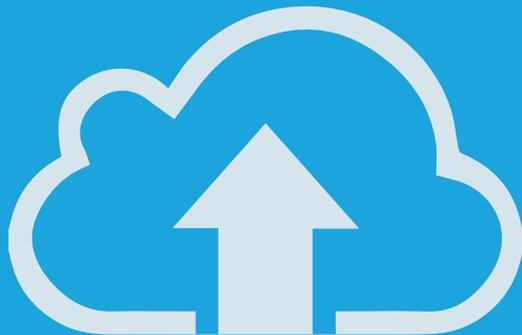




**Moving Your Customer Service
to the Cloud**



Migrating to the Cloud - The New Normal

Today, winning at customer service is harder than ever. Customers are becoming more demanding and even one negative experience is enough to dissuade them from doing business with a company and turn to their competitors. Businesses are under a constant pressure to innovate while keeping their costs under control. Creating a successful customer experience strategy in this intensely complex business landscape means enterprises need to be agile enough to deliver the right service at the right time across the entire customer experience lifecycle. To achieve this, organizations are increasingly embracing the power of cloud technology to transform their contact centre operations to quickly and effectively engage with customers across a wide range of channels including voice, text, mobile apps, email, chat, social media, web portals, outbound and video.

As such, using cloud deployment models, in one form or another, is fast becoming a norm for most businesses aiming to optimize the performance of their contact centres. According to 2016 Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report by Dimension Data, cloud solutions is rapidly gaining traction among contact centres, while their dependence on locally installed IT solutions is decreasing. Organizations using cloud technologies in their contact centres are experiencing positive impact on their bottom line. As a result, more and more organizations are planning to shift workloads to the cloud, with a majority of them showing a preference for hybrid cloud solutions that combine legacy systems with cloud services.

As businesses recognize the value of cloud in providing these powerful business benefits - including lower costs of operation, access to innovative solutions, better flexibility, and increased agility, to name a few - it's fast becoming an industry standard, rather than an option.

Cloud gains popularity



On-premise IT solutions set to drop from 60.1% to 23.1%



Cloud solutions set to rise from 20.5% to 60.5%



Hybrid cloud solutions receiving the most attention

Source: Dimension Data



say it provides access to a single integrated customer contact platform



say it offers access to new functionality



say it has reduced costs



More than 2/3 also agree it provides better security

Source: Dimension Data

Why You Should Shift Your Customer Service to the Cloud

95 percent of customers today use more than one channel to communicate with companies but 65 percent of customers complain of inconsistent experiences. As such, delivering 'omnichannel' customer experience is becoming top focus for organizations. The capabilities to ensure seamless transitions between channels, and between self-service and assisted service, is being viewed as a competitive differentiator across industry sectors. However, one of the biggest roadblocks in the way of this 'omnichannel' experience is that some of the existing channels are still based on legacy technologies and are out of pace with evolving customer demands and next-generation solutions.

Deploying your customer service in hybrid cloud enables you to benefit from new and more advanced tech solutions while being able to maintain certain workloads on site. With your customer service desk on the cloud, your contact agents can have access to the necessary data and information anytime, anywhere and customers' demands can be met by your team, no matter where they are. But that's not all. Here's how shifting your customer service to the cloud can be a big step in the right direction. Faster resolutions with proactive and faster IT support

Customers are increasingly looking for faster resolution of their complaints and inability to provide this can be a frustration experience for them. Having your service desk on the cloud enables your contact agents to be better equipped with information needed to attend to customers' needs at any hour of the day.

Your help desks for IT solutions on the cloud allows your customer service personnel to quickly access all the data required to solve customer complaints, from wherever they are, and at any time, leading to faster IT support. If your company has a self-service component, your site would be online 24x7x365 enabling your customers to resolve their problems using your FAQs and your knowledge base which you make available to your customers.

Better collaboration between customer service and IT teams

Since both the customer service as well as IT teams are now located on the cloud, they can collaborate easily, being able to simultaneously sync, share records and resolve customers' problems in real time. The cloud thus enhances the efficiency of your workforce, gaining your company a better reputation through customer satisfaction. Your company can avail of the chat services provided by your cloud vendor to interact with your customers in a secure environment. This chat service can be utilized by your IT teams and customer service representatives to work out effective solutions.

