

Modernize Your Contact Center: How to Move to the Cloud with Confidence

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Today's companies are at the mercy of increasingly empowered customers who expect convenient, consistent and speedy service. They expect brands to know what they want before they ask for it.

Such rapidly changing demands require the business agility to serve customers across any channel, from any place, at any time—and to make adjustments as needed—quickly and with minimum effort and resources. Staying competitive and meeting rapidly evolving customer expectations requires a cloud contact center platform that enables your business to adapt quickly. Cloud solutions (sometimes referred to as Contact Center as a Service or Virtual Contact Center) offer the following advantages:

- Simply add new functionality when you need it
- Easily support multiple, global contact centers and at-home agents
- No need to buy, maintain or upgrade hardware
- Pay only for what you use each month
- Seamless, automatic software updates
- Security, scalability and reliability that matches or surpasses on-premises systems

Such agility and flexibility empowers organizations to deliver personalized, one-on-one interactions with customers, improve agent job satisfaction and retention, serve fluctuating call volumes on demand, and quickly analyze—and improve—performance in real time. Companies around the globe are realizing the benefits of moving to the cloud and adoption is accelerating.

Gartner expects adoption to hit \$250 billion by 2017, growing at a yearly growth rate of 20.2 percent—proof that forward-thinking companies are reaping the benefits by moving their contact center operations to the cloud. In fact, in Verizon's "2016 State of the Market: Enterprise Cloud" study, companies reported that moving mission-critical workloads to the cloud improved their overall business operations. Eighty-eight percent said the move improved responsiveness to business needs, 65 percent stated that it improved overall operations, and 69 percent of respondents said switching to the cloud enabled them to reengineer their business processes.

The evidence is clear: the benefits of moving to the cloud far outweigh the inertia to stay

on-premises for most organizations. However, before moving core contact center infrastructure and applications to a new cloud platform, customer service and IT leaders need to develop and execute a holistic plan. Organizations that ensure cross-departmental buy-in and follow-through across all steps in their cloud migration plan are much more likely to successfully achieve their business goals, such as greater profitability of their contact centers and improved customer experience.

"...contact centers are finding it compelling not to have to purchase, set up, maintain, and upgrade hardware and software. Once freed from this burden, managers can dedicate their time and resources to optimizing the business aspects of the solutions."

Donna Fluss
President DMG Consulting

According to Bill Pieper, President of EPIC Connections, Inc., a leading provider of customer experience and contact center optimization services, taking a realistic and methodical approach to cloud migration involves careful consideration of three pillars: the workforce, the processes and the technology. "Organizations are spending millions on technology every year and what we see is some companies are giving little consideration to the people and process changes that need to take place in order to have a successful deployment of new technology," Pieper said. "If you have broken processes and ineffective workforce situations, technology won't solve those problems."

To ensure a smooth transition to the cloud, companies must take a strategic view, and create a holistic plan that takes workforce, processes and technology into account.

Bill Pieper,
President, EPIC Connections

Bill is a 30+ year BPO industry leader with proven experience in operations and business development. Bill's experience includes senior executive positions at ADP, First Data, and Sitel. In his 12+ year tenure at EPIC, Bill has worked directly supporting clients, including Fortune 500 Companies, Regional Organizations, and SMBs. Bill has established one of the most prolific and well-recognized partner and executive networks in the Contact Center Industry.

Bill is an active participant in many industry trade associations and was honored as a Partner in Progress by the Professional Association for Customer Engagement (PACE).

Bill is a U.S. Army veteran who remains active supporting service veterans. Bill is a graduate of the University of Delaware with a BSBA in Marketing.

