Public Cloud for Business Communications

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE

Mitel®
Powering connections

So you're considering public cloud for your business communications. You're not alone! In fact, more and more businesses are turning to cloud communications (a.k.a. hosted communications), as witnessed by its tremendous market growth of roughly 25 percent year over year.
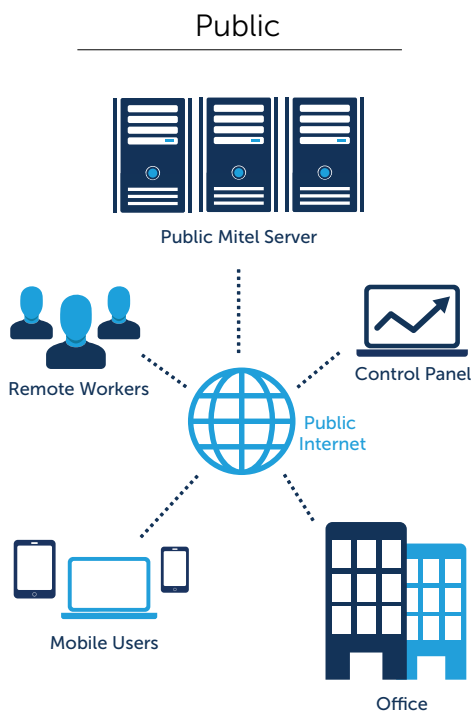
Why choose public cloud deployment for your communications? What do you need to know about public cloud? And what are the next steps on your path? Before diving in, you must have the answers to these key questions. That's why we've prepared this handy guide to take you through the basics of public cloud communications and what you need to know before taking the next step.

The advantages of a public cloud communications platform can be summed up in three words:

Simplicity: Your cloud provider manages all hardware and software, lessening your IT burden

Scale: You can add or remove users to scale up or down as your business needs change

Savings: Hosting your business communications via public cloud can largely reduce your capital expenditure.

Public

Public Mitel Server

Remote Workers

Control Panel

Public Internet

Mobile Users

Office

Facts about public cloud communications

- *Public cloud is the most popular of the cloud deployment models for communications, especially for growing businesses with less than 500 users.*

- *It can be easily procured on a per user per month basis and can be combined with private network connections, although it's often used over a basic Internet connection (also known as "over the top" (OTT) service).*

- *Most professional-grade cloud communications solutions include productivity-enhancing team collaboration and contact center features. They can also integrate with popular business applications, like the customer relationship management (CRM) tool, Salesforce.com.*

- *Public cloud communications offerings can be delivered with private networking for increased security and reliability. You can also leverage software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) to improve overall quality.*

Ways to connect to a public cloud communications system

There are two main ways of connecting to public cloud, so you have the freedom to choose based on your privacy, security and financial needs. As we break down the options below, keep in mind three main considerations in order to determine which model is right for you:

1. *Your call quality expectations*

2. *Your IT complexity comfort levels*

3. *Your budget and desired price point*

Public Internet connectivity, a.k.a. over the top (OTT)

OTT telecommunications providers deliver voice and video services to customers over public Internet connections, like business-grade DSL, E1/T1, etc. OTT can be ideal for growing organizations or connecting mobile and home-based employees. In fact, almost any organization will use some level of OTT service—for example, by a remote user working from home, in a hotel, or at a coffee shop. The majority of growing businesses choose this delivery method due to the low cost of leveraging the pre-existing public Internet connection.

OTT does have its drawbacks. For one, your call quality is only as good as your available bandwidth, meaning you're at the mercy of your organization's application usages, all users and any other strain on the network. For example, streaming services and undetectable malware can have a huge impact on your bandwidth and be wildly uncontrollable within even a small organization. This leads to inconsistencies in call quality experience and, for this reason, larger sites should carefully evaluate whether OTT will deliver the quality expected or required. The second challenge of OTT lies in establishing a completely secure connection which, depending on the sensitivity of your data, can be a deal-breaker.

Summary: The OTT delivery model is a great option for growing businesses that want to leverage their public Internet connectivity to host their business communications in the cloud. Be mindful of your organization's bandwidth to prevent loss of quality—a reputable vendor that has expertise in cloud communications can provide guidance and support.

Multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) networks

Companies use multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) in high-speed telecommunications networks to transport packets over virtual links. Data transmitted via MPLS contains known information about the network's topology, meaning it can be routed efficiently to its destination.

MPLS offers a more secure connection and high call quality, unsurprisingly making it a popular option for many businesses. Connecting multiple locations to an MPLS network can be more expensive than other options, making it best suited for larger organizations.

MPLS supports numerous access technologies, like:

- *T1/E1*
- *Asynchronous transfer mode (ATM)*
- *Frame relay*
- *Digital subscriber lines (DSLs)*

Some cloud communications providers offer MPLS networking as a fully integrated service that provides additional benefits. For example, quality of service (QoS) monitoring can help businesses ensure that voice and video traffic is always prioritized above other types of network traffic to ensure good quality and low latency.

