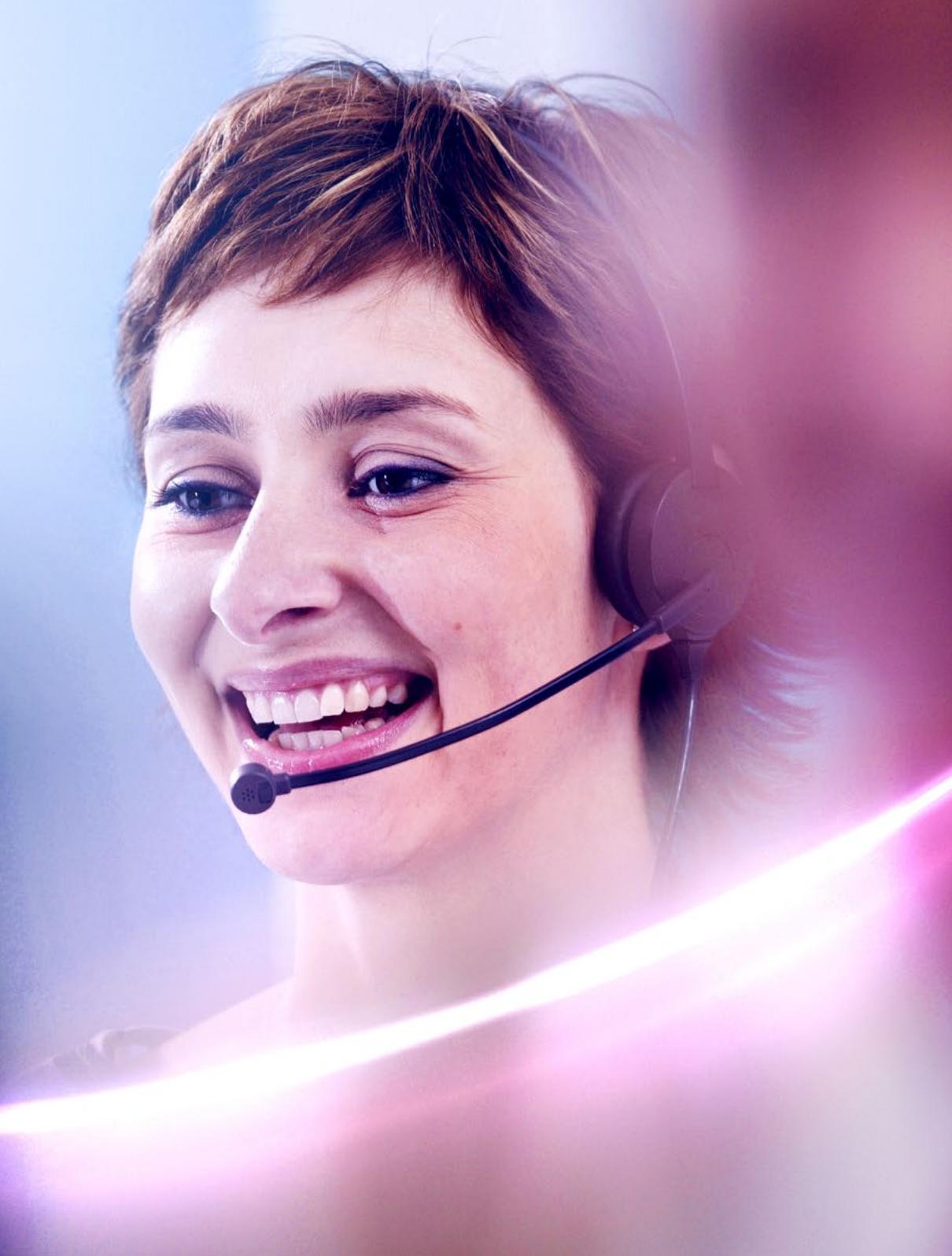




# Why it pays to move your phone and contact centre system to the cloud

It's time to hang up on traditional PBXs



# Why your head needs to be in the cloud

IDG found that 81% of organisations have at least one application, or part of their computing infrastructure, in the cloud. Businesses expect to be spending close to a third of their total IT budgets on cloud computing within the next year.<sup>1</sup>

So what's the next step on your journey to the cloud? Moving your PBX and Contact Centre.