Six top considerations

1. Define the requirements, not only for the contact center but for the overall organization

Migration to the cloud can be a smooth process if organizations don't jump in blindly. It's important for enterprises to gain cross-departmental understanding and buy-in of the elements needed to build and operate their cloud infrastructure. Such foresight will enable the successful migration to the cloud and will serve as the foundation of their IT operations for years to come. Getting it right starts with conducting a benchmark and risk analysis study prior to shifting to the cloud to understand the technical and

resource requirements, the benefits, and the drawbacks. This knowledge will help make the decision less stressful and provide sound recommendations for the requirements, thus helping to gain buy-in for the move. To justify the migration to a new technology platform, companies need to build a business case with an associated ROI projection. "If a company is moving from one to the other without a strategy it will never realize its anticipated results and it will be business as usual," said Pieper. While there are many

potential data points to test and benchmark prior to conducting a cloud migration, companies must first start by benchmarking their operations against industry standards. For an unbiased point of view, an independent third party is often best suited to conduct such an assessment, develop a gap analysis, and apply a consultative approach to identify the necessary steps and requirements to move with confidence to the cloud.

2. Evaluate vendors and all resources required for success

Before signing on the dotted line, organizations must first conduct a cloud vendor evaluation. These evaluations include the functional capabilities of the contact center software, as well as other resources less common in evaluating on-premises software vendors, such as operations, professional services, and networking/connectivity. For instance, insist on precise information about the availability and reliability of the service (ask how the SLAs are calculated and paid, how they are operationally designed to achieve their goals, and whether they'll be transparent on actual service level attainment). Organizations should also inquire about the types, skills, and incentives of the service and support teams that are critical to ongoing success. Finally, there is no substitute for a cloud provider's record of customer success - both in overall market leadership and success stories that closely match your business environment and goals.

In addition to researching a cloud contact center provider's functional capabilities and customer track record before making a

decision, there are a few additional technical considerations to not overlook:

Does the telephony migration policy meet your needs? Nick Larsen, senior director of professional services at NICE inContact, cautions companies to review the cloud vendor's telephony migration policy. Some vendors, he explained, don't schedule the replacement of the telephony system to coincide with the migration of other systems like CRM. Cloud vendors that partner with telephony vendors equipped with pre-integrated carrier networks offer the ability to get organizations up and running quickly without lengthy set-up and back and forth between different vendors.

Will there be a need for middleware? Another consideration includes whether there's a need for middleware to bridge the cloud with existing systems. It's incumbent upon the customer to consider if middleware is necessary and can integrate natively with their key systems. If not, procure a middleware vendor to be part of the engagement.

Is there a commitment to providing high-speed internet? While the processing power is being done by the vendor in the cloud, connectivity to contact centers and distributed agents requires an Internet Service Provider (ISP). "In my experience over the last six years, there's a perception that moving to the cloud is cheap and fast," said Larsen. "It's become a misnomer for customers who fail to recognize the 'follow-the-sun' strategy. Therefore, the customer must secure their own ISP with sufficient bandwidth and speed to ensure efficient and rapid processing in the toolset."

Does the vendor have proven deployment methodologies? Often companies that have been operating in a premises-based model for many years show trepidation when moving their customized workflows and tools. This hesitation slows down the process. Other organizations may view a move to the cloud as removing all hardware, which often isn't the case. A vendor with a proven deployment methodology is a major ally in aligning expectations and moving the project forward on schedule.

3. Determine which applications and business functions to transfer first

Many organizations are set in their ways. Oftentimes they conduct a 'lift and place' where they lift the processes they have sitting on an old platform and place them on a new platform. This procedure, according to Pieper, can create some issues. Pieper advises companies to take a strategic look not only where they want to be today, but also three to five years from now. "Many companies that attempt to deploy all new cloud applications and business functions at once lack the resources and project management skills to do so. This leads to frustration and reverting to how they operated in the past. We feel strongly the migration should be phased.

Start with the core priorities and then move to the other phases on the strategic roadmap." He suggests starting by prioritizing the most important processes, departments, and functions to migrate. Some of these decisions may hinge on the demographics of a company's customer base. For example, if millennials comprise the bulk of the customer base, the company may want to first enable text messaging on the cloud prior to moving over its email capabilities. Design an operating model that not only meets today's requirements, but looks out three to five years and then establishes a priority roadmap to get there. It shouldn't be done in one fell swoop.

"It depends on the client situation, but overall it's really about understanding where the challenges are today and addressing the immediate ones first and then moving to the long-term ones.."