This service also alleviates the burden of identifying different circuits, deciphering different invoice formats (even multiple invoices from the same provider), recognizing bill cramming or toll fraud—all responsibilities that require many hours of management attention each month.

However, not all service providers offer networking services – some won't even allow customer owned/managed links into their data centers – so you need to carefully evaluate different service provider options with your business requirements in mind.

Summary: With MPLS, you get high call quality, but it's often a more expensive investment best suited for larger organizations. Many service providers include MPLS services and guarantee the quality of service for their customers, significantly reducing management burdens.

Enhancing your public cloud connection with SD-WAN

With a new innovation, known as software-defined wide area networking (or SD-WAN), businesses can get the best of both the MPLS and OTT worlds: better quality at a lower cost. SD-WAN delivers these benefits by using one or multiple network connections, including a mixture of OTT and/or OTT with MPLS services, to better prioritize applications.

With SD-WAN, you get enterprise-grade performance, visibility and control over Internet broadband and private links. WAN traffic is automatically steered across the best links and most optimal paths. Dynamic multipath packets are steered to the optimal link based on performance metrics, application requirements, business priority of the application and link cost. This technology can create a virtual, high-bandwidth pipe from multiple, inexpensive broadband links and leased lines, providing businesses with improved WAN economics and quality.

The downside of SD-WAN is that it still relies on Internet connections that are vulnerable to congestion; however, you can mitigate this using multiple broadband connections. What's more, using broadband connections with different ISPs and/or different carriers provides a backup in case of an outage.

Summary: With SD-WAN, you can use inexpensive broadband connections to deliver an enterprise-grade experience. SD-WAN reviews and evaluates all network traffic, prioritizes applications and can switch circuits in nearly an instant to ensure data and call quality are handled as the highest priority.

Assessing your business requirements

Now that you've explored the different ways to connect to a public cloud communications platform, it's time to assess your organization's structure and requirements. Don't forget, there are always private or hybrid cloud options if you're not sure a public cloud deployment is the best fit for your business needs.

High-performance companies need high-performance solutions

When four-time Olympic gold medalist Michael Johnson opened Michael Johnson Performance (MJP), his goal was to help athletes maximize their athletic performance and abilities. Fulfilling this vision required keeping a staff of performance specialists, physical therapists, nutritionists and mental conditioning advisors in lockstep to aid athletes in reaching their goals.

Today, MJP is a model for organizational collaboration. Replacing an outdated communications system with a complete, end-to-end public cloud system, MJP was able to reach past the physical confines of its Dallas-based headquarters and connect its global organization seamlessly. With powerful unified communications and collaboration (UCC) features, employees could easily share content, centralize charts and manage projects from anywhere in the world. With real-time video capabilities, workers could do a whole slate of things remotely—including coaching, expert consultations and even help in assessing an injury.

"At MJP, we're committed to having the most effective technology available to help train athletes to achieve their best," says Michael Johnson, Olympic legend and founder, Michael Johnson Performance. "We also want to ensure our staff has access to advanced tools and resources that maximize efficiency in their day-to-day operations so everyone is actively involved in athlete success."

Watch the video to see how MJP is using public cloud to power its high-performance collaboration.

Here are the next steps to take on your way to public cloud communications:

1. EVALUATE YOUR BANDWIDTH

Do a speed test to assess your existing bandwidth and assess whether your current bandwidth provider is the right fit for a public cloud deployment.

2. ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS FOR CALL QUALITY

Develop standards for call quality in order to ensure you choose a carrier that meets your needs.

3. EXAMINE YOUR WORKFORCE TODAY AND CONSIDER YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Is your company growing? Are you expanding your global footprint? Do you have mobile or remote workers? Think about what your workforce looks like today, then consider your goals for the years to come—and pick a platform that can accommodate for both.

4. EXPAND YOUR VENDOR EXPECTATIONS

As you evaluate whether public cloud communications is the right choice for your business today, consider the future as well. Whether you want to test the waters slowly or dive right into a public cloud deployment, choose a platform that allows you to grow, change and potentially even switch deployment models altogether in the future. Ask your vendor questions about their data centers, service level agreements (SLAs) and the total value of their offering—what can they provide beyond dial tone that will enhance your business and, ultimately, your bottom line?

Your best path to cloud communications

There's a reason more subscribers choose Mitel for their cloud communications needs than any other brand. We work with customers to determine the best model for their unique business needs and implement a solution that delivers confidence and peace of mind, freeing you up to focus on your customers and your bottom line.

Your business communications are critical—that's why Mitel only uses top-tier data centers to offer the highest level of security and power for your cloud deployment, and a geo-redundant environment to reduce disruption in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

With public, private, and hybrid cloud deployment options, we offer a cloud deployment option tailored to your specific requirements today and designed to grow or change with your business to keep you covered in the future. And, no matter which model you choose, our expansive portfolio of customer experience, mobility and collaboration solutions provide a unified, comprehensive platform for your business communications.

Find out more

Contact us today to speak with an expert about your best path to the cloud. This guide contains excerpts from Cloud Communications For Dummies®. For a complimentary copy email TIG at info@ask-tig.com

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