricité and a Mastere from Ecole Nationale Supérieures des Télécommunications.


Hugues Treguier

Director of Strategy & Products – Unified Communications, Arkadin.

In his role as Director of Strategy & Products – Unified Communications, Hugues is responsible for Arkadin's global UC strategy and product management, including building Arkadin's UC vision and strategy, managing the construction of Arkadin's UCaaS service offers portfolio, overseeing the evolution of the UCaaS roadmap and ensuring its timely delivery, and managing the UC partner ecosystem. He graduated from the Ecole d'Ingenieurs des Technologies de l'Information et du Management. He joined Arkadin in October 2008.


Melanie Reversat

Senior Product Manager for Digital Meeting Spaces, Arkadin.

As Senior Product Manager for Digital Meeting Spaces, Melanie is responsible for overseeing the ArkadinVision, Adobe Connect, BlueJeans, and Vidyio product lines. Melanie joined Arkadin in April 2013. She holds a master's degree in Statistics from Paris XI University.


Nikki de Kretser

Vice President of Marketing, Arkadin.

In her position as Vice President of Marketing, Nikki is responsible for overseeing all global marketing activities to support revenue growth and Arkadin's business strategy to be a leading cloud communications player in North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Nikki joined Arkadin in October 2014. She is a graduate of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and holds a master's degree in marketing.


Nicolas Coudret

Head of Cisco Unified Communications Strategy, Arkadin.

In his role as Head of Product Management Cisco, Nicolas oversees product management for Cisco's full suite of Cloud Collaboration solutions at Arkadin, including WebEx, CCA-SP, and Spark. Nicolas joined Arkadin in July 2015. He holds a master's degree in video broadcasting, multimedia, and distance learning systems from Paris University.