Bill Pieper
President, EPIC Connections

4. Build a change management initiative to meet your company's needs

Focusing on the technology alone and ignoring the social aspects of this change is a recipe for disaster, especially as ownership of certain tasks may move from one team to another and some roles will change or may disappear altogether. Such changes will require retraining existing employees or hiring new ones to fill the role. Adopting a new cloud contact center platform without a focus on people will lead to failure because there are many stakeholders involved in a cloud migration. Security, compliance,

legal, procurement, human resources, finance, sales, marketing, service desk, operations, disaster recovery and others all have a part to play. New roles are common when enterprises shift their contact center applications and infrastructure to the cloud, however focusing solely on the technology without dedicating a significant amount of time and resources on organizational change and process reengineering can produce suboptimal results. The key to keeping the plan aligned to the goals is in ensuring

involvement from stakeholders by having a strong and comprehensive communications plan that spans the enterprise. "Constant stakeholder communication and holding people accountable to the project plan need to be high priorities so everyone knows what's happening at a given time," said Pieper. It's not only important to communicate effectively, but to also have a project plan with accountability built in. The technology is easy. Changing the hearts and minds of people is where the difficulty lies.

5. Execute plans to support customers in their channels of choice

From a workforce perspective, one of the keys in migrating to an omnichannel cloud environment is understanding skill sets and agent profiles. A company's best voice agent might not be its best chat agent. Effective strategic development hinges on laying out a plan that best suits customers, whether it encompasses social media, chat or text, or multiple channels. A cloud vendor's professional services team should provide clear guidance to ensure its clients make the most educated decisions about how to leverage individual channels and to seamlessly integrate them to match customers' omnichannel engagements. Agent profiles, skill sets, and routing rules from the prior contact center system may

provide a good starting point for configuring the new cloud platform. However, it is important to avoid a pure "lift and place" approach to your existing policies as they may not be the best fit for the new system or your customers' needs. A true 'channel of choice' experience allows customers to swap between channels based on their needs and personal preferences. When properly integrated into the contact center, this can help to build greater levels of customer engagement and loyalty. Deploying new capabilities across channels as part of a staged roadmap will often yield a much better customer experience than trying to take advantage of all the new features your new platform has in one "big bang."

The Right Questions for the Right Channel

- Which channels do customers prefer to use most often?
- Do certain channels illicit more honesty?
- Which channels do customer trust the most?
- Which channels do customers perceive as low-effort?

6. Measure and celebrate early wins

Success of your project won't happen overnight, but publicizing and building on early wins will generate the momentum and cross-departmental buy-in that are essential to achieving your overall goals. To build this momentum and buy-in, project leaders and sponsors must define and identify the company's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) based on current service levels. They should also determine the KPIs that are likely to have the highest impact improvements after the new contact center platform is fully implemented. For example, an Average Handle Time (AHT) metric may be of top concern today, but as the new contact center platform enables an omnichannel environment that serves customers where and when they want to be helped in a more personalized manner, First Contact Resolution (FCR) improvements may provide the biggest opportunity for improvement. After those quick wins, customer experience

metrics like customer effort and Net Promoter Score (NPS) may gauge success and Return on Investment (ROI) more accurately. "It's also understanding where the company wants the customer journey to go in the future," Pieper said. "It's reviewing the existing service levels, understanding if they're appropriate, and determining what they should be going forward." The ability of the cloud contact center platform to produce the analytics and provide actionable insights optimizes agent performance in real time. Analytics are critical to helping the contact center run more effectively. The data empowers managers to improve their operations and customer experience on a continuous basis. Pieper adds, "Putting available data into a real-time dashboard environment that allows facilitation of immediate action is critical to running a successful contact center operation."

High Impact Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Average Handle Time (AHT)
- First Contact Resolution (FCR)
- Net Promoter Score (NPS)
- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Average Wait Time (AWT)
- Average Abandon Rate
- Self-Service Usage
- Call Wrap-up Time
- Call Service Level (SLA)

Summary

As adoption of cloud contact center solutions continues to accelerate throughout 2017 and beyond, more and more organizations are making plans to move operations from on-premises technology to contact center as a service. In fact Global Industry Analysts, Inc. predicts the global market for cloud computing services will reach \$127 billion by the year 2017.

