



GROWING THE BUSINESS VIA CLOUD DEPLOYMENTS

Midsized businesses are better equipped to compete in today's extremely competitive marketplace when they take advantage of cloud technology. Unified communications and collaboration offerings are a critical component that can add value when migrated to the cloud.

To keep pace with the growing digital economy, companies must find ways to work more efficiently while utilizing cost-effective tools. Business leadership expects IT to lead the way, and IT is turning to the cloud.

In fact, 72 percent of midsized organizations are currently leveraging the cloud and an additional 17 percent have said they plan to utilize the cloud within the next 12 months for at least a portion of their applications or computing infrastructure—whether it's private, public, or hybrid.¹

Unified communications and collaboration (UCC) applications are ideal for cloud architectures. After

all, the cloud plays a pivotal role in seamlessly empowering file sharing, collaboration, and flexibility within an increasingly mobile marketplace.

Given this reality, 47 percent of midsized companies say they have ventured, at least partially, into UCC cloud deployments.² Furthermore, when looking to the future, 67 percent anticipate some form of UCC cloud deployment within the next two years.

That said, organizations are proceeding with caution, because if they fail to capitalize on opportunities to enhance collaboration capabilities, the business as a whole will likely suffer. Ignoring

customer expectations for highly collaborative and on-demand engagements could have negative consequences. Also, the lack of IT resources is a constant drumbeat, as the business expects CIOs to do more with less, so investments must be thoughtfully considered. If its attention is diverted to operating and optimizing the existing infrastructure, management won't have time to consider new investments and concepts.

"People are stretched thin, and there are a lot of choices they have to sort through to make the most of their investments," says Henry Dewing, senior evangelist with Avaya, a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions. "Selecting a cloud deployment that aligns with business goals can ultimately provide management relief."

THE BENEFITS OF UCC IN THE CLOUD

It's not just a lack of in-house resources that's pushing IT to explore UCC in the cloud. The benefits make for a strong investment case, including the ability to:

- Modernize with minimal technology risk
- Scale as business needs change
- Enhance user capabilities
- Gain control over associated expenses

Modernize with minimal technology risk

Cloud providers reduce technical risk by leveraging a single full-stack solution with fewer integration points and interfaces. The buyer trusts that the provider will meet its service-level agreements (SLAs) and deliver reliable service.

“72 percent of midsize organizations are currently leveraging the cloud”

Scale as business needs change

Cloud-based systems provide the foundations for ad hoc, flexible, rapid deployment and disbanding of resources. Scale is especially important for organizations with business models that naturally swell or contract, such as tax preparers adding numerous temporary employees throughout the first quarter of the year or resort communities where seasons can have a dramatic impact on the number of employees who need temporary access to communication and collaboration tools. Every midsize company understands that an underpinning of business growth is having flexibility as needs change. The cloud provides that.

Enhance user capabilities

Cloud-based UCC makes it easy for an administrator to instantly add capabilities for an individual, a group, or all employees. This results in unmatched flexibility, giving users what they need when they need it, regardless of device or location—which is crucial, considering today's anywhere, anytime, any device mantra. Also, when leveraging a single, full-stack solution, organizations can pick and choose what is right for the business at that time while still allowing for future adaptation and growth. One of the biggest benefits is that the user experience is uniform across the entire UCC deployment, regardless of whether a specific component is in the cloud or on premises.

Gain control over associated expenses

The cloud offers an opportunity to reduce capital expenditures (CapEx) while matching expenses to business volume. This results in greater predictability of costs and therefore profits. Specifically, the UCC cloud solution is entered into the financial ledger as an operating expense (OpEx), often with a monthly subscription fee rather than a large up-front capital expenditure. Particularly midsize companies, where significant cash outlays are challenging, can quickly reap the value of the OpEx approach. This investment method also continues to pay off down the road; for example, upgrades become seamless, because it's the provider that has the responsibility of ensuring successful installations.

As a result, businesses can better predict expenses and match them to actual business volume. A well-sourced cloud deployment ultimately decreases IT management overhead and requirements, increases the availability of staff for strategic efforts, and decreases the time spent on routine maintenance and operations. However, the benefits go well beyond cost issues—for example, improving productivity and efficiency levels. Bottom line: A solid investment means spending more time running the business and less time managing the communications solution.

