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White Paper

Call Centers and the Cloud

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Call centers may be one of the highest benefitted sectors from the cloud. Cloud computing has become an instrumental piece of many different organizations with its benefits of high cost savings, flexibility, scalability, and user ease. Call centers are able to experience these benefits by moving to the cloud with the convenience and simplicity of having off-site employees, reduced infrastructure maintenance, instant updates and upgrades, and more. Today, investing in on-premises solutions is inefficient because they'll probably be out of date a year or two later. Herein lies the huge value of cloud computing. Frequently updating call center technology certainly takes its toll, so cloud computing is a long-term solution that effectively ebbs and flows with the ever-changing market.

According to IDC, US spending on cloud contact center services is expected to grow to $1.6 billion by 2018. 77% of on-site contact centers are either already using cloud or evaluating transitioning to a cloud or hosted contact center. It's a solution that's in it for the long haul, and implementing cloud computing is a great way for call centers to think ahead and future-proof themselves.

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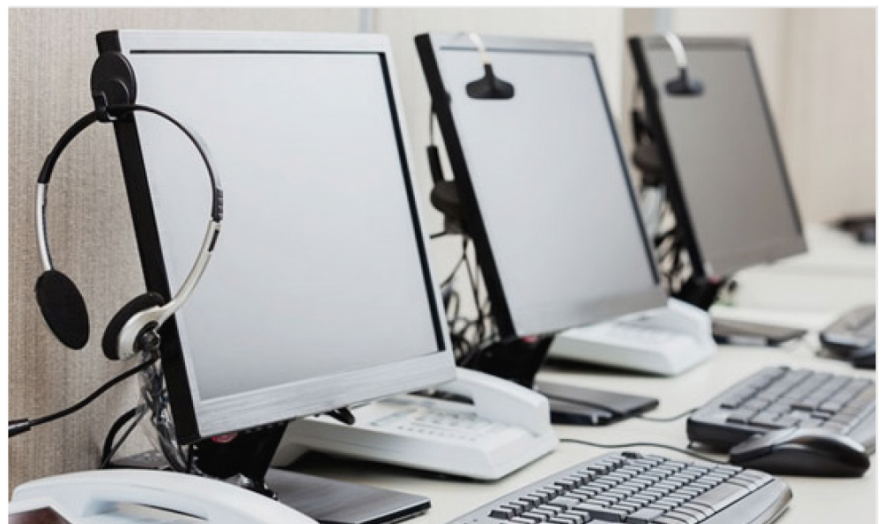
How Cloud Adds Value to Call Centers

Flexibility

Call centers rely on the ability to be up and connected at all times to receive calls. Imagine if one of your call centers got disconnected, whether it be because of a storm, a power outage, or any other event that could occur. With the cloud, employees can work from anywhere simply by logging into their virtual environments. This means that when a call center goes down, the team can disperse to their homes, a local coffee shop, or another call center close by and continue receiving calls from another device. The beauty of this is that no matter where the employee is they have the ability to log into their environment and efficiently and effectively do their job just as if they were sitting at their desk within the call center.

There are many implications with such great flexibility. This may include eliminating the entire call center physical location all together. With the abili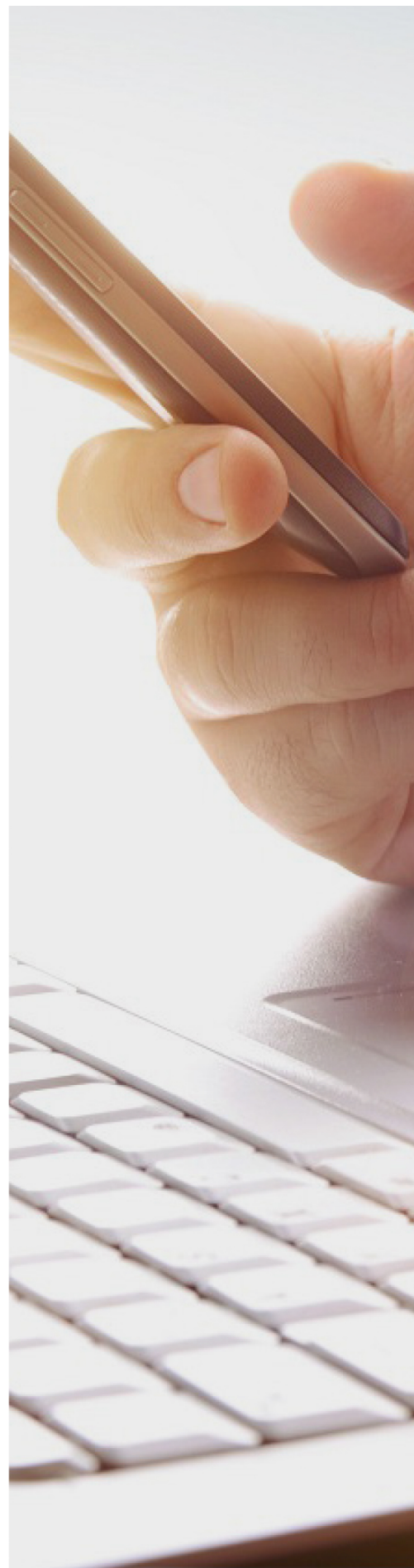ty to have employees work from anywhere you can eliminate the need for in-house staff. The overhead that comes with leasing or owning a physical building can be cut to a mere fraction of the expense when you only need to pay for connectivity or hardware for your employees to work off of within their homes. Furthermore, handling updates to the virtual environments can be coordinated with any employee regardless of location with simple initiations from the central data operation center.

