Connected Cloud Communications

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In today's digital era, businesses are exploring ways to use cloud capabilities to enable mobility, flexibility, and less expensive alternatives to traditional telecommunications, both for their internal communications as well as connecting with customers, partners and suppliers around the world.

As with other areas that have benefited from the cloud, the move is designed to drive efficiencies, reduce costs and tap into new geographic markets and customer opportunities. In addition, cloud capabilities are a growth catalyst for digital service providers, enabling them to create a global footprint nearly overnight.

Success in this global environment depends on simple, cost-effective connectivity. Companies and customers expect to be able to connect with each other, whether they are local or around the world, without having to worry about call charges or poor quality.

The scale and simplicity of the cloud

Historically, a business wanting to connect offices across the world—or one looking to open a new branch in a different location—had to factor in the high cost of international phone rates, the complex, lengthy process of shopping around with local providers for the best deal, and, more often than not, unreliable service quality.

This process often required securing telecom licenses, phone lines and purchasing, and managing and maintaining PBX and other on-premises equipment in every market—along with the staff to do it. The next step would be to integrate the disparate telecom services and infrastructure to support conference calling, telepresence and enterprise-wide communications platforms for communications consistency whether employees are in Bangalore, Berlin or Boston.

In terms of time and expense, all of these things pose challenges to an existing business looking to expand its footprint. Globalization depends on businesses being able to scale quickly and easily. And for staff, clients and customers to communicate and collaborate for a low cost, whenever they wish and wherever they are in the world.

Rather than looking around the world for different service providers in different countries,

businesses are now looking to the cloud as a telco replacement. Phone numbers hosted virtually in the cloud provide a means of secure communication for customer service contact centers, unified communications, conferencing services and more.

The Connected Cloud

Shifting to cloud-based communications means moving away from separate telecom infrastructure with a set number of individual phone numbers and extensions. Calls can now be made and received over cloud numbers via the Internet or a secure private backbone, based on the criticality of the application or usage.

Cloud numbers, also known as virtual numbers, are the fundamental building blocks of cloud communications. These are local numbers—also known as toll numbers or local DIDs—that can be used for all enterprise telephony needs, including customer contact centers, unified communications, enterprise communications and conference calls.

Cloud numbers are outsourced, meaning enterprises can quickly and easily set up telephony services in new markets, or offer value-added telephony services without the hassle of regulatory applications, license acquisition, on-premise equipment and so on.

They are easy to use, as applications can originate or terminate calls using cloud numbers on any Internet-connected device. Calls can also be diverted easily to multiple locations, facilitating seamless remote working and operations outsourcing.

Adopting cloud numbers means that a company's communications infrastructure is placed in a virtual environment hosted and maintained by a third party—including servers, routing technology, ISDN lines, MPLS connectivity, SIP trunk and anti-fraud services. Once a provider has been selected, companies then complete a simple agreement outlining the requested service elements, including the amount of numbers and expected capacity.

Types of Cloud Numbers

Toll-Free Numbers are non-geographical numbers that customers dial for pre-sales and post-sales support. These are ideal for businesses or organizations looking to set up customer care lines, conferencing or customer support services. This can be either a local or national toll-free number for a specific country or a worldwide toll-free number issued by the ITU.

Virtual Numbers are two-way voice and SMS communication for mobility and omni-channel applications, often used for "sharing economy" applications.

Local Numbers are local phone numbers used to create a presence within a country with incoming and outgoing capabilities.

Cloud numbers deliver seamless quality on calls made over carrier-grade telecom networks. Using high-availability secure backbones, these calls are delivered in high-definition and with a very high quality of experience. Critically for fast-moving companies in the digital economy, global cloud number solutions can offer a geographic footprint in more than 100 markets around the world, making provisioning in new markets as easy as clicking on a button.

Driving a Two-Way Customer Experience

The inability to engage in two-way communications with customers has long been a challenge, especially for the customer service industry. Cloud numbers allow companies to introduce two-way communications by allowing consumers to not only call a customer service agent but also be called back by the agent. Because of this capacity, two-way communication can make for a much richer, more fulfilling and less frustrating interaction—giving customers an option instead of forcing them to call back with a reference number for updates.

A simple use case could be from the airline industry. Imagine that a certain flight was cancelled. Passengers who had purchased a ticket can call in to the customer care line to register a complaint and seek reimbursement or a flight adjustment. Cloud numbers empower the customer care representatives to call or send an SMS to the passenger to engage and resolve the issue directly. More importantly, the same process would be supported globally, rather than having different numbers or systems for different countries or regions.

The Cloud is Calling

This approach to communications can massively cut operational expenses and total cost of ownership and allows companies to scale into new regions by creating a local presence at the country or city level. Outlay on new hardware is reduce—or eliminated—as cloud-hosted numbers are interoperable with all unified communications platforms and all device and media types, so can be used by staff working remotely.

Those contacting a company through a call center or customer care line also benefit: local numbers are provided for specific, defined geographic areas so the caller only pays local calling charges, or none at all, regardless of whether he or she is calling from a mobile device or landline.

Being part of a global, expanding business is exciting, and staying in touch with colleagues, customers and partners shouldn't get in the way of growth or productivity. Where once you may have had to deal with fuzzy phone lines to far-flung countries, moving communications to the cloud has elevated quality of service, and introduced a range of enhanced means of staying in touch. From voice, web and HD video conferencing to chat, social media and virtual reality, cloud communications can help businesses to realize richer interactions.