

Is Your Business “Cloud” Ready?

5 Questions & Answers to Help Decide if Hosted Services are Right for Your Business

Introduction

Over the last several years, a lot of buzz has been created around the term “Cloud,” and in particular “Cloud Computing” and “Cloud Communications.” What was seen originally by some as a fad has taken hold as a viable option for businesses of all sizes. As this paradigm shift takes place from the old way to the new way of communicating, many businesses are now evaluating Cloud Communications services.

This white paper was written to help business and IT decision-makers decide if Cloud Communications is a smart choice for their companies.



What is Cloud Communications?

communication (both voice and data). Some of the main characteristics of Cloud Communications include:

- **Web-based** – services and applications can be accessed over the Internet.
- **Virtual** – very little equipment is needed on-site for deployment of services
- **Flexible** – services and features can be added or subtracted quickly and easily
- **Scalable** – new users, departments or locations can easily be added

What are some advantages to Cloud Communications?

There are many advantages, especially for small-to-medium sized business, to switching from premises-based to Cloud-based communications. Some of the main benefits include:

- **Little hardware to purchase or maintain** – Since the intelligence of your services now reside in the Cloud, you may only need a simple router and switch at your location.
- **Reduce capital costs** – Less equipment means lower expenditures and increased bottom line revenue.
- **Increased capabilities** – Since all devices integrate seamlessly, your features are more powerful, enabling greater productivity for your workforce.
- **Updates usually included and automatic** – Gone are the days of paying for every new version or upgrade. With Cloud-based services, your updates are typically included and occur automatically.
- **Lower costs** – In general, Cloud-based services offer a cost savings since you reduce the quantity of equipment used and can tailor the features and usage to each individual user.
- **Greater flexibility to add or subtract users and services** – No more expensive upgrades or licenses.
- **Predictable monthly service fee** – You can now budget wisely with no surprises.
- **Redundancy & auto-failover** – Since the “brains” of your services are off-site, there are increased options for redundancy and auto-failover in case of an emergency or disaster.
- **Refocus in-house staff to other tasks** – Cloud-based services relieve some headaches and hassles from your staff, so they can focus on other tasks and growing your business.



Applications of Cloud Communications

What are some common applications of Cloud Communications?

The capabilities of the Cloud are expanding rapidly, and include the following:

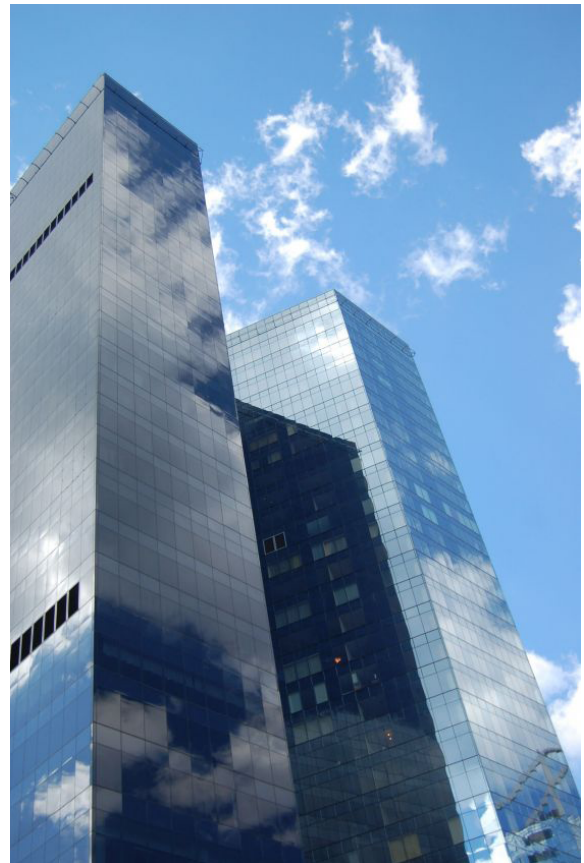
- High-Definition Voice
- Instant Messaging
- Presence & Status
- Messaging – Voicemail, Fax, Voice to Text Transcription, etc.
- Team collaboration, anywhere, anytime
- Integrated Workflow Applications
- Sharing, Storage & Backup of Documents & Files
- Hosted Calendaring
- Video/Multi-Point Conferencing
- Web/Data Conferencing
- Audio Conferencing
- Mobility, including FMC and Softphones
- Hosted PBX
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Sales Force Automation (SFA)



How do I know if my organization is ready?

Every organization has different needs and will have to consider many factors when deciding to make a transition of IT services. Besides the network and technology issues themselves, more important is the shift in mindset. Below is a list of questions to help determine if your organization is prepared for the transition to the Cloud. (The more responses you answer with a “yes,” the more ready you are.)

1. Would you prefer to outsource your communications, allowing your staff to focus on other tasks?
2. Are your licenses or telecom equipment outdated and in need of upgrade?
3. Are you looking for greater flexibility and control over your users and their services?
4. Would you like to increase the integration of your devices (computers, desk phones, mobile phones, etc.) for more effective communication?
5. Are you frustrated with managing multiple vendors and bills, and would you like to streamline them into one provider?
6. Are you looking to reduce capital expenditures?
7. Does your business require redundancy and/or business continuity abilities?
8. Would your employees benefit from Cloud-based mobility features and virtualization?
9. Would you like to avoid paying for software updates?
10. Would you like your IT staff focused on other projects?
11. Is your staff largely mobile? (Work from home or frequently out of the office)



Transition to Cloud Communications



What is the transition to the Cloud like?

That really depends on the vendor you choose. When choosing a Cloud Communications vendor, be sure to research the following factors:

- **Experience** - Find out how long they have been providing Cloud-based services. Beware the wolf in sheep's clothing - there are many companies popping up in hopes to cash in on this wave of technology.
- **Track record** - Ask for references and follow up on them. Ask their references about outages, installation and customer service.
- **Customer Service** - Problems are always likely to occur, and many times are out of the control of your provider. However, their approach to customer service will make night and day difference to you when an issue arises, so make sure they are committed to providing top-level, efficient service.
- **Financial stability** - Many providers are here today and gone tomorrow, leaving their customers hanging. Make sure the provider you choose is rock solid.

If you've chosen a stable vendor with excellent experience in Cloud-based services, your transition to the Cloud should be smooth and comfortable.

Conclusion

Cloud Communications services have experienced explosive growth in recent years, with no signs of slowing down. As more and more businesses services become available over the Cloud, the business case for using Cloud-based communications grows ever stronger.

About Broadcore

Broadcore is a provider of hosted unified communications services for businesses. Through an extensible, highly scalable IP communications system, Broadcore offers a unified communications platform for voice (VoIP), data, and mobility communications across the enterprise and multi-location businesses. Broadcore's solutions allow the enterprise to increase employee productivity, accelerate business processes, and improve customer care through tight integration of dispersed communications endpoints for office, mobile, or call center employees.

Broadcore offers lowered total cost of communications ownership by assuming the cost burdens associated with data redundancy, infrastructure expansions, technology obsolescence risks, system scalability, and new feature integration and updates. By removing the costs associated with infrastructure and additional IT staff to maintain increasingly complex communications technologies, Broadcore allows its clients and their IT organizations to focus on their core competencies while remaining current with the latest communications technologies.

With over twenty years of providing telephony communications and hosted UC to over 120,000 users, Broadcore offers faster and easier deployment of communications capabilities within the enterprise, resulting in employee productivity and business agility with minimum interruption to business operations. www.broadcore.com