## Everyone's thinking 'cloud'

Why are businesses so enthusiastic about moving to the cloud? IDG<sup>2</sup> found that the top three reasons are:

1. Because that's where the best applications and platforms are (49%)
2. To help save costs while optimising spending (41%)
3. To strengthen disaster recovery and business continuity plans (40%)

As organisations recognise the speed, flexibility, and cost savings offered by cloud SaaS (Software as a Service) business applications like Salesforce, they've started to move key business infrastructure into the cloud. So it's not surprising that cloud-based VoIP phone systems and UCaaS (Unified Communications as a Service) are experiencing phenomenal growth.

Gartner<sup>3</sup> expect that between 2017-2022, 'the rate at which organisations [will] deploy cloud telephony will more than double, from about 14% of users to 32% of users'.

1. IDG Communications, 2020 IDG Cloud Computing Survey (IDG Communications Website 2020)

2. Ibid

3. Gartner, Critical Capabilities for Unified Communications as a Service, Global (2019)

# The final call for the on-premises phone system

There's one immediate benefit of moving your communications system to the cloud: you no longer need all that on-premises hardware that's at the core of a conventional phone system.

Moving your phone system to the cloud not only eliminates the obvious investments in hardware but also avoids many of the not-so-obvious costs related to an on-premises phone system:

**PBX upgrades and maintenance.** Network upgrades, licence fees, installation, and separate building wiring can quickly mount up. And as your PBX supplier adds more features and improvements, you'll need people trained to maintain the hardware, roll out software upgrades, and manage system use.

**High call and line costs.** You'll also be paying for trunk lines to connect your PBX to the phone network. Add on call costs, and factor in the potential for installing (and paying for) more phone line capacity than you actually use, and you're looking at a substantial drain on your telecoms budget.

**Standalone service costs.** Separate bills through third-party vendors for conference calling, video conferencing, web meetings, and internet fax can soon stack up.

**Connecting locations.** Maintaining MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) and associated hardware, and PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) lines to meet the demands of bandwidth-intensive communications between two or more locations can cause management headaches and strain IT budgets.

**Unpredictable cost of future capabilities.** Depending on your supplier, each feature, service, or maintenance agreement can become an added cost.

**Phone line management.** By eliminating the need for costly ISDN lines from each of your locations, you'll streamline management of the system. You'll no longer need to manage multiple services and provider relationships.

**Employee expertise and costs.** A cloud solution means you don't need trained staff at each location. Any IT person can add, move, or change lines and users without specific hardware or telephony expertise. All it takes is logging into a simple web or app-based user interface on your desktop or smartphone.

These cost savings can amount to 70% or more, compared with premises-based PBX systems.



# The real value of virtual phone systems

Whether you embrace cloud-based phone systems or not, the world is moving on.

People expect to bring their own device (BYOD) to the workplace. We've all got mobiles, tablets, laptops and other forms of connected tech. Many of us don't even have a fixed workplace anymore. Flexible working is increasingly the norm, accelerated everywhere by the 2020 lockdown.

On-premises phone systems are relics of a different age. Don't believe us? Look at the numbers. Analysts are expecting the mobile VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol, or calls over the internet) market to be worth over \$145 billion annually by 2024.<sup>4</sup>



## Take your office phone with you

A cloud-based phone system helps your people work together effectively wherever they are: in the office, working remotely, or on the move. Everyone has the same capabilities as if they were using the office phone system. Direct extension dialling, transfers, access to your company directory, and the same number whether they're using an office phone or their mobile.

Since everyone's sharing the same virtual PBX, they're all sharing the same advanced phone system features regardless of location or device.

## Bring everything under one roof

Moving your communications to the cloud doesn't just make sense for the people using it, it's much simpler to manage. You can bring your voice, internet, video conferencing, fax, and text services together onto a single platform. No more multiple providers to manage. Bringing everything under one roof means less hassle, easier and more effective management, and potential cost savings.

4. Grand View Research, Mobile VoIP Market Analysis By Services (Video And Voice Call, Video Conferencing, Instant Messaging), By Platform (Android OS, iOS, Windows OS), And Segment Forecasts to 2024, (2016)

# Easier to manage

Managing a traditional phone system can be a time-consuming headache, something you can only do on-site. Upgrades can also be difficult to manage. But move to a cloud-based system and management suddenly becomes much simpler and more flexible.

