

Whitepaper

Cloud Migration and Contact Centre Solutions

Public Sector

About NEC

NEC has delivered world-class technology solutions and services to customers across the globe, for more than a century. For over 50 years in Australia, NEC has built a sophisticated technology and anything-as-a-service company which brings together the best technology and the best people to ensure our customers capture maximum value from their IT and networking investments.

NEC connects people through reliable communication infrastructure while also helping to keep communities safe and secure with intelligent surveillance systems and the world's leading biometrics identification technologies.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Business Drivers.....	6
Building an End-to-End Experience	8
Benefits	11
NEC's Solution	14
Conclusion	17



Introduction

Introduction

Cloud technologies are fundamentally transforming the contact centre.

Forecasts with regard to the potential size of the market for cloud technologies may vary, but what is clear is that investment in on-premise contact centres has flatlined in recent years, while adoption of Cloud-based solutions has increased and is likely to continue to grow.

Migration to Cloud-based contact centre solutions began with basics such as call recording and routing, speech recognition, customer relationship management, and workforce optimisation. But demand is growing for newer functionalities, such as automation, omnichannel services (a step up from multichannel), and cutting-edge analytics.

Enterprises are also finding traditional contact centre models are ill-equipped to support the newer ways in which their customers prefer to communicate, such as social media or chat.

The leaders in the adoption of Cloud solutions for contact centres have been private enterprises in medicine, retail, media and entertainment, insurance and finance. But Cloud service providers are increasingly finding demand for their services in the public sector.

Many government organisations are exploring Cloud-first approaches to their customer service computing needs. Yet government organisations can face unique challenges as they move into the Cloud — and Cloud service providers need to understand them.





Business Drivers

Business Drivers

Public sector organisations want to reduce delivery risks associated with contact centre services. They include security vulnerabilities, poor software performance and service reliability.

They want to reduce operational costs such as set-up, maintenance, and upgrades associated with operating contact centres. They may also anticipate that they can convert fixed costs such as upfront investments in hardware and software to variable costs.

“We have seen shifts in both federal and state governments in the last three to four years,” NICE Systems managing director A/NZ, Gerry Tucker, says.

“There’s a much more straightforward acceptance, willingness and in some cases preference for Cloud, primarily because they’re trying to reduce the cost to serve.”

A third driver is a desire to reduce time to value, through the ease of innovation and continuous improvement Cloud solutions offer.

Cloud solutions also give contact centre customers the ability to scale up operations in high-traffic periods, or down again, in a more cost-effective way.

“What has happened in the past was that if you needed greater capacity, you had to invest in new infrastructure,” NEC account director for the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), Donald Craven, says.

“Once you bought that capacity, you couldn’t simply sell it again. It was easy to ramp up capacity, but not easy to bring it down again. The Cloud gives you the capacity to ramp up and down.”

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Gerry Tucker,
Systems Managing Director A/NZ,
NICE Systems



Building an End-to-End Experience

Building an End-to-End Experience

The same factor that has driven the rapid uptake of Cloud solutions to contact centre issues in the private sector also applies to government: providing better customer experience.

Contact centres in the Australian market have traditionally been seen as call centres, delivering less value than other parts of the organisation.

But that's changing, Tucker says, as the realisation dawns that customer experience has a significant impact.

"Nine out of 10 organisations see customer experience as their key differentiator," he says.

This is increasingly true for government agencies as much as it is for enterprise.

"Government agencies' stakeholders are holding them to the same standards as their bank or insurance company," Tucker says.

"If you look at on-premise solutions, one of the issues nowadays is that Businesses can't keep up"

Jim Chryssikos,
National Solutions Manager,
NEC Australia

"As far as they are concerned, they don't see a difference. If they're getting good customer service in one sector, or one area of their life, they should have that elsewhere, too."

This is where Cloud services, which incorporate analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, omnichannel routing and workforce optimisation, are making a big difference.

"One of the problems with on-premise solutions, is that businesses struggle to keep up," according to NEC Australia national solutions manager, Jim Chryssikos.

"They need dedicated resources to manage the environment, to maintain it and to add new features. But moving to a cloud takes that problem away."

The responsibility is passed to the Cloud service provider to apply the analytics, scheduling, forecasting and reporting systems, along with maintaining industry best practice.

Analytics plays a central role in an effective cloud strategy. It's a new way of thinking.