Taking all these benefits into account, moving to the cloud becomes the quickest and most efficient way for midsize organizations to make communications and collaboration work, says Dewing. "It's scalable, updated regularly, and maintained by the provider. By relying on their cloud provider, companies are able to spend more time and focus on the right things—such as providing further opportunities for business growth."

UNDERSTAND DEPLOYMENT DIFFERENCES

As revealed in IDG's cloud computing survey, public, private and hybrid cloud deployments will all grow over the next 18 months, with hybrid cloud gradually

taking market share from the predominant public and private options. All three—public, private, and hybrid—have their individual selling points. So then it becomes a question of how to choose which approach is the best for your organization.

When taking the private cloud route, organizations elect to run their solutions on an architecture with dedicated resources. This can be developed either in-house or in conjunction with one of the many cloud providers. For large enterprises, embracing a private cloud often makes more sense than for SMBs—if for no other reason than economies of scale. Specifically, private cloud configurations can strip away some of the cost benefits for midsize organizations. For example, with an in-house private cloud, all the management, maintenance, and updating responsibilities remain on IT’s shoulders. Although this approach offers IT control, it also places a financial burden on IT resources. That said, in some instances where compliance dictates the actions of an organization—such as a regulated financial services company—a private cloud may be the best solution.

With the public cloud approach, organizations are sharing the same infrastructure and operational costs, which typically make the public cloud the less expensive option. The most common concern with the public cloud is security, primarily because companies don’t want to share infrastructure with an organization that may not have security policies similar to their own. However, major cloud providers invest heavily in securing their environments. They have the financial resources and IT staff to go the distance in cloud security. Also, most cloud deployments include SLAs specifically covering the provider’s commitment to protect client data and applications. The key is to pay close attention to SLA details.

Then there are hybrid solutions, which blend cloud and on-premises deployments. This route is attractive,

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because it allows business needs to dictate when new cloud capabilities should be enabled while still leveraging existing on-premises infrastructure investments. A hybrid solution is useful, for example, for expanding to new regions or merging two previously independent organizations that need to have a single integrated UCC architecture. The same is true when flexing capacity to meet demands for peaks and valleys in business activity.

MAXIMIZE YOUR CLOUD INVESTMENT

Deployment models can look significantly different from business to business. There are several steps to help determine what works best for your company’s individual needs.