In a well-designed, hosted model, experts in secure data centres manage all the systems for you. Taking care of upgrades and addressing any security and compliance concerns, there's no more waiting for manual upgrades to get hold of the latest features. Updates are automatic and free.

According to Frost & Sullivan, 'hosted IP telephony offers enterprises access to converged telephony infrastructure at a lower cost, with the technology risk borne by the service provider'.<sup>5</sup>

## Built with resiliency in mind

Cloud phone systems are inherently more resilient than any on-premises equivalent. Because they're software-based, everything's located in remote data centres rather than in a comms room tucked away in your basement. So if a fire, flood, or other disaster strikes one of your locations, your cloud-based system will carry on unaffected. Even if no one can get into the office, they'll still be able to use the system and receive calls to the office number wherever they are, using their mobiles.

But what happens if the data centre runs into trouble? That's unlikely. They're built to withstand disasters. But let's say that something calamitous did happen to a data centre. No problem, a second data centre (often in a different location or country) mirroring your data, calls, and applications will automatically kick into action.

So don't worry, your phones will not stop ringing.



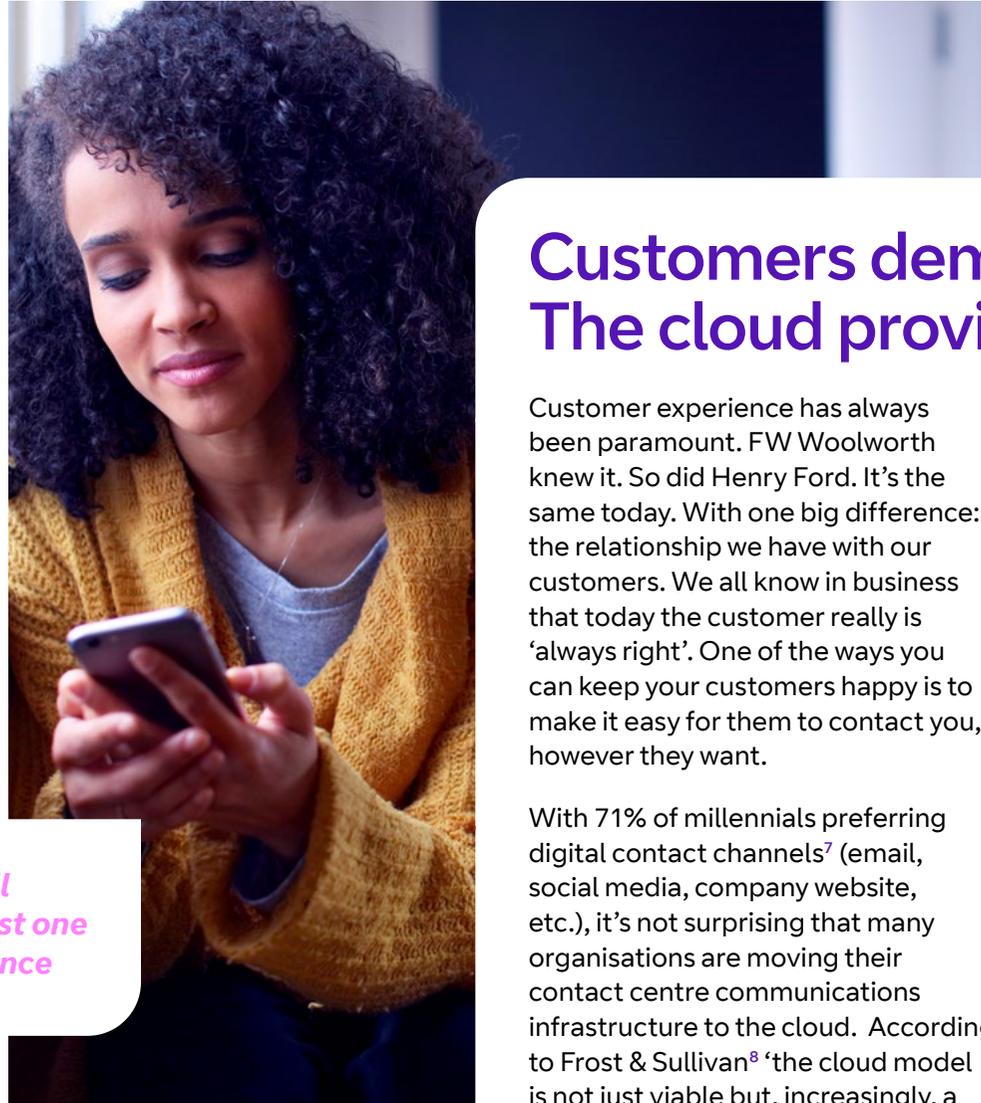
# Run a contact centre? The cloud has that covered, too.