In traditional on-premise models, analytics is applied almost as an afterthought, to identify and solve problems after they have occurred.

Analytics in a Cloud system allows government organisations to be more proactive, NICE Systems' Tucker says.

Building an End-to-End Experience

“Say you’re launching a new piece of regulation. You can track it and see how well you’re doing, and then make any necessary adjustments in a much more proactive fashion. Getting from insight to operationalisation to feedback on whether it’s actually working is much, much quicker,” he says.

Analytics, in turn, feeds into automation and AI.

“Because you’ve got analytics driving insights, and automation and AI in the platform, you’re able to decide on those elements you want to automate, and those from which you want to remove the human element,” Tucker says.

“Or you may wish to augment the human agent with automation. These approaches will drive efficiency, while also having a direct impact on improving customer experience and employee experience which are very closely linked.”

Analytics, AI and automation also enable one of the most exciting elements of Cloud solutions for contact centres: omnichannel routing.

Multichannel routing allows an organisation to communicate with customers via a range of platforms from phone to email to text, but by using omnichannel, a contact agent can, for example, start a conversation by chatbots, then move to phone, then continue the same interaction via the Web, or SMS, without losing the thread.

Cloud can bring together the diverse datasets involved in each medium to provide a seamless customer experience.

“It is not uncommon for customers to call an agent, and for the agent to discover the customer has already tried unsuccessfully to contact the company in many different ways,” Tucker says.

“A successful omnichannel approach will pull all the strands together giving the agent a thorough history of the customer interaction.”

The concept of omnichannel has been around for a decade or so, however, companies are still struggling to deliver on this due to disparate data systems and processes. A consolidated data approach within a Cloud platform enables them to deliver on their omnichannel strategy.

Demand for omnichannel exists on both sides of the transaction.

Governments are endeavouring to become more citizen-centric, and citizens, in turn, expect a personalised connection with services.

“With government organisations, the extra element is the potential impact of bad customer experience,” Tucker says.

“We’ve seen that across various government agencies, where one or two bad experiences become political fodder in the press.”



Benefits

Benefits

For governments, there are three basic benefits to migrating contact centres to the Cloud: improved customer experience, managing risk and data sovereignty, and managing costs. Elements such as omnichannel offer governments a new and improved way to interact with clients.

“A contact centre is all about client interaction,” NEC’s Craven says, “and this is so important for key government agencies dealing with significant numbers of public. It’s all about citizenship and citizen interaction, and improving their reputation.”

In the case of managing risk, there are elements unique to government that must be managed along the way.

The government sets stringent mandatory requirements for cybersecurity which are making their way into the Cloud. For example, data cannot be stored outside of Australia.

“We have product-as-a-service but the product that governments need is Security-as-a-Service. This is an emerging market for government,” NEC enterprise architect, Chris Fryer, says.

In traditional contact centre operations, compliance issues are inevitably overseen internally.

A Cloud-based system, on the other hand, offers a centralised platform for recording, archiving and managing calls and other data, and an easier way to stay compliant with legislation.

Similarly, governments speak a slightly different language from private enterprise when it comes to costs. For instance, there is no revenue element to speak of.

“Sometimes the concepts are the same as in the private sector, but the terminology tends to be different,” NICE Systems’ Tucker says.

“A contact centre is all about client interaction and this is so important for key government agencies dealing with significant numbers of public. It’s all about citizenship and citizen interaction, and improving their reputation.”

Donald Craven,
Account Director for the Australian Taxation Office (ATO),
NEC

Benefits

“If you are a government agency, you are probably less interested in revenue generation as a key element of customer experience. But on the cost side government departments are facing similar challenges to the private sector.”

Within government agencies, Fryer says there can be a confusion to what vendors can be used for certain services. The cyber.gov.au lists vendors that have been accredited in certain classifications.

“The government needs to demonstrate that all the requirements are being met and they are getting the most cost effective solution. Then finance will give it the go-ahead,” he says.

Craven says government needs to view Cloud as not necessarily a cost saving exercise.

“But the argument is going to be about how they’re going to manage their costs, and the flexibility and the speed of half the things they can do.”

Data management is a perpetual headache for contact centre managers, making non-Cloud omnichannel practically impossible to implement.

