MAKING THE TRANSITION TO HOSTED COLLABORATION SOLUTIONS

TOP SEVEN REASONS–NOW IS THE TIME

FlexITy® **SOLUTIONS**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Today's work environment is more geographically dispersed and faster moving than ever before. While a traditional corporate structure might have had one or two central offices, contemporary organizations often operate across a diverse range of locales, and managing communication systems can sometimes be costly, slow and labor-intensive. Keeping systems up to date, adding new users and introducing new products can all be major undertakings.

At the same time, employees are looking for more collaborative and flexible work options, and many feel they should be able to work from home or on a mobile device of their choosing. Two out of three workers worldwide would take a job with lower pay in exchange for more device flexibility and a more mobile work environment, according to a Cisco Systems study. Additionally, employees want to be able to access the streamlined connectivity of unified communications (UC) solutions and the frictionless sharing of cloud collaboration tools, as comparable services are increasingly available to home users.

Businesses are overcoming these challenges with hosted collaboration solutions (HCS), which move communications infrastructure to the cloud. A collaboration solution extends the traditional UC functions of single-interface telephony, IM and email to include tools such as multipoint conferencing and web information sharing, and a hosted or cloud infrastructure makes these capabilities accessible from any location with any device.

The benefits are already apparent to many organizations, especially those in verticals with highly distributed footprints, such as retail, legal and real estate: Forrester Research anticipates the demand for cloud-based collaboration services to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 15 percent through 2018. By relying on a remotely hosted solution rather than an on-premise private branch exchange or UC tool, organizations can access true interconnectivity and flexibility, simplify administration, cut costs, improve system resiliency and tap into many more benefits.

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Top seven reasons to use HCS

Flexible, distributed deployment

1

In many ways, the five-day office work week is no longer typical. A soon-to-be-released study from McMaster University in Hamilton and Memorial University in St. John's showed that just 43 percent of employed Canadians work a standard five-day week on a regular basis, with many enjoying the option to set flexible hours or workdays. Such an environment calls for an equally flexible communication system.

With an on-premise phone system, teleworkers, remote sales staff and others are cut off from the main business communication infrastructure. In contrast, a hosted system allows employees to use the same network from anywhere and on any device, making the traditional office unnecessary from a communications perspective.

Centralized administration and management

2

Updating end user device software, changing settings or adding new users in a traditional IT environment required staff to spend time configuring each machine. With HCS, all these software functions can be handled from a central administrative interface and configured or updated simultaneously.

Whether an organization is managing one, 50 or 1,000 end users, the time it takes to modify settings or roll out a patch is the same. While a distributed infrastructure - or the sheer scale of the undertaking - might have discouraged IT professionals from performing minor updates in the past, HCS ensures that even the most minor administrative tasks are simplified.

Ease/speed of deploying new solutions

3

The centralized administration of HCS also makes it easy for IT to add new features to end users, since applications and services can be rolled out as soon as they are ready. Such rapid deployment lowers the risk involved with introducing a new product or function by making the process more agile, thus enabling IT to be a greater driver of innovation in the organization. Additionally, encouraging users to adopt new tools is easier with HCS because updates occur automatically even across a dispersed workforce.

Cross-device compatibility

4

As employee-owned devices flood the workplace, standardization risks becoming a major issue. With hundreds of specific smartphone and tablet models spread across a variety of operating systems, organizations need collaboration solutions that work regardless of platform. With hosted software, applications are managed externally from the device, guaranteeing ongoing compatibility and making it easy to support different operating systems.

Budget efficiency

5

Installing or upgrading traditional communications infrastructure can be a significant expense, but HCS bypasses the rip-and-replace nature of such projects by turning communications into a service rather than a product. Shifting from a model with a large upfront capital expense, unpredictable operational costs and expensive processes for adding new users to a managed services approach eliminates the initial outlay, stabilizes operational expenditures and builds flexibility and scalability into the system. Additionally, by consolidating administrative and support functions, organizations can create staffing efficiencies. Combined, these various benefits substantially reduce the total cost of ownership (TCO) associated with a communications solution.

Better collaboration/streamlined business processes

6

Organizations are always at risk of having operations interrupted by a local network outage or natural disaster. In today's fast-paced business world, failure to ensure application and service continuity in the wake of such events can create significant setbacks with tangible financial consequences. Hosted solutions move critical communications network infrastructure off site, enabling uninterrupted and remote mobile access even in the event of an in-office system failure or a disaster that makes a specific site unsafe. With such reliable connectivity, organizations can contact employees to ensure their safety in the wake of a disaster, provide options for remote work and maintain uninterrupted client-facing operations.

Business continuity

7

HCS tools such as document sharing and video conferencing simplify communication and collaboration across disparate locations and even in-office. Features such as call forwarding and voicemail transcription can significantly reduce the time spent trying to connect with employees. Integration between HCS and other applications allows collaboration and communication to be built into nearly any part of the business environment. With such agile solutions and seamless connectivity, organizations not only have the tools to immediately streamline and quicken workflows, they also have the building blocks to tackle communication inefficiencies they might have never considered and introduce new types of innovation.

Managing the transition to HCS

Moving to HCS allows organizations to tap into new efficiencies and overhaul existing workflows, but making the transition requires executive buy-in and some reorganization of communication processes. Developing a plan before undergoing a migration to HCS is essential. Organizations should determine what specific business needs they hope to address with HCS so they can ensure their chosen solution includes the necessary functions and tools. Additionally, it is important to choose the right technology partners to support these features and to provide ongoing help in managing collaboration and driving innovation.

Many organizations choose to work with a trusted third-party managed services or IT consulting partner like FlexITy, as such firms offer experience and guidance in navigating available HCS options. Additionally, the preferred partnerships between managed service providers and hardware and software vendors enable organizations to access the best deals and most comprehensive service. For businesses ready to make the transition to a hosted solution that provides greater flexibility, simplified administration and workflows, lower costs, improved business continuity and adequate cross-platform support, the next step in the journey is choosing a partner like FlexITy with whom to modernize collaboration and communication tools.

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