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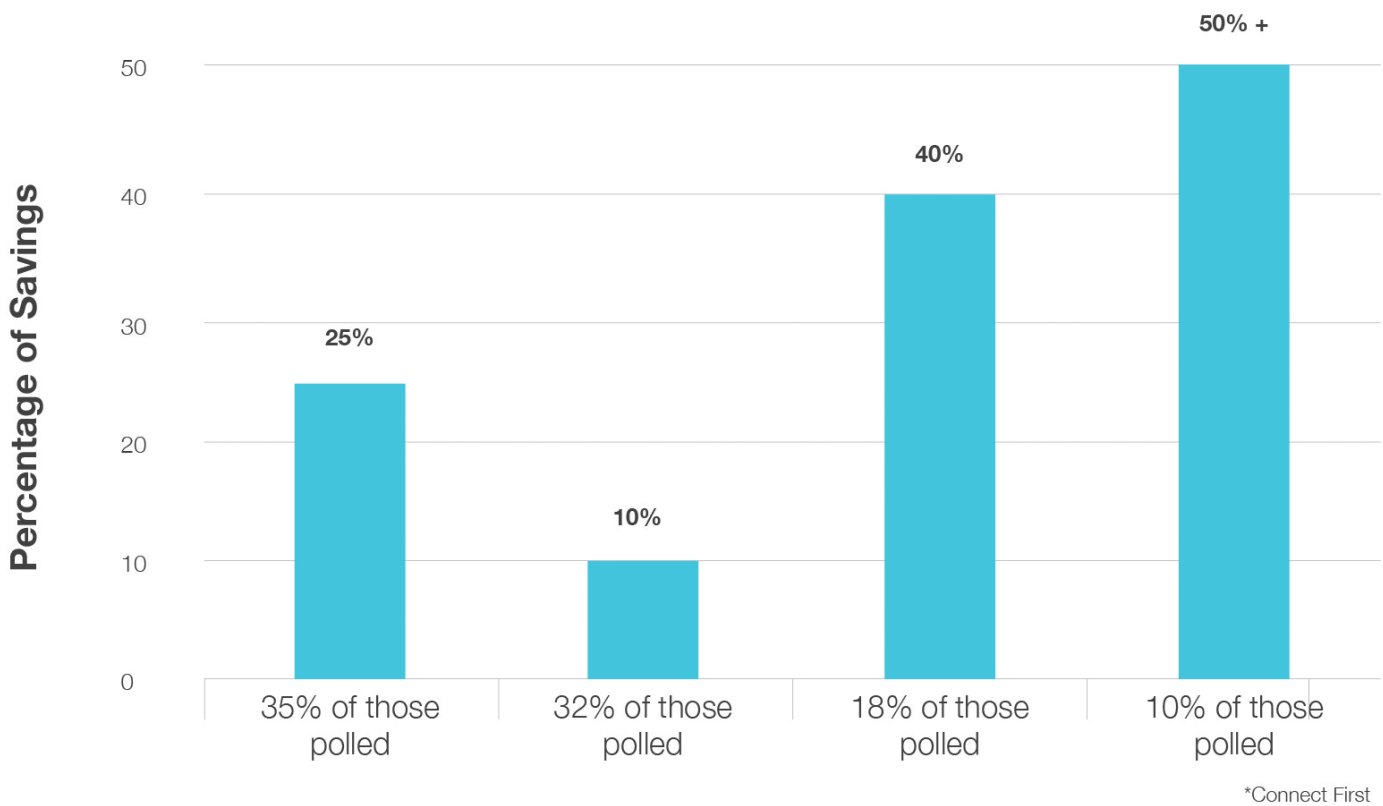
Cost