NEC’s Chryssikos says, **“It can be difficult to piece together the full intent of a customer query, or the emotion behind it. What NICE is doing is infusing their analytics across all the various modules in their platform. Delivering that on-premise could amount to years of work.”**

And there are other benefits such as workforce optimisation. Craven says an area which is not discussed enough is how the Cloud can help improve the finance function’s visibility and management of contact centres.

“You don’t have to manage it in the IT department,” he says. **“You can manage it in the procurement or finance department instead. When it is time to add a new service, the chief financial officer [CFO] will know exactly what it is going to cost. The Cloud environment gives you that flexibility and it is easier to manage in that environment. It is more efficient and potentially saves more cost.”**

Meanwhile, some of the burden of management will be shifted from the IT department, allowing it to become more productive.

Finally, Cloud solutions may help governments to alleviate some of the headaches around outsourced contact centre operations.

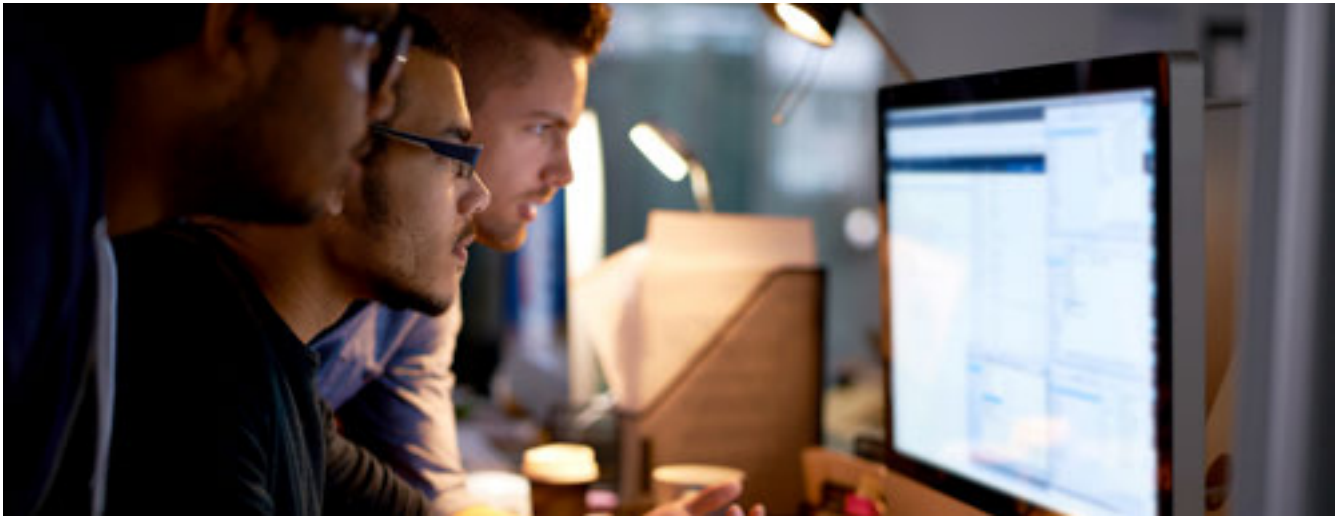
Outsourcing has been part of the landscape for more than a decade, leaving government departments with fewer skills in-house.

“Outsourcing gave agencies an initial cost-benefit, and maybe some operational benefits,” Tucker says. **“But over time, those benefits have been reduced. Now, with public Cloud, you are getting the benefit of economies of scale.”**



NEC's Solution

NEC's Solution



The CX Plus solution has been designed to provide industry best practice contact centre Cloud technology to governments.

It has been shown to have benefits in reducing time to value, improving customer experience and employee engagement, and increasing flexibility and security, while offering an easier way to manage costs.

“CX Plus is a public Cloud environment where upgrades just happen, several times a year,” according to Tucker.

“There’s no need to go and buy more CPUs to upgrade to the latest version. You are always at the latest version, which enables faster innovation. Organisations can say: ‘We’ve got voice, ACD, IVR, email and chat. But then in three months, we want to add in a WhatsApp channel and another social media channel.’ They can just switch that on, without having to worry about how to integrate it. It becomes part of the platform.”

Government agencies face many of the same challenges faced by private enterprises, NEC’s Chryssikos says.

“There’s a fear of the unknown – how do I get from here to there? What will the journey be like? Who’s going to take me there? We have the consulting expertise to help customers answer those questions. We’ve helped many customers move from on-premise to the Cloud because we have the whole business consulting practice behind us.”

