

Cloud-based contact centres have multiple advantages

With instant gratification a fact of everyday life, a strategy of customer-centricity is a hallmark of competitiveness. Market leaders employ cutting-edge technologies that connect them more closely with their customers, enable a better understanding of their needs and allow shorter response times.

A few well-hyped technologies are often credited for their effectiveness in achieving this. They are social media, mobile, search, and location-based services. "But another development, the hosted (cloud-based) contact centre, has now joined their ranks," says Rob Lith, director of Connection Telecom. Bandwidth cost and availability is already a non-issue. Also, the reliability of cloud-delivered Internet protocol-based (IP-based) voice is no longer in question, as cloud communications providers include quality of service and redundancy planning in their service portfolios.

Infrastructure already exists

What sets a hosted contact centre apart from an on-site installation is the fact that the infrastructure already exists in hosted data centres, meaning none of it need be replicated on the customer's premises. An advantage is that the model lends itself to cost-effective delivery of standard contact centre functionality, residing in the cloud and accessed remotely by customers. Moreover, more or less functionality is available on demand. The new generation of cloud-based contact centre providers can deliver on-demand contact centre functionality at much reduced cost. If more advanced features are requested, they are simply switched on.

In terms of extra functionality, IP-based contact centres offer unprecedented analytics without complex systems integration, giving contact centre owners better insight into issues like agent profitability, and allowing them to be more responsive to customers. Analytics also enables easier protection of personal information compliance, as it reveals classes of customer information that cannot be kept on record.

On-demand contact capability

Cloud also enables elastic capacity, or the ability to rapidly provision more or less seats. A hosted, virtualised contact centre application can be delivered in whatever service increments to customers, on demand. And it can just as easily be decommissioned again, without being saddled with on-site equipment.

Having an on-demand contact centre capability, one that can be turned on and off like a tap, runs at a gush or a trickle and grows with you is more than a luxury - it is a necessity for any modern customer-centric organisation.

A time-limited sales campaign, for instance, requires a professional contact centre capability, but doesn't necessarily justify the large capital outlay that some contact centres require. Business cycles can also demand different levels of customer-

facing capacity at different times. So the ability to provision just enough seats from within the cloud, in keeping with your business flows, is excellent customer service enablement.

Easy access to application

Another cost-efficient characteristic of cloud contact centres is their web-based location independence, meaning the application can be accessed via a browser from anywhere. Moving premises, for instance, no longer means carting a truck-load of data centre equipment and communicating planned service outages to customers. While one team of agents sets up at the new location, another team continues to man the remote contact centre at the first location. As soon as the new location comes online, the old one can power down for a seamless handover.

As bandwidth issues are a thing of the past, and technology matures sufficiently, cloud delivery heralds a new age in contact centres, in which contact centre owners are geared to deliver true customer-centricity.

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