Leverage the benefits of UC without the hefty price tag

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Unified Communications (UC) bring together a variety of real-time and non-real-time communication channels, such as voice, video, email and instant messaging, into a single cohesive platform. This technology offers a number of benefits to organisations of all sizes, including enhanced collaboration ability, reduced travel requirements and more.

However, for many businesses the cost and skills required to implement in-house UC infrastructure, or integrate a variety of different technologies, as well as the cost and skills required to maintain such solutions, are prohibitive factors. Hosted UC solutions are the ideal answer to this dilemma, offering all of the benefits of UC on a service basis. In addition, organisations can leverage their current investments through hybrid options, which integrate hosted services with existing infrastructure.

Drawbacks of on-premises UC

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The benefits of UC for organisations of all sizes are numerous. However, the drawbacks to having such solutions on-premise tend to decrease adoption rates. Not only is procurement of the required technology expensive and time consuming, the implementation is often fairly long, taking a number of months from start to finish. In addition, once implemented, organisations need to ensure they have the skills in-house to provide on-going support. On premise solutions also do not offer any agility and any new features must go through a full procurement and implementation cycle before they can be rolled out. As a result, many organisations are looking toward hosted UC offerings as a solution.

UC as a Services

Hosted UC is a cloud-based offering that allows organisations to make use of UC as a Service (UCaaS). The main benefit of this is that there is a limited requirement for investment in on-premise infrastructure, converting this traditionally capital-intensive exercise into a more cost effective operational expense on a monthly basis.

In addition to minimising the upfront infrastructure investment, UCaaS provides full operational support, so organisations do not need to have onsite engineers. The service is pay-as-you-grow and therefore can be fully scaled according to requirements. Organisations are also assured of having the latest upgrades without the need to install new hardware and software. In addition, new features and functionality can be provisioned on demand, and implementations can be conducted far faster so organisations can be up and running on UC quickly and with a minimum fuss and up-front cost.

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The hybrid model

Hosted UC is agile and flexible, enabling organisations to dynamically adjust to the number of users and the exact services required. Furthermore, since the UC solution is hosted from the cloud, only end point devices are required on premise. Hosted UC offerings can also support hybrid deployments, protecting an organisation's existing investment into communication infrastructure such as Voice over IP (VoIP) or a PBX system.

These existing on premises solutions can be integrated with cloud-based offerings to augment UC service offerings and deliver additional services and solutions via the cloud. This enables organisations to take advantage of flexible, agile UC solutions while at the same time leveraging their existing infrastructure.

Deciding whether to deploy a full hosted UC solution or a hybrid offering depends on an individual organisation and its current situation. For enterprises with legacy, end of life solutions in-house, a full upgrade to a hosted service can deliver significant benefits and productivity gains. However, for enterprises running the latest equipment but wish to incorporate additional UC services, a hybrid offering might be best. The ability to deploy a hybrid solution also depends on its integration capability. Partnering with an expert solutions provider can ensure organisations deploy the right model for their needs, and can derive maximum value for minimum investment.

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