The cloud in general presents the opportunity for immense cost savings. Anything from reducing or removing capital expenses to transforming an organization into a BYOD model, the cloud allows organizations to focus on other IT matters instead of managing and purchasing hardware and software. Purchasing hardware for infrastructure is a costly endeavor that can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on the size of the business. All of these must be purchased in one lump sum and can make for a difficult financial situation. Furthermore, the operating expenses of managing, patching, and supporting that infrastructure can continue to increase that overall expense. The cloud makes it much simpler by implementing the data into a virtual environment hosted within an extremely secure data center. The hardware already exists at the expense of RapidScale, and the management, support, and upgrades are all coordinated via the RapidScale support team. Not only does this imply initial cost savings, but the operating fees of hosting in-house infrastructure is built into the predictable pay-as-you-go monthly fee.

The implications for a call center include the fact that hosting infrastructure off-site means that you're virtually removing on-site costs for hardware, maintenance, support, and updates. Furthermore, the ability for employees to connect to their virtual environments anywhere in the world means that the overhead expense of real estate, facilities, electricity, and more can essentially be eliminated. It's no longer required for an employee to be within a corporate office when they're able to work from any of their devices from anywhere in the world. The scalability of the cloud also means that when there is an influx of calls, whether it be due to a promotion, an outage, etc., the call center can quickly scale up with more employees and scale back down when the usage levels have leveled back out.

What are the estimated savings on a virtual call center platform to your organization?

Percentage of Savings

- 50% + : 50 (10% of those polled)
- 40% : 40 (18% of those polled)
- 25% : 25 (35% of those polled)
- 10% : 10 (32% of those polled)

*Connect First

Scalability

The ability to quickly turn up and turn down users is tremendously simplified when utilizing a cloud-based virtual environment. The central administrator has access to all user management and is able to add new users and disconnect users with the click of a button. This means that a user can be up and running within minutes and can be accessing their virtual environment that same day. There's no software installation or hardware setup, everything is provisioned for use with the click of a button.

When implementing new software or new updates, call centers typically struggled with the immense task of updating every single user station to have the latest version of software. With a virtual cloud environment, all updates are tested prior to implementation and can be pushed out to every user's machine at one time with a single click. This saves large amounts of time as well as allows the IT team to focus on more important tasks instead of machine updates.

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Ease of Use

Using a virtual environment is as simple as logging into a computer. When a user sits down at their machine, whether it's a desktop, laptop, tablet, Thin Client, smartphone, etc., they're able to open their virtual environment and log in with their credentials just like they would log into their device. Once open, their desktop populates and they're off and running. When they need to change devices, they simply log off and log in to their new device, and they're right back where they were. The virtual environment is based off of a Windows 7 operating system so every user can recognize the interface and will know how to use it.

Administrators are also able to designate applications to be available to different user groups. Accounting, for example, can have access to QuickBooks, while the sales team has access to their CRM, and the support team has access to any call center software that may be required. With the simple click of a button an admin is able to distribute software applications to any virtual environment and give access to that user. When the user logs in they are then able to see that application within their virtual environment. This functionality allows call centers to organize and distribute application needs to any employee regardless of their location.

BYOD

With the rapid increase of personalized technology use, a phenomenon is occurring in the workplace that is changing the way people work. This is BYOD, or "Bring Your Own Device," a policy that permits employees to use their personal computing devices, including laptops, tablets and smartphones, to access company information and applications. BYOD allows call center employees to use their virtual environment from a device of their choosing. Employees are already comfortable with that familiar device which eliminates a learning curve that could inhibit productivity. We offer solutions that enable you to introduce BYOD efficiently and securely in your business. Our virtual desktop solutions, CloudDesktop and CloudOffice, are perfect for companies that want to embrace this new way of working.