Building and maintaining customer loyalty has never been more critical to gaining or maintaining a competitive edge.

And when it comes to contact centres, customers have never been more impatient or more demanding. A recent study by Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand (PwC)<sup>6</sup> found that one in three customers will stop buying from their favourite brand after just one bad customer experience.

Today's digitally and socially-wired consumers also have the ability at their fingertips to instantly share a bad sales or support experience with their friends. Or the entire world. Just one viral tweet can cause widespread brand damage.

**32% of consumers will switch brands after just one bad customer experience**



## Customers demand flexibility. The cloud provides it.

Customer experience has always been paramount. FW Woolworth knew it. So did Henry Ford. It's the same today. With one big difference: the relationship we have with our customers. We all know in business that today the customer really is 'always right'. One of the ways you can keep your customers happy is to make it easy for them to contact you, however they want.

With 71% of millennials preferring digital contact channels<sup>7</sup> (email, social media, company website, etc.), it's not surprising that many organisations are moving their contact centre communications infrastructure to the cloud. According to Frost & Sullivan<sup>8</sup> 'the cloud model is not just viable but, increasingly, a

preferred model to deploy contact centre technology'. It gives you the capacity, flexibility, and agility to meet customer demands, whatever they are.

Contact centre systems deployed on top of an on-premises PBX infrastructure struggle to keep pace with the fast-moving advances in digital communication. Organisations relying on this legacy infrastructure to see them through are missing out on the full benefits of the latest multi-channel solutions that work in lockstep with cloud apps.

Why invest heavily in building a contact centre and training a workforce if you're going to cut corners on your communications solution?

6. PwC, Experience is everything: Here's how to get it right, (2018)

7. Visual Objects, How Social Media Help Businesses Increase Website Traffic, (2019)

8. Frost & Sullivan, Cloud Contact Center Market Trends: Movement from Best-of-Breed to Suites

# The benefits of an integrated, cloud-based contact centre and phone system

Cloud-based contact centre solutions offer a number of advantages beyond multi-channel integration.

Among the most obvious benefits, as with a cloud business communications system, they eliminate steep up-front investments in on-premises hardware, software, and licences. They also speed up deployment and streamline management and training.

But integrate a cloud contact centre with a cloud-based phone system and you'll unlock even more benefits:

## Transform your customer experience

Customers want to engage with your sales and support agents using the channels of their choice: chat, email, social, website, app, text, and whatever's coming next. And many people still like to speak to you over the phone.

You need to take an omni-channel approach where the customer chooses how they want to contact you and can move seamlessly between different channels. They may start with a Twitter DM (direct message) and then hop over to a web chat or a phone call. Whichever

channel they're using, your agent knows what's already happened and can pick up from where they left off without forcing the customer to go through the whole story again.

Integrating a cloud contact centre with a cloud phone platform gives you that agility and flexibility, together with visibility of how agents are engaging with customers over the different channels.

But why stop there? If you integrate your contact centre solution with your cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) and business applications, agents can stay connected to the databases and systems they need to serve customers. Everything will be working in perfect harmony: incoming and outgoing calls, web chat, email, CRM, customer service applications, ordering and fulfilment systems.