Customization and optimized resource allocations

It is much easier to customize solutions for customers on the cloud. By adding, subtracting, and rearranging links on the launch pad (intranet). As your IT desk resides in the cloud, your IT desk can build cloud based apps which can be accessed by your customers on their smartphones. Your company can also allocate resources according to the sectors identified by your representatives as facing the most problems, can be allotted more resources and so on.

Wider range of customer service features is facilitated on the cloud

Besides obvious business benefits, customer service on the cloud facilitates the creation of apps which can be used by the end user/customer and the customer service representatives. Through apps, your customer service personnel can update statuses and take notes. Apart from tracking customer sentiment across social media on real time basis, you can apply analyze data to anticipate customer needs. By responding to customer queries and developing products for customers, you can transform help desks into sales desks.

Better customer experience and satisfaction, and higher ROI

Shifting your customer service to cloud is an opportunity for your organization to enhance your customer service and create effective self-help customer service portals as well. With growing numbers of satisfied customers, your good reputation would increase as well, getting you more new customers. Your ROI is higher as your infrastructure costs are drastically reduced as you do not have to buy or maintain any hardware or software, and still have access to the latest technology. However, shifting to cloud isn't just an infrastructure upgrade and achieving your cloud migration goals requires more than the right technology investments.

It involves an enterprise-wide transformation and organizational changes. In fact, by moving ahead without a solid plan, your organization may not experience fully all the benefits the cloud promises to offer - operational efficiency, lower costs and greater agility to deploy, consume and manage IT resources. That said, let's discuss five steps that can help your organization make a successful move to the cloud.



Five Steps to Make Your Customer Service Shift to the Cloud Successful

1. Develop a migration strategy well-in-advance

Prior to moving your contact centre to the cloud, it's necessary to have a proper migration plan in place. This allows you to take advantage of the benefits cloud computing brings to the table without compromising service continuity, robustness or security. Plus, building a migration plan well ahead in time helps to devise ways to avoid potential obstacles and retrace any step that might have gone wrong.

For instance, when enterprises consider a move to the cloud, a higher-bandwidth network connection is often the first item on their checklist. This approach doesn't work for every organization for the reason that a network for cloud is never a one-size-fits-all proposition. Network requirements depend on which model of cloud - public, private, or hybrid - you're going to deploy, how cloud-hosted applications and workloads will be accessed, and the estimated traffic between on-premises systems and the cloud.

A migration strategy should ideally begin with developing a clear understanding of your business requirements, your application and network architecture, the available bandwidth, and your budget. Chalking out concrete goals for the deployment right at the outset helps you move ahead with an aim and allows you to determine if you are moving in the right direction.

2. Anticipate technology and security-compliance concerns

When segmenting workloads for your organization, technology and security compliance are key issues to be factored into your decision. If moving to the cloud has you worried over security issues, then you must know that the Dimension Data report found nearly 72% of contact centre leaders were able to mitigate security and compliance risks by embracing cloud/ hosted solutions.

Data confidentiality varies between industry and business types. For instance, financial organizations regularly handle highly sensitive customer data and would therefore need to enforce stringent security measures when considering cloud migration. The type of data and workloads they can afford to put into the cloud will significantly differ from a business that may not have such critical information in their databases. However, as a rule of thumb, for a healthy cloud migration, you need to consider how to control customers' personal information and infrastructure to minimize security risks, as well as how to maintain operational efficiency to optimize the use of in-house resources and customers' experiences.

Generally, a mixed-cloud strategy offers the best balance of technology benefits and risk management. However, there are other cloud models too that may provide your business with the right combinations of control and opportunities to tap vendor capabilities.