Traditional computing solutions cost a lot of money. It's just a fact. Purchasing the hardware for your employees to work, as well as the power to run it all, is expensive. And on top of that, the lifespan of this hardware is short. It quickly becomes obsolete and then you're facing the costs of replacing this equipment. When your employees are able to use their own devices, costs shift from the company to the users. Users tend to update the devices they use more frequently, so many of your employees will be working on the latest technology that they are paying for, rather than you. This is an amazing solution for businesses that need to cut spending, but don't want to risk the quality of their business operations.

Replacing Desktops

In addition to having the ability to adopt a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) business model when moving to the cloud, call centers can also consider utilizing Zero and Thin Clients as alternatives to traditional tower and monitor computers. Utilizing a Thin or Zero Client is essentially like hooking up directly to the Internet. These devices are very basic in nature and are commonly referred to as "dumb terminals". The idea is that the devices are completely stateless and generic by nature, making it a breeze to swap out a broken terminal with a new one. We can even take it a step further by configuring the network to automatically propagate the necessary information on how to connect to the Citrix farm, requiring absolutely zero configuration by the end user other than plugging it in. The benefit of these is that they are significantly less expensive than a traditional computing setup with average prices ranging from $200-$500.

| Zero Client	Thin Client
A non-Windows-based operating system residing in a manufacturer's proprietary equipment which solely serves to connect to a virtual desktop session.	A Windows-embedded operating system (an offshoot from Windows CE).
Advantage: Less expensive, easier to maintain.	**Advantage:** More flexible and easier to set up printers for use with the CloudOffice platform. This is because most desktop printers are primarily (even exclusively) designed to work best with Windows-based operating systems.
Disadvantage: Although printing is supported, configuring printers on Zero Clients requires deeper involvement using internal IT support resources.	**Disadvantage:** More expensive solution .

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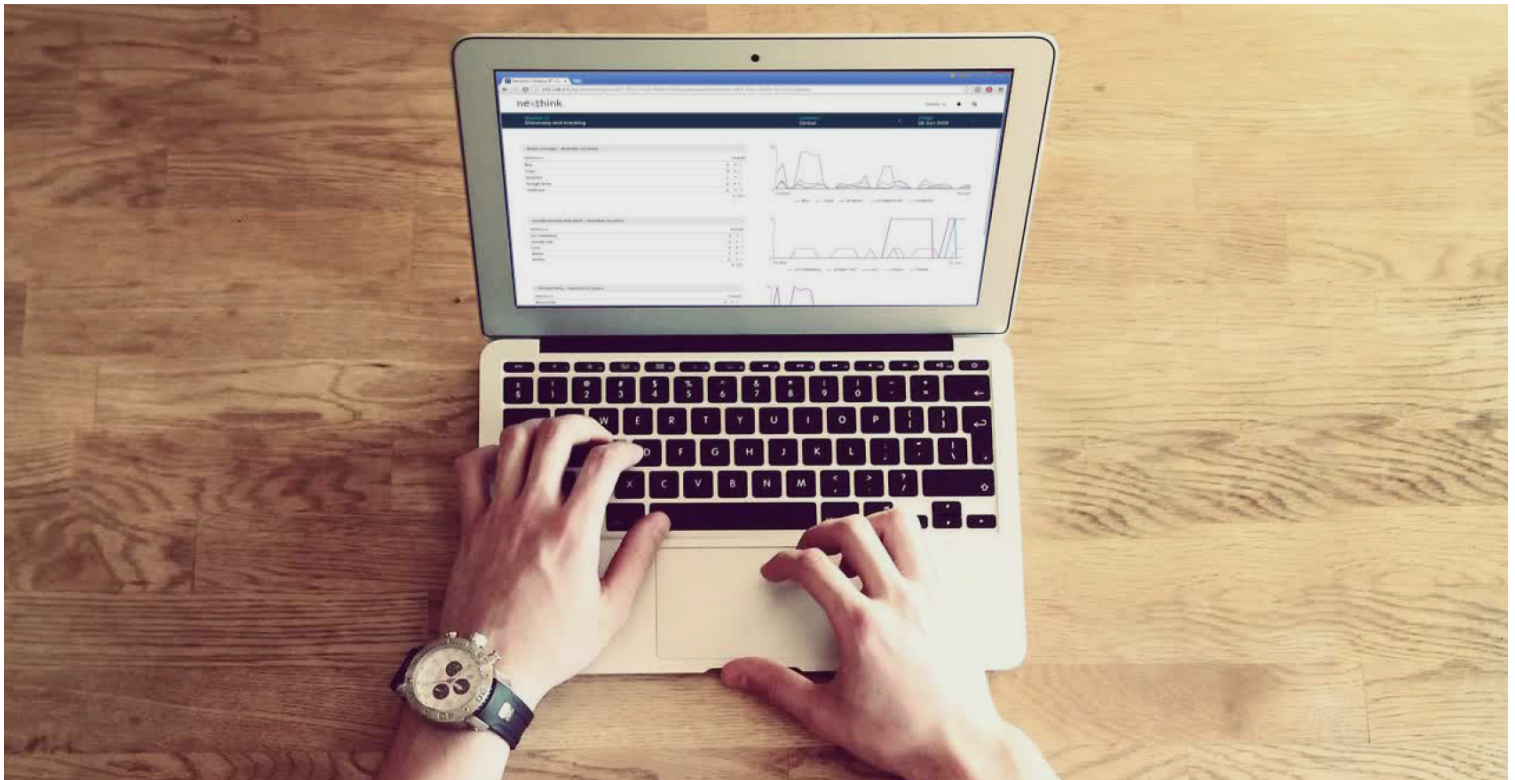
Application Virtualization