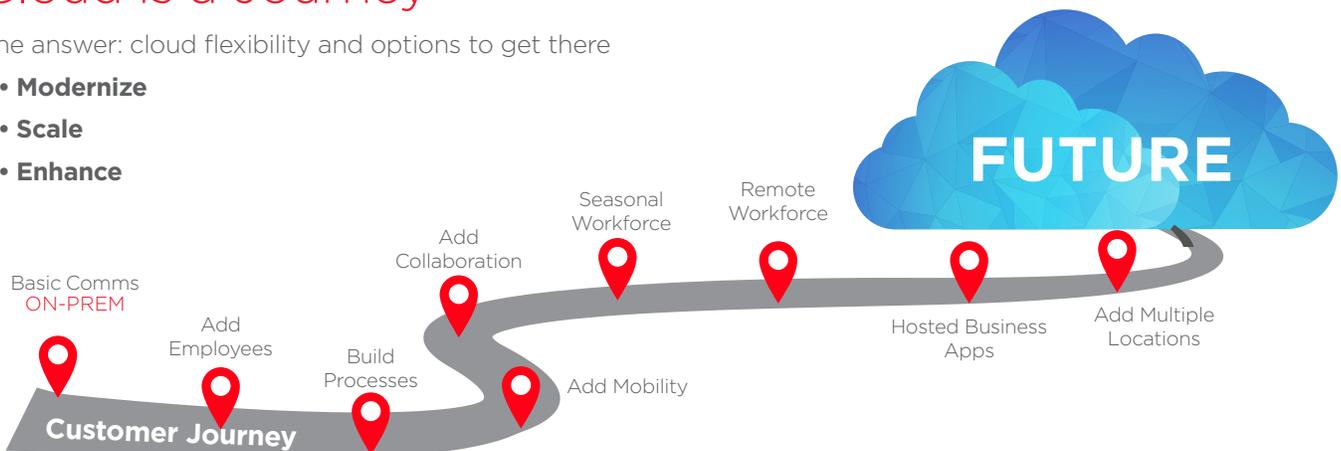
Step 1: Understand business goals

As with any other investment, the key to getting the most out of a cloud UCC deployment is to first have a solid understanding of organizational goals—whether the object is to lower TCO, enhance collaboration internally or externally, increase productivity, or create a competitive advantage. Starting out with specific business goals enables a sharper focus and a better ability to realize expectations.

Cloud is a Journey

The answer: cloud flexibility and options to get there

- **Modernize**
- **Scale**
- **Enhance**



For instance, a common strategic goal in today's digital environment revolves around improving the customer experience. This is one area where a cloud-based UCC solution thrives. Organizations with the right tech solution not only simplify collaboration but also empower the ability to engage with customers, suppliers, and partners. Consider the value attached to immediately seeing who is available within the supply chain and then seamlessly connecting stakeholders to troubleshoot a problem or brainstorm new product or service offerings. It's that level of engagement that separates leading organizations from the pack.

Step 2. Address the user

Simply deploying technology by itself doesn't solve problems, especially communication and collaboration issues. Even the best solution will fail if the organization doesn't take the user experience into account. Success here starts with understanding what users want or need to accomplish and where they perceive that existing solutions are falling short. Involving employees—from across business lines and use cases—in the process ultimately helps establish ownership as well.

At the same time, it's crucial to understand the value of embracing the latest technology. The current generation of UCC solutions offers meaningful benefits, including the ability to improve the customer experience and the quality of key engagements—such as quickly connecting clients with representatives capable of handling time-sensitive requests.

However, it's important to get users involved before a vendor is selected. Who better than day-to-day users to explain their business needs? It's also a good practice to set expectations and provide solution or tool training in the context of the work to be done. Don't expect the technology to make users more collaborative if they don't understand how to use it; what it will accomplish; and how it saves them time, money, or effort.

Step 3. Find provider alignment

When organizations go through the proper due diligence, UCC cloud deployments can foster greater efficiency. It's important to recognize that not all cloud providers are created equal. Individual business needs can make one provider more attractive than another.

"For example, at some point in the selection process, it's important to address geography," Avaya's Dewing says. "Make sure the cloud provider selected can connect and serve in the regions where your business is operating. For

example, a cloud solution from a China-based telecom provider may be great, but it is likely to not be as effective for users in Lisbon as it is for users in Shanghai."

Regulatory concerns should also be a part of the conversation. This is especially true when operating in countries such as Germany, where customer and employee data cannot cross national borders. The key to avoiding potential issues is to make sure up front that the cloud provider knows local regulations as well as how they apply to your business.



Step 4. Maintain realistic expectations

The cloud simplifies the route to empowering the user base for leveraging a solid UCC solution, yet a cloud deployment still requires planning and thought to achieve optimal results. As such, realistic expectations must guide the process. For example, an SLA with your cloud provider establishes the basics: baseline capabilities and availabilities. That agreement sets the foundation on which you can build relationships with your own customers. The important consideration is that process planning gets as much attention as network planning. Having the right perspective from the beginning can make a noticeable difference in the eventual outcome.

IN SUMMARY

No organization can afford to fall behind in an environment—especially at a midsize company that sometimes competes against larger enterprises with greater resources—where customers expect highly collaborative and on-demand engagements. Understandably, this can put stress on IT to deliver.

That's why it's critical to invest in the cloud-based UCC solution that best fits your organization. When properly sourced, such a solution spells much-needed relief for IT and gives the growing business the flexibility it needs in order to remain competitive.

For more information, visit www.avaya.com. and [@Avaya](https://twitter.com/Avaya)

¹IDG Enterprise 2015 Cloud Computing Survey."

²IDG Enterprise Unified Communications and Collaboration Survey 2015."