



OPINION PIECE

Tellumat Telecoms

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Unified communications should only partly be in the cloud for now For redundancy and availability, choose a hybrid solution

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Cloud – a compelling story

ICT vendors are pushing cloud computing almost without exception these days. And their story is very compelling.

- For one thing, the green benefits are unassailable, with more efficient, demand-dictated provisioning of computing resources, lower consumption of electricity and less atmospheric warming.
- In the face of demands for higher performance at lower cost, cloud computing cannot be beaten for efficiency.
- With off-site, vendor-managed hardware and applications, cloud computing offers seamless technology adoption, support and maintenance, and upgrades are assured.

In short, cloud computing offers a way out for everybody: customers get the unlikely windfall of more for less, while vendors are assured of continued sales growth, thanks to a model that reduces complexity and makes better financial sense than on-premise computing.

But a premature one

But for now, the world isn't quite ready for fully-fledged cloud solutions. Many applications have not yet been developed for cloud delivery, and cannot be placed in a virtualised environment.

From another point of view, customers are simply not comfortable yet with having all their computing off-site. Even the likes of Amazon have learnt that many customers prefer using the cloud for some services, while running their own data centre for baseline services.

And for other reasons entirely, South African customers' heads are not in the cloud yet. Until a more competitive telecoms environment comes about, we will continue to suffer low bandwidth at high cost, putting the cloud some way off in the distance.

Who delivers?

What makes sense right now is a hybrid delivery model that combines the savings of the cloud with the security and peace of mind of on-premise computing – whether the customer wants a PBX, unified communications or CRM.

It's all in the architecture. A unified comms solution, for example, can be delivered in one of three ways:

- The server-based approach is a complex model followed by many vendors that support a legacy of multiple acquired or separately developed UC services. These are centrally provisioned from multiple servers, and require much investment for deployment replication and maintenance.
- Cloud-based delivery is, to some, a risky proposition that suffers reliability problems, given the SA bandwidth situation. It further relies solely on the business continuity and security measures of the off-site host. Services are centrally provisioned.



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- Appliance-based – a single-image solution replicated across site-based appliances in a 'distributed intelligence' model, with cloud failover for extra redundancy and efficiency.

Qualified support for cloud

While both local and global UC vendors are pushing the cloud agenda to the potential benefit of customers as well as the industry, it makes better sense to wait out the bandwidth dilemma before pushing more services into the cloud.

And for peace of mind, it is advisable to adopt a hybrid model that combines the savings of cloud computing with the extra redundancy of on-site equipment.

* *Tellumat is the South African distributor of ShoreTel systems.*