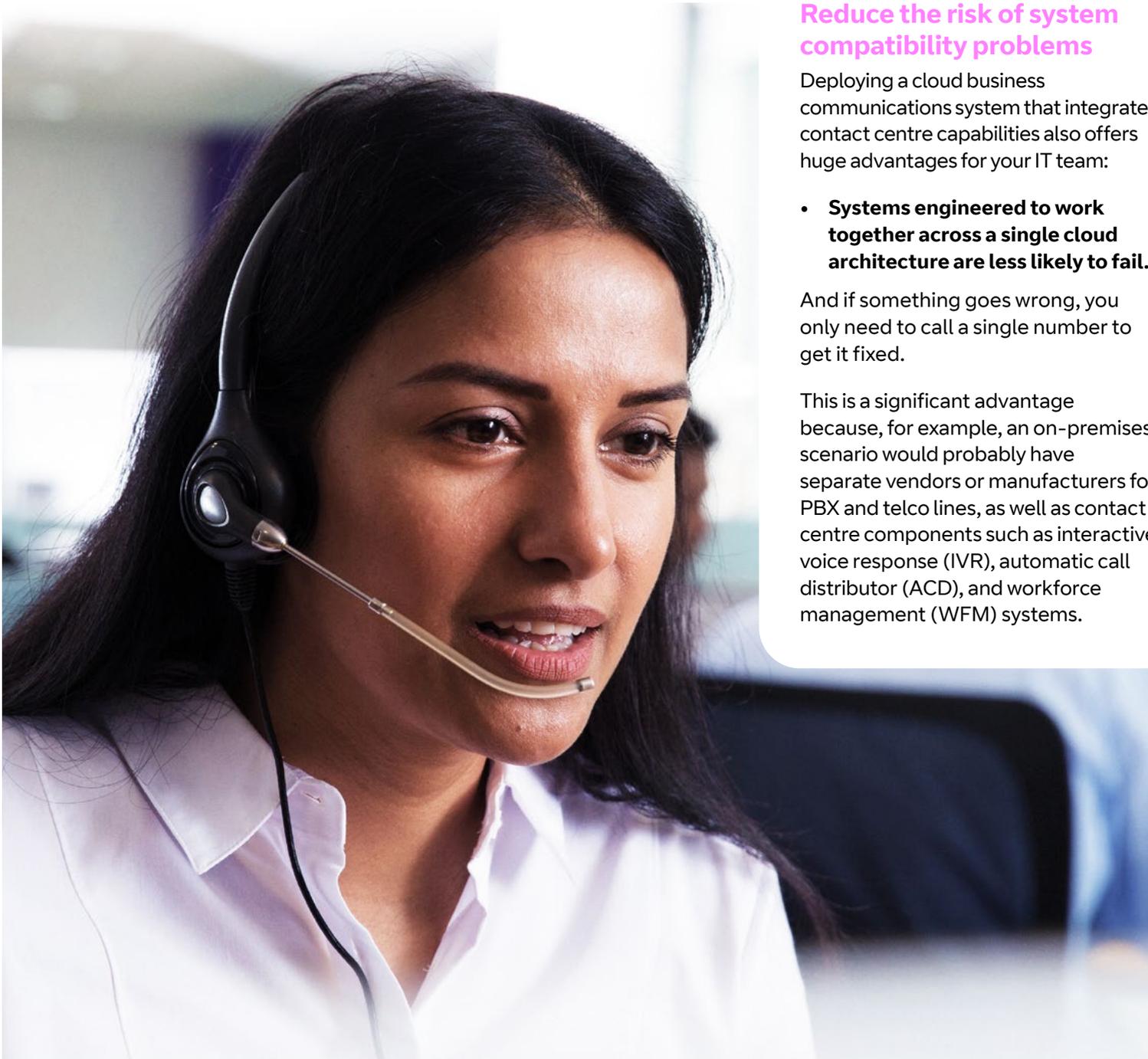
And with your agent at its core, orchestrating exceptional customer experiences will become the norm.

## Make flexible working work for you

Because it's not tied to any hardware or office phone in a specific building, a virtual phone system in the cloud is ideally suited to a flexible or mobile workforce. And, as many businesses have discovered, people like the flexibility to sometimes work in the office, sometimes work at home.

A cloud-based phone system is ideal as it means people can use all the features of the phone system wherever they are. And your customers are none-the-wiser – they just call the office number and get a great experience, wherever your agents may be located.





## Reduce the risk of system compatibility problems

Deploying a cloud business communications system that integrates contact centre capabilities also offers huge advantages for your IT team:

- **Systems engineered to work together across a single cloud architecture are less likely to fail.**

And if something goes wrong, you only need to call a single number to get it fixed.

This is a significant advantage because, for example, an on-premises scenario would probably have separate vendors or manufacturers for PBX and telco lines, as well as contact centre components such as interactive voice response (IVR), automatic call distributor (ACD), and workforce management (WFM) systems.

