

Why your contact centre strategy is best built on cloud capabilities

WHITE PAPER



Introduction

Pictures have recently surfaced on social media showing a bakery in the USA still using the 40-year-old Commodore 64 as a cash register. It does the job of taking customers' money with just a 1MHz CPU and 64KB of RAM.



There are also call centres with equivalent technology who are yet to be convinced of any need to move on. They remain content to use spreadsheet pivots to analyse their data and offer user interfaces designed 30 years ago for their employees.

Even though this is a whitepaper that aims to convince readers about the value of cloud powered customer service, it is worth remembering not everyone reaches the same conclusion about the need to modernise their technology. Especially while it still works functionally.

Fair point. But maybe the better question is whether those technologies remain fit for purpose.

In the case of call centres, the evidence says no. And has done for quite some time. Not because the technologies have stopped working. Or that vendors will no longer support them and cause their retirement. It's just that they can no longer satisfy today's needs and expectations. Let alone cope with what's coming next.

Let's step back for a moment to understand why.

Even though the aim of serving customers has remained constant over time, the means to do so have been industrialised ever since call centres emerged. Many now agree that what was gained in efficiencies was at the expense of feeling recognised and valued as individuals.

The consequences have become clear to senior leaders. Losing customer or colleagues in a world in which growth and profitability is so challenging must now be reversed as a matter of urgency, even survival. It is why contact centres are starting to evolve technically, culturally and behaviourally given their significant role in this strategic intent.

While efficiency still matters, effectiveness matters more. For instance, a global survey of 33,000 consumers by Qualtrics discovered just 45% agreed their issue was full resolved during their most recent service interaction. UK contact centres trended even lower at 41%.

At the centre of this industry-wide failure lies a fundamental inability to match demand and supply. The solution is real time, detailed understanding of customer needs with an ability to dynamically offer the optimal path to resolution with embedded personalised support at hand. This enables full resolution with customers feeling recognised and valued.

In the AI first world we are now entering, this is the new benchmark for core operational competency. It's a standard of service that will need to be consistently achieved before senior leaders can expect that customer value actually increases in terms of loyalty, advocacy and spend.

In this context, effectiveness is about being able to personalise at scale. It is the polar opposite of 'First In-First Out' routing or

cut 'n paste template answers. Culturally, it's about replacing a 'just work harder' ethic with a 'work smarter' version. Something that remains impossible while queues are siloed by channel, and default resolution pathways are anything but straightforward for either customer or colleague.

The industry's long-term focus on efficiency has ironically delivered the opposite. Too many customers facing the prospect of transfers, repetition, 'system is slow' excuses, 'can't help' apologies and inadequate self-service outcomes that still require live assistance to resolve simple stuff.

At fault is a fragmented service ecosystem built on a redundant generation of technologies compounded by a lack of service design: a frequently ignored competency that transforms technical functionality into memorable user experiences.

Those wanting to see things improve might have hoped that the promise of omni-channel would have fixed things. Give customers their channel choice and surely self service will ease the pressure on live queues allowing more time to fully resolve customer issues. This is the promise we have lived with for the last decade.

While there is plenty of research showing widespread expectation that indeed this should now be commonplace, our real world, lived experiences tell of continuing frustrations.



40% Deloitte Digital research confirms this. 40% of organisations admit their channels are isolated, with little or no visibility to prior interactions

across channels. Only 7% of so called omni-channel contact centres can transition customers between channels seamlessly by providing customer data, history, and context to the next advisor or system.

To resurrect an important distinction, the Deloitte research suggests most organisations are still delivering multi-channel rather than omni-channel functionality. Point solutions rather than a unified capability.

On top of this, the convenience of digital channels has unfortunately increased inbound volumes. Conversations are also lasting longer. Meanwhile, the growing issue of customer vulnerability is adding to the complexity of servicing needs.

If self-service is working, and many still hold negative memories of bot encounters, then it is not scaling fast enough to relieve the pressure on often understaffed live assistance.

