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MAGAZINE

IS A HOSTED SYSTEM IN YOUR FUTURE?

PLUS...

**LET YOUR NEXT SYSTEM
UPGRADE BE YOUR LAST**

**THE VIRTUALIZATION OF
THE CALL CENTER**

**POWER QUALITY ISSUES
CAUSE COMPUTER
PROBLEMS**

Is a Hosted System



in Your Future?

By Wayne Scaggs

Today's call center and telemessaging environment is more challenging than ever before. Clients have greater access to information and are more demanding because they know that your competition is only a phone call away. The ability to deliver consistent, personalized service – and to do it cost effectively without diverting resources from other business needs – is critical to attracting and retaining clients so that your business can profitably grow.

Often, this means limiting service offerings, increasing staff to manually process a greater number of client demanded features, or obtaining a system that provides additional features and applications while improving efficiency. The question then is, which of these three options provides the highest probability of achieving your goals?

Limiting your service offerings makes it difficult to attract and retain clients and, over time, decreases your client base. Increasing staff increases labor costs, decreases cost effectiveness and, in the long term, does not attain your goals. Obtaining a state-of-the-art system that provides not only the features and services demanded by your clients today, but a system that leads the way for anticipated client demands and can decrease your costs – is the best of these options.

Traditionally, this third solution required the purchase of a system. However, there is an alternative, subscribing to a hosted system. When reviewing your requirements, and deciding whether a system purchase or hosted system is right for you, here are some items to consider.

Set-Up and Installation: Hosted systems involve less set-up and installation on your premises. The installation is less complicated because there is less equipment on the premise site and the telephony requirements are much simpler in a VoIP environment.

Growth Management: Managing service growth is easy in a hosted environment. Additional trunking or talk paths can be added quickly and easily if your capacity is exceeded. The same applies to adding agent workstations. Another advantage of hosted services is that costs can decrease if your client base or call flow declines (such as with seasonal businesses) because your call usage decreases.

Maintenance: Should there be maintenance problems with the system, the provider has technicians to resolve them. The customer's site has the responsibility to maintain only their network, workstations, and Internet service. Spare parts are not required on premise for servers and switches. There are no annual maintenance contracts; software patches and upgrades are taken care of by the host.

Security: Hosted systems provide centralized security managed by the provider, which means that you avoid the associated cost and responsibility. In addition, hosted systems have good physical security in the provider's datacenter, generally greater than is common on a customer's premise.

RELIABILITY:

Typically, carrier grade reliability is provided for hosted services with redundancy exceeding that of premise-based equipment.

VIRTUAL OFFICE:

Another major advantage of hosted services is the ability to quickly and easily set up a virtual (remote) office or site. All that is required is broadband access. Remote agents can work from home or from a satellite office.

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BUSINESS CONTINUITY:

One of the most important benefits of hosted systems is disaster recovery. Hosted systems are backed up with the most current configuration and data as well as greater redundancy than what is often found at premise-based sites. Should there be fire, flood, tornado, hurricane, or other disasters in your area, your replacement costs are limited to the agent stations rather than an entire system. More importantly, your entire service can be quickly relocated to any area where there is broadband access, whether it is your home, a hotel, or a location hundreds of miles away from your call center.

CASH FLOW:

Hosted services require a much lower investment than capital purchases of customer premise equipment.

SOFTWARE UPGRADES:

In hosted services, upgrades are included in the fees. There is no need for your staff to manage upgrades or be involved in this process. Since there is no additional cost associated with the upgrades, the decision to upgrade need not be delayed to preserve cash flow requirements. This means that your system and service offerings are always up to date.

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS:

Hosted services offer the ability to deploy additional agents and services in any increment at any location having broadband access. This means that you can easily convert or merge another facility into your system.

OBSOLESCENCE:

A hosted system eliminates the issue of your system becoming obsolete, which is often accompanied by increased maintenance costs and/or the difficulty of obtaining spare parts.

CONCLUSION:

Hosted systems can offer savings and simplicity. Without the need to purchase a complete system, there is less initial cost, and much less equipment to maintain. Additionally, the agent workstations can be located in a centralized office environment, in remote locations, or in a combination of both. There are no service maintenance contracts, and the system is kept up-to-date by the host, and costs are predictable and manageable. 📧

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