- **An integrated solution helps to minimise compatibility risks.**

With a traditional on-premises phone and contact centre solution from multiple suppliers, you'll sometimes run into compatibility issues when one of these suppliers is upgrading one component of the solution.

But with an integrated solution from a single supplier, you can be confident this isn't going to happen.

## Ramp up customer satisfaction

Agents can give their customers a much better experience because they'll be able to connect to internal and cloud-based knowledge management systems (through the unified desktop). They'll have everything they need at their fingertips.

And with a single solution integrating multiple modes of communication, agents could be talking to a customer on a voice call while simultaneously sharing their screen with them through a web meeting. Great for showing a customer around a product on a sales call or helping to talk them through how to fix something on a support call.

## Reduce costs

As with a cloud phone system, eliminating the need for on-premises call centre hardware, software and licences, as well as maintenance, repair, and updates, is a key benefit of cloud solutions. But deploying a cloud contact centre on top of a cloud phone system creates even more benefits:

### Hot-desking without splashing out on more kit

Hot-desking, where people work at different times and share the same desk space, is an easy way to save on the cost of office space and gives your employees more flexibility in how they work.

With a combined cloud contact centre solution and cloud phone system, employees can either log in to a shared phone or move a phone from somewhere else and simply plug it in to the Ethernet jack. The phone

then immediately functions as the agent's own extension.

### Ideal for handling seasonal fluctuations

Cloud phone systems and contact centre platforms are scalable. Unlike the traditional fixed versions, the cloud equivalents are highly flexible, which is ideal for businesses that grapple with seasonal fluctuations. If you're super busy in the run up to Christmas and you tend to hire many temporary workers, you can quickly and easily increase the capacity of your phone or contact centre system to accommodate this increased demand. And then, when the post-Christmas lull appears, you can scale back down again.

Why's that important? Because you're not paying for fixed capacity all-year round that's idle for long periods. You only pay for what you use.

### Encourage people to bring their own devices

'Bring your own device' (BYOD) continues to gain in popularity. A cloud-based phone system can transform your employee's smartphones into secure desk phones, eliminating the cost of paying for a phone line or forking out for company-owned mobiles.

### Turn a computer into a phone

You can also plug a headset into a desktop computer or laptop to make and receive calls and send texts and faxes. This softphone functionality is often available with High-Definition voice technology, for crisp, clear sound, and security software that prevents anyone listening in to your calls.

### Get up and running fast

It's quick and easy to deploy cloud-based phone systems and contact centres. There's no need to cable

the building or set up phones; your IT team doesn't need to open firewalls or provision VPNs: cloud platforms can be up and running in an instant. Just plug in and, after a short training session on the intuitive user interface, you're ready to start talking.

### Robust business continuity and disaster recovery

If a disaster or outage prevents your agents from working at your contact centre, they can instantly begin working remotely, carrying on just the same as if they were in the physical contact centre.



# It's time to get on board the cloud

It's no exaggeration to say that everything is moving in the same direction. Your business applications, systems, networking solutions, voice communications, security, video conferences, data storage, and critical platforms may already be in the cloud. And when you factor in the rapidly expanding Internet of Things (IoT) technologies entering the workplace, many aspects of modern life are adapting to cater to the future needs of business.

So it's clear that moving your phone system, contact centre solution, or both to the cloud will bring you plenty of compelling benefits. Sure, there's the cost savings to tot up and the efficiencies you'll make, but for many businesses, these are secondary. What's more important is that if you want to stay in business in the twenty first century, you need to be in the cloud.



But you're not alone in thinking about how you can exploit these new opportunities.

Your competitors are making the same connections. And somewhere there's a hungry start-up busy joining the dots. They don't need all that expensive, restrictive PBX equipment. They can just go straight to the cloud and compete. And in doing so, they'll start experiencing benefits such as:

- omni-channel communications that push their customer satisfaction levels ever higher
- flexible working patterns that help motivate their people and encourage them to work more efficiently
- remote working capabilities that mean they can attract more experienced talent from abroad
- and disaster recovery and business continuity to ensure they never experience any down-time.

Cloud-based phone systems and contact centre solutions are more than just technology options with serious benefits. They're how all businesses will work in the future.

And so should yours.

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