Of course, removing failure demand would ease the pressure on inbound queues. But this needs sophisticated analytics which too few contact centres yet have access to.

And ongoing contact centre attrition is proof that the job still feels too tough for too many.

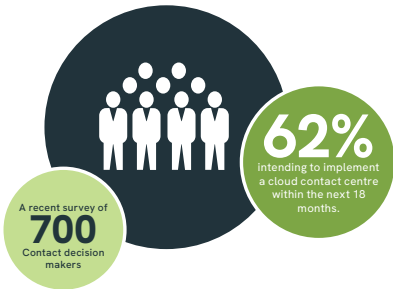
This is the dilemma many contact centre leaders find themselves stuck in. Still battling on the wrong side of an enabling framework that can transform customer and colleague experience for the better.

It's one thing to be aware that 53% of consumers have cut spending after a single bad experience with a company (Qualtrics). It's another to prevent that outcome happening with your own customers.

So, with this snapshot of what's going on in mind, how can cloud powered contact centres contribute to moving things on?



The Value of Cloud Powered Contact Centres



A recent survey of 700 contact centre decision-makers showed 62% intending to implement a cloud contact centre within the next 18 months.

What were their reasons?

As expected, they were attracted to the core benefits that ‘going cloud’ offers. These included:

- ▶ **Moving the financing of new technology from a capex to opex model.**
- ▶ **Offering secure on demand access for remote and hybrid work models which contact centre recruiters rely on to attract recruits.**
- ▶ **Being able to resize capacity to meet fluctuating demand and quickly onboard new functionality enabling a more agile response to change.**
- ▶ **Having ongoing access to the latest version of their chosen vendors contact centre solution(s) to meet emerging needs of customers and colleagues.**
- ▶ **Offloading the ongoing management and maintenance of technology to external partners.**

Other contact centre specific reasons included:

- **Being forced to act as existing deployments approach end-of-life. Then realising that innovation and vendor attention is now firmly focussed on cloud solutions e.g. *Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS)*.**

- **Needing a better way to deal with ‘the high cost or impracticality of adding new omnichannel capabilities to an existing contact centre’. CCaaS offers a framework of unified routing and reporting into which the most common communications channels are pre-integrated with ‘app library’ style access to any other variation of voice, text and video.**

Beyond these research findings, contact centre decision makers can also count on support from the broader IT community. Cloud is becoming their deployment model of choice at organisation level so are happy to support others adopting that strategy.

Also, cloud platforms are currently the default home for delivering AI functionality. The owners of major cloud platforms such as Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services (AWS), and Google Cloud are all highly skilled in applying advanced AI. They have ensured it is deeply embedded into the intelligent, automated management of their cloud platform and services.

Unsurprisingly, these global brands are also at the forefront of developing the latest generations of generative and agentic AI. These models are being enthusiastically deployed by CCaaS vendors in the hope of finally fixing many of the systemic issues explored at the start of this whitepaper.

If it’s true that AI needs data, contact centres can certainly generate huge volumes. However, turning data into actionable insight to enable the real time ‘personalisation at scale’ model mentioned earlier requires a level of compute power that most on-premises servers were never designed to handle. In this respect, ‘Cloud and AI’ fit hand in glove.



Choices In Your Migration Journey

So far, we have simply described the direction of travel regarding where contact centres are heading strategically. Hopefully we have managed to capture the moment in the sense of showing it as a time of widespread, disruptive change. A new page is being turned. Do we keep the Commodore 64 or not?

“ The future is already here – it’s just not evenly distributed.

– William Gibson

Every leadership team has their own unique set of circumstances to consider in terms of how quickly and to what extent they can and need to embrace this future.

Some have the motivation and reason to fully adopt a public cloud model. Others require more control over data sovereignty, compliance and greater customisation options than the shared model offered by public cloud.

For instance, they want to maintain control of changes, software updates and planned maintenance so these can be scheduled to suit the organisation’s timetable rather than a cloud vendor. For these reasons a private cloud is a better fit.

