CCaaS: Is it Delivering on Its Promises?

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With TCO and cloud-readiness benefits, CCaaS solutions are providing quick and effective means to deploy a contact center solution.

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Cloud contact center technology has been around for 20 years already; however, just in the last few years, it has become mainstream and has experienced exponential growth.

From 2018-2019, the cloud-based contact center market grew 25.4%, according to **a DMG Consulting report**. The number of players in this space has also substantially increased. Initially, there were just a few in this market: 8×8, InContact (acquired by Nice) Five9, Serenova, and NewVoiceMedia (acquired by Vonage), to name a few. Around 2010, others joined in: Interactive Intelligence (acquired by Genesys), Talkdesk, Sharpen, Content Guru, Bright Pattern, and Twilio. The traditional premises-based solutions like Aspect, Cisco, Mitel, and Avaya had to work hard to catch up to the new cloud vendors through rapid development or purchasing/partnering with an existing CCaaS provider.

Even though there are many cloud vendors to choose from, sometimes, they only handle certain contact channels or functionality. For example, Vonage teamed up with Salesforce to form a CCaaS solution; Vonage will route the voice contacts, and Salesforce will route email, chat, and social channels and also

provide all the reporting, including the voice traffic. Some vendors will only provide one aspect of a contact center functionality like Injixo, a cloud workforce management solution. This space will continue to fluctuate as new vendors enter the arena, and acquisitions continue.

The first marketing appeal made by CCaaS vendors is a lower TCO, including reduced IT costs. Yes, initially, the investment in CCaaS will be lower since one is essentially purchasing or renting agent/feature licenses on a per month basis. However, when adding up expenditures over a three-year basis, the CCaaS costs usually are very close to the investment costs of a premises-based solution, if not more. IT positions, where professionals set up and monitor servers, can be reduced, and with user-friendly, intuitive CCaaS applications and dashboards, admins can monitor and set up a solution more easily. Even though some IT resources may be reduced, vendor management positions may increase.

The second appeal of CCaaS for customers is the agile nature of cloud computing. If you need to add agents or increase capacity for calls or other contacts, this can easily be done with a telephone call, email, or support ticket to your vendor, and changes can happen in minutes or within a day. Most vendors will also allow elasticity, meaning you only pay for the licenses or increased capacity for the time it is required. Premises-based solutions required days, if not weeks, to increase capacity, and sometimes it required hardware changes; furthermore, you were then stuck with that extra capacity even when it was no longer needed.

CCaaS is agile in its updates, and cloud applications are kept current. IT no longer must schedule downtimes to bring the system to the next release. If you have a public instance of the application, your system will be upgraded to the next release along with other customers in that same software cluster. You should get a warning of when the new release will be added; however, you usually won't have a say on when that will occur. If issues occur due to the new release, the "rollback" option won't be a possibility, unless all the other customers are also affected negatively by the new release. Another benefit of CCaaS is that so many customers are on the cloud services that there is a constant demand for better, different, and new features – you repeat the benefits of the combined customer demand.

CCaaS is also agile in the sense that it is easier to deploy. There is little if any hardware to be set up onsite, if the CCaaS is going to use a public cloud instance, it can be ready very quickly. The main thing that will need to be addressed is an assessment of your network and desktop environment. Not all administration applications are accessed through a browser. Some still require thick client applications that need to be loaded and tested, which gets a bit challenging in a virtual desktop environment.

What has not changed is the time to review the business requirements, translate them to the new CCaaS applications, perform appropriate testing, get business sign-offs before implementation, and create good instructions for end users, supervisors, and administration education/training. It is in this last area I

have found that most of the cloud vendors neglect to allot the appropriate time for requirements gathering, testing, and training. The “plug and play” attitude of cloud vendors is prevalent. In this area, careful documentation and a thorough SOW must be established, or customers often are left very unhappy the day after implementation.

Lower TCO and the agile nature of cloud are just two of the promises made by the CCaaS vendors. For a deeper conversation, join me at Enterprise Connect on April 1, where **I will host a panel of CCaaS experts**. As with most things, the promises made and the benefits realized so far are mixed; however, CCaaS is here to stay, and customers on premises-based solutions will continue to explore moving part of or all of their applications to the cloud.