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Gerry Tucker
Managing Director, ANZ,
NICE Systems.

Cloud Migration for Governments: Four Key Insights

Plan solutions that work within Commonwealth procurement rules.

You must be compliant with these rules, and understand what is obligatory versus what is desirable for government within the rule. You need to understand what value for money means to government agencies, and how they can achieve it. Governments have very specific requirements and approval processes for the Cloud.

Understand the client environment and how it applies to Cloud products and services.

There are big differences between government and corporate entities. It's important to look at what secure, certified, accredited government gateways there are, and to provide access as a service. Enterprise is different, you can start with just an internet connection.

Be aware of how the Cloud is funded.

In the private sector, there is one bottom line and it is a financial one. Government might seem attractive if everything is out to contract, but that's generally not the case. We want to influence the government's decision by providing insights but, also, we have to work within funding parameters. We might have to provide a product and not a service, or vice-versa. This will define whether we provide a hybrid or full Cloud.

Be conscious of government strategy on the Cloud. Is it policy-driven or financial?

Technology is less important. The strategy could be to introduce DevOps into the environment or it could be purely financially driven. This is a potential catalyst for discussion, but not the main issue.

Chris Fryer
Enterprise Architect
NEC Australia

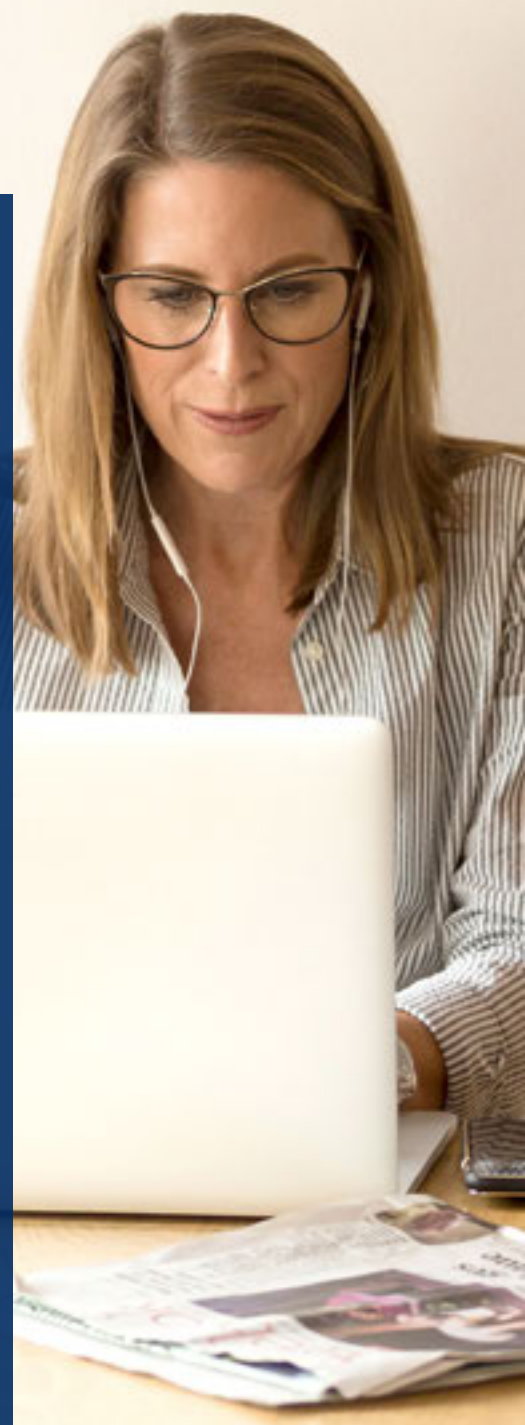
Conclusion

Migrating contact centres to the Cloud is not always a painless experience for government agencies. There are a myriad of regulatory issues to work within, new technologies to incorporate, new ways of thinking to adopt and some creaky legacy systems to dismantle.

All of this can take time and effort. However, the risk profile associated with Cloud migration is diminishing rapidly, and uptake is increasing, as governments seek to become more citizen-centric and offer their clients a better level of service.

Government departments are following the market in moving to the Cloud and seeing the advantages of being able to execute quickly on contact centre improvements rather than adopting piecemeal IT solutions.

“Increasingly CIOs come to the role with a Cloud-first strategy, they have left the baggage behind and they are ready to move,” Chryssikos says.



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