Finally, there is an option called hybrid cloud that combines existing on-premises infrastructure with public/private cloud models. It is a popular, pragmatic option that suits the timetable and risk profile of many organisations.

They can opt to retain critical legacy systems while adopting modern cloud capabilities such as omnichannel interaction, AI-driven routing, and scalability. A best of both worlds approach. This is attracting a growing number of advocates who see it as a better fit with their strategic agendas.

So, if choosing a hybrid cloud solution is the commonly reached conclusion, where do many organisations start in their thought process?

Let’s explore this.

At the heart of most digital transformations lies the challenge of what to do with legacy infrastructure. In most instances, the core functionality it provides is still needed and so must remain part of the infrastructure going forward. But the question is how.

For instance, despite the advancements of public cloud technology, many legacy applications and hardware remain incompatible, leaving transformation teams grappling with how to embrace cloud innovations while maintaining the features, security, and functionality of their existing systems. **Can on-premises and cloud be combined?** Maybe with some kind of specialist integration capability and the right expertise to make it happen.

Then there is the issue of protecting legacy investments that are nowhere near being end of life. A popular solution is to incorporate existing hardware and licence investments into a private cloud deployment. This achieves business priorities without writing off significant cost. It also enables IT to start the cloud journey now, rather than waiting for legacy systems to reach end of life, forcing a wholesale shift to cloud later.

Combining on-premises infrastructure with cloud-based services help organisations control costs while avoiding the need for extensive hardware upgrades. Predictable pricing models and scalable channels further enhance cost optimisation.

There are other cost-efficiencies such as allowing organisations to dynamically scale and handle seasonal campaigns or fluctuating demand without maintaining excess infrastructure throughout the year.

Another popular cost optimisation tactic is to leverage the public cloud for non-critical workloads and reserve private cloud environments for sensitive ones.

Beyond cost where are other key benefit in a hybrid strategy?

Another consideration around migrating legacy systems is the potential to disrupt existing operations. Many contact centres have a finely tuned on-premises setup, often with complex, customised integrations.

Hybrid architectures allow organisations to modernise incrementally, reducing the risk of operational disruptions during migration and giving IT more time to understand needs and explore options.

Cloud adoption can be done on a piecemeal basis. Focussed on elements that do not disrupt the status quo This approach is particularly beneficial for organisations with complex legacy systems or strict compliance requirements.

A hybrid option also scores well in terms of recovery and continuity.

These cloud setups ensure minimal downtime by using public cloud resources as failover platforms during disruptions. They are designed with built-in redundancy and failover mechanisms, ensuring uninterrupted operations even during outages or unexpected disruptions: a critical concern for certain sectors such as healthcare and public services.

And course hybrid solutions offer all the required security using encryption protocols, identity management, and automated threat detection. This ensures compliance with regulatory standards while protecting sensitive data across environments.

In summary

Hybrid cloud solutions offer a balanced approach for contact centres looking to modernise while maintaining control over critical systems. They provide the agility needed to adapt to market changes, improve employee productivity, and deliver better customer experiences while optimising costs and minimising risks during digital transformation.

Tailoring hybrid solutions to align with specific business needs rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach, allows organisations to make progress while navigating the complexities of digital transformation.

All that's needed is a specialist integrator who knows how.

Planning For Migration Success

Whichever cloud strategy emerges as best suited, the process of navigating that change follows a common path. In the concluding part of this whitepaper, we offer a set of high-level checklists you can use as input into more detailed plans.

However, a word of warning regarding their use or any others you choose to incorporate. It is crucial there is more than just a task orientated mindset around identifying what needs attention. Otherwise, important topics may be missed. Incorporating cloud creates ripples across the status quo regardless of the preferred rate of change. So, it is important to identify indirect impacts as much as the obvious ones.

For instance, cloud introduces the ability to very quickly add, change or decommission resources via infrastructure as code, API calls or other methods of automation. In the context of managing legacy infrastructure this is going to be new to many IT teams.

There are consequences that need to be anticipated with this new capability. For instance, the ease with which large changes can be performed requires appropriate governance to prevent unintended consequences. This needs intentional redesign of processes and reskilling of teams. Therefore, ensure governance is reviewed and evolved with this in mind.