	Physical Location		Physical segregation	Operational control
Traditional deployment	Traditional on-premise	On-premise	Yes	Customer
	Traditional off-premise	Off-premise	Yes	Shared
Cloud deployment	Private on-premise	On-premise	Yes	Customer
	Virtual private	Off-premise	Yes	Shared
	Community	Off-premise	Yes	Shared
	Private off-premise	Off-premise	Yes	Shared
	Public/multitenant	Off-premise	Yes	Vendor

Source: McKinsey Research

Infrastructure compatibility is another key issue that requires serious consideration. Especially when it comes to building hybrid cloud, compatibility and interoperability can prove to be a major hurdle across existing new and existing infrastructure. Plus, with this two-layered infrastructure - a private cloud that the company controls, and a public one that is managed and controlled by the provider - you need to determine if you have enough tools to implement a secure and compliant solution, or if your team has the right training to manage your cloud infrastructure.

3. Choose the vendor wisely

The choice of right vendor is vital to making your cloud migration a successful one. Hence, a vendor should not be chosen based on just pricing but your broader goals and business objectives.

Before zeroing in on a vendor, list down your expectations, explore their services and capabilities, fee structure, billing terms and flexibility, understand their approach to security and privacy, and read their SLAs thoroughly. Make sure your cloud provider has all the required certifications to comply with policies and legal regulations. Also remember that your choice should be based on both, functional and technology support provided by the service provider. Spend time to research and look out for existing case studies the vendor may have to understand what you can expect from them and whether their approach and offerings are aligned with your goals. You should also be checking into service providers for ease of shifting data, types of dashboards, etc. to avoid the problem of vendor lock-in (as often happens in a multi-cloud situation) while still reducing the complexity of IT management.

4. Assess and plan for retrospective/sunk costs

Sunk costs theoretically shouldn't affect business practices. However, it's still important to conduct a cost/benefit analysis before migrating any application to the cloud. One of the major concerns when shifting to the cloud comes from legacy infrastructure, which is considered a sunk cost and hence, unrecoverable. Businesses fear this might increase their total cost of ownership (TCO). However, that's not the case. According to Accenture, "companies replace their current legacy infrastructure every three to six years" therefore "most have an opportunity to optimize and align this refresh cycle to cloud migration."

For more strategic cloud migration, you should carefully balance the cost of a cloud deployment with the costs of traditional operations (without cloud), licensing, human resources, networking, storage, and hardware maintenance and operational costs.

5. Evaluate performance critically after migration till stabilization

Once the migration is complete, it's critical to assess all aspects of your operations post-migration to make sure everything is performing as expected. However, a one-time review is not enough. You need to put in place regular performance reviews to evaluate whether you are meeting your intended goals and there's adequate skill and resource compatibility within your internal teams. This is also a good time to make sure all your employees and agents are up to speed on the upcoming changes as well as the key business and contact centre operations. If there are gaps that need to be filled or rooms for improvement, make sure to keep those documented for future.

Transition and Transform

It's a necessity for today's businesses to have an agile technology infrastructure when it comes to delivering stellar customer service and creating superior customer experience. At the heart of all this lies the contact centre, which is why businesses need to focus on adopting a systematic approach to shift to cloud where they can strongly feel the benefits such as improved performance, reduced costs, better channel support and engagement, and reporting and analytics to successfully cater to a customer base whose demands are ever-changing.

Shifting your customer service desk to the cloud can transform the way you do business. While the transformation isn't easy to achieve, it can yield remarkable results if the migration has been done the right way. From improving the customer experience to equipping your agents to perform better and catalysing business growth, it can be a total game changer for your business.

About Wolken Software

Wolken Software is a premier software company with an impressive portfolio of out-of-the-box, configurable and scalable enterprise - class service desk solutions that help modern organizations transform their relationships with customers and employees. With offices in Palo Alto, CA and Bangalore, India, we empower customers around the world to offer the highest level of service performance, quality, and delivery. Built on a modern technical stack, our ITIL-compliant and **PinkVERIFY™** - certified solutions can be deployed on the cloud or on premise.

Our solutions include:

- ✓ **Enterprise service desk - Wolken Enterprise**
- ✓ **Customer service desk - Wolken CRM Service**
- ✓ **Business communication - TeamToq**



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