CloudApps is the next-generation application purchasing and licensing management platform for business. CloudApps connects businesses with the applications they want while eliminating licensing management and application upgrades. Our Business Apps as a Service platform allows organizations to implement their required software into their virtual environment for their users to access at any time. The implications of this are numerous including the elimination of manual software updates, installations, and more. With CloudApps, organizations are able to click and deploy any software application within their admin panel to any user environment.

With RapidScale's CloudApps we can implement, manage and support almost any business application in our cloud. Call center software has the ability to be packaged and deployed within a virtual environment so that no matter where a representative is logging in, they're able to access their software. Furthermore, RapidScale offers the ability to bring your own software or to select from our pre-packaged software from our CloudApps catalog. RapidScale can package and deploy 97% of business applications in CloudOffice. Ask your RapidScale expert for a business application proof of concept. Additional business applications are continuously being added to the application library and will be available for CloudOffice without a packaging fee.

Let RapidScale's CloudIntelligence team to design the right application business flow for your business. Today we offer some of the most commonly used business applications like QuickBooks, Microsoft Office, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Visio, Google Chrome and many more commonly used business applications.

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Security

RapidScale delivers nothing but the highest-quality protection for your data and information. We've equipped ourselves with the best-in-breed data centers to hold your sensitive information for safe, encrypted storage in our SAS70, SSAE 16 Tier 3, Class 1 Data Centers. Our enterprise security team and software will protect your business from viruses, malware, and rogue employees at an infrastructure level.

Protecting our customers' data is our number one priority. RapidScale's procedures for handling data are designed to allow an organization to comply with some of the industry's most extensive compliance regulations such as HIPAA (Healthcare), PCI (Credit Card Data), Sarbanes-Oxley or SOX (Financial Information), and more. The privacy of our users' data is also a top concern. The data stored within RapidScale's cloud is only visible to the user with the appropriate credentials. RapidScale's internal team can not see or manipulate a user's data without having access to their account via their credentials.

Our data centers have also undergone full compliance auditing and are all SSAE16 certified. SSAE16 compliance is attained by undergoing a full audit to ensure that the way the data center handles information falls under adequate controls and safeguards. RapidScale can provide SSAE16 reports upon request.

Cisco Routers and Firewalls with encryption 256k	IaaS Enterprise Virtual Firewall or Customer-Owned Device
NetApp Encryption in flight and at rest, all SANs have SEDs	HIPAA, PCI, Sarbanes-Oxley Compliance
End-User password strength/resets	Environmental Controls: N+1 redundant HVAC
Circulated and filtered air in data centers	Advanced fire suppression systems

About RapidScale

RapidScale, a managed cloud services provider, delivers world-class, secure, and reliable cloud computing solutions to companies of all sizes across the globe. Its state-of-the-art managed CloudDesktop platform and market-leading cloud solutions are the reasons why RapidScale is the provider of choice for leading MSOs, VARs, MSPs, Carriers and Master Agents throughout the United States. RapidScale is not only delivering a service but also innovating advanced solutions and applications for the cloud computing space. RapidScale's innovative solutions include CloudServer, CloudDesktop, CloudOffice, CloudMail, CloudRecovery, Cloud Backup, CloudApps, and more.

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