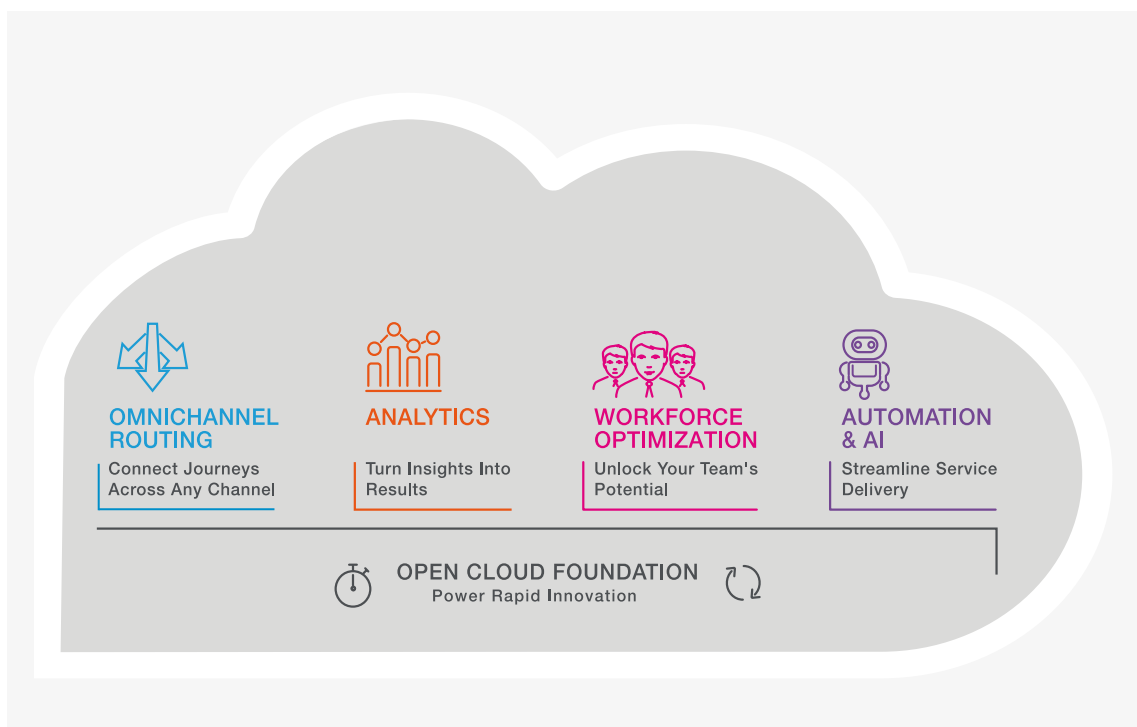
While the potential benefits from this move are tremendous, achieving those goals takes careful planning and follow-through to ensure the workforce, business processes and technology are aligned. To get

the most out of a move to a cloud contact center platform, it pays to reevaluate existing business processes and identify new opportunities to improve customer service and efficiency.

Pieper affirms a burgeoning market for technology to improve the customer experience and believes that the opportunity to make a change to a cloud environment is also an opportunity to look inward at what to do to improve the workforce and reengineer the business processes. "Migration to the cloud is an ideal time to not only look at new technology but to also look at a new way of doing things."

Transforming One-on-One Experiences in the Contact Center

Cloud Contact Center – powered by CXone, the world's #1 cloud customer experience platform, helps organizations be first in their industry by powering exceptional experiences for customers and employees. CXone is the first and only platform unifying best-in-class Omnichannel Routing, Analytics, Workforce Optimization, Automation and Artificial Intelligence – all built on an Open Cloud Foundation. CXone helps organizations of all sizes be first and stay first, empowering your teams to move faster and work smarter. Be the first choice of customers, first to innovate, first choice employer. Only CXone delivers one unified experience, on one cloud native platform, along one proven path, from one leader.



Resources

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Let's start a discussion together



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