Here are the promised checklists.

1. Planning and Assessment

Stakeholder Engagement

- ✓ **Gather input from key stakeholders, including IT, customer service teams and others involved in customer resolution. Involve them in defining need and solutions throughout the migration process**

- ✓ **Understand the full technology implications of their core customer and colleague strategies**

- ✓ **Educate stakeholder on trends and capabilities of contact centre technologies including the benefits of cloud models to gain buy-in**

Evaluate Current Setup

- ✓ **Assess current workflows, performance metrics, and stakeholder feedback to identify areas for improvement**
- ✓ **Conduct a hardware and software inventory (e.g. servers, phones, CRM systems) then assess their future value and role in contact centre modernisation.**
- ✓ **Evaluate data security and compliance requirements (e.g. GDPR, PCI DSS)**

Risk Management

- ✓ **Evaluate cloud options for best fit with IT, CX and business priorities**

- ✓ **Plan how to respond to data security breaches, service interruptions, integration failures, performance degradation or compliance violations**

Define Goals and Objectives

- ✓ **Clarify business objectives such as scalability, productivity, effectiveness, cost reduction, customer/colleague experience.**
- ✓ **Set technical goals like omnichannel support, AI integration, or enhanced data security**
- ✓ **Establish a timeline with milestones for the migration process**

2. Technology Selection

Choose the Right Cloud Solution

- ✓ **Identify upgraded capabilities such as omnichannel, workforce management, and analytics**
- ✓ **Ensure the cloud solution supports seamless integration with legacy systems via APIs or pre-built connectors**

- ✓ **Evaluate scalability options to handle seasonal demand fluctuations**

Security and Compliance

- ✓ **Verify that the cloud provider adheres to industry-standard security protocols (e.g., encryption, access controls)**
- ✓ **Confirm compliance with relevant regulations.**

3. Migration Strategy

Develop a Phased Migration Plan

- ✓ **Identify which functions should move to the cloud versus those that remain on-premises for compliance or operational reasons.**
- ✓ **Test each phase in a controlled environment to identify and resolve issues before going live**
- ✓ **Maintain a backup system to ensure uninterrupted customer service during migration with clear rollback procedures**

Integration with Legacy Systems

- ✓ **Map out which on-premises systems will remain operational and how they will integrate with cloud solutions (e.g., CRM, ticketing systems)**
- ✓ **Test integrations thoroughly to ensure seamless operation across platforms**

4. Workforce Preparation

Training Programs

- ✓ **Provide comprehensive training on new tools and workflows**
- ✓ **Offer ongoing support through workshops, training materials, and help desks to address learning curves.**

Collaboration Tools

- ✓ **Implement unified communication platforms that support team messaging, video calls, file sharing, and real-time collaboration for hybrid teams**

In conclusion

Contact centres are at the heart of satisfying customers and developing their loyalty. What this now looks like in terms of expectations is fluid and generationally specific. The role of contact centres is also in a state of change. Some are becoming revenue generators and insight hubs on top of their traditional role as service centres.

As we have explored, few have yet mastered the complexities of ensuring customer experience is personalised and that their contact mix is effective in terms of resolution paths and low effort.

In this respect modern infrastructure enables new operating models capable of satisfying these needs. There are many routes to that goal. One that is growing in popularity is the hybrid cloud solution since it's a framework into which organisations can reconcile many of their competing needs and start migrating to a new operating model on a schedule that works for them.

If you're ready to future-proof your contact centre strategy, Maintel is here to help. With our expertise in integrating cloud capabilities, hybrid solutions, and AI-driven innovations, we can guide you through every step of your transformation journey. Whether you're exploring hybrid cloud, modernising legacy systems, or aiming to personalise customer experiences at scale, Maintel ensures your contact centre evolves seamlessly to meet today's demands and tomorrow's challenges.

Contact us to discover how we can tailor a solution that aligns with your unique needs and delivers measurable value to your business.



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