



**Ultra Communications:  
Overview on Network  
and Hosted Solutions**

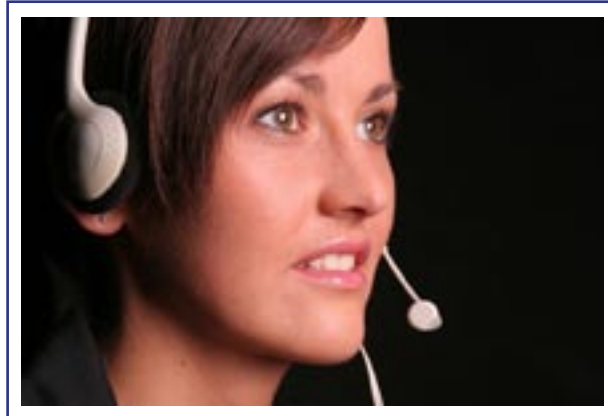
The Leading Provider of Network Contact Centre Solutions



*.. working in partnership with you*

*The market share for Network based and Hosted solutions has grown rapidly as a result of their strong value proposition and low cost of ownership.*

## OVERVIEW ON NETWORK AND HOSTED SOLUTIONS



### Introduction

Building an effective contact centre can be very expensive due to the capital expenditure required to purchase, install and integrate client premises-based technology (CPE).

For a number of years, there has been an alternative to the traditional approach of purchase and management of CPE Dialler and contact centre solutions, which have been somewhat gently marketed up to now by a variety of providers.

Viable solutions are provided by a mixture of the more traditional providers eager to provide a solution to meet all tastes, and companies dedicated to meeting this specific market place.

In general these solutions fall into one of two main areas; Network based or Hosted solutions – definition of these solutions - where a service provider owns and operates a contact centre technology platform and leases its services and features to end-users for a monthly or usage-based fee.

The target audience and the overall market share these providers have secured has been growing rapidly, fuelled in part by the effectiveness that these solutions have had the opportunity to prove. However, there remains much uncertainty about the potential advantages the differences between these solutions.

These models are gaining in popularity because of their strong value proposition and low cost of ownership.

While they share many similarities and benefits, they also have some intrinsic differences which can affect the potential gains of the users, depending on the primary reasons for choosing them.

Network Based solutions are marketed as solutions with dialling equipment physically located in multiple locations, permitting users to access the various services via a combination of the call centre's internet connection and the standard PSTN networks. They allow for total geographic independence and provide complete disaster recovery (DR) solutions for the client.

*The support offered by hosted/network providers is an essential factor now in the decision making process for businesses looking to the future. Superior providers offer fully managed monitoring as part of their services.*

Hosted solutions generally consist of the more traditional and understood CPE provided equipment, hosted at a site external to the operational contact centres, and adapted to permit access to be segmented and shared amongst many contact centres. Access to the Hosted solutions is generally provided by fixed access links installed specifically for the purpose, but can also be via connecting to existing private WAN networks.

Network and Hosted solutions need at least the same level of functionality as CPE type equipment, and there is no reason a good provider does not offer remote web-based access to authorised users. The real advantage is that as the system is managed remotely, the hosted/network supplier should be able to offer a much higher level of support to its users.

This differentiator also permits providers of hosted / network solutions to offer fully managed and supported services, with a few offering proactive monitoring. On a pay as you talk tariff, there is clear synergy in between the call centre and the dialler solution provider to ensure the system is fully operation, and is configured to operate at the optimum level.

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### **What type of companies make good candidates for Hosted and Network solutions?**

- Small and medium business, especially those needing rapidly deployable, easy-to-use services, such as enhanced routing.
- Any size company looking to start a contact centre - outbound, inbound or both or move at low risk, or increase size for a temporary campaign.
- Any size company looking to provide or leverage the advantages of a multi-site capability.
- Enterprises that desire advanced contact centre functionality and are interested in acquiring a complete solution as a service.
- Businesses needing contact centre business continuity plans.
- Businesses needing to quickly expand and contract for peak seasons/traffic/campaigns.
- Enterprises with CTI functionality today who wish to enhance enterprise functionality with network call queuing and network routing or other components such as outbound, call blending, workforce management, Internet or web functionality.
- Any size company wishing to gain access to technology with uncertain potential gains, such as call blending, and call me back services.



*Hosted & Network solutions offer businesses the opportunity to deal with operating costs rather than capital expenditure.*

Put simply, whether delivered by customer premise equipment (CPE) solutions, by hosted or network systems, or a mixture of both, enterprises always demand control, choice and intelligence in a financial framework that is acceptable.

Hosted & Network solutions offer businesses the opportunity to deal with operating costs rather than capital expenditure which will always get a positive hearing at the budget-holder level of a business, although some providers can also offer leasing options.

The bottom line is that a successful Hosted & Network solution should offer everything a business could achieve with CPE, but yet be available on a pay-per-use or pay-as-you-talk basis (per minute or second / call / month, etc), be scalable and reliable, and offer easily-added functionality if required.

While these solutions already offer some inherent benefits provided by their design such as simpler DR (Disaster Recovery) planning, their providers also have the ability and should offer functionality and managed services that would not be possible with CPE. By the very nature of providing a service on equipment based external to the contact centre, the real time activity of that operation can be monitored. A good provider will be able to offer the service to monitor, and advise on the use, management, configuration and results achieved while using their services. As the supplier / manufacturer, they should be best placed to supply answers, support and advice on the best configurations of the dialling platforms.

### **Main differences between Network and Hosted solutions**

- Network based can arrange solutions to be integrated and live in days, as no specialized on site equipment or dedicated connections are required. This reduces project times and costs, and allows business to react to requirements far quicker.
- Network systems being available in days are very cost effective option, and the only requirements are IP connectivity and phone lines – something a normal contact centre would already have in their infrastructure. Hosted solutions will require a complete change in the connection between the centre and the hosted solution provider's equipment and may take longer therefore to integrate.
- Network solutions permit a substantially reduced telephony and switch infrastructure. Automated Call Distribution (ACD) functionality is controlled via the network and inbound calls are routed through a variety of selected rules and then using a script application 'pops' the agents screen with all information collected from the call.
- Network solutions can provide back-up DR protection to centres with on-site CPE, as reserve protection - although indeed, a good network solution provides a high level of DR integrally, and thus businesses employing them primarily should not require additional DR cover.



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- Superior network solutions do provide their solutions as managed services. These offer the added benefit of complete management support for the supervisor and centre. The network provider is incentivised to ensure that the centre is working at optimum productivity levels, unlike on-site providers.
- Network systems allow for shared services, especially across larger contact centre sites. This gives access to more functions, for less cost and better productivity.

### **Frequently asked questions (FAQs) to pose to a Network or Hosted Provider**

Important questions need to be asked of any potential Contact Centre technology provider before making the decision to start or indeed move over to another provider. These are listed for guidance and some particular questions specific to choosing a network or hosted partner have been included. There are various important areas to include: your required time to implement and delivery time for your business need, the guidance through the implementation, the infrastructure needs and demand on your business resource:

#### **Implementation Requirements**

- How long and complicated is a typical implementation?
- Are there additional support and service expenses?
- What support is provided to the centre and staff?
- What training is included within the set-up for everyone involved?

#### **Providers' Background and Experience**

- What is their history and experience working with contact centre operations?
- Are the solutions provided theirs or provided by a third party – what happens when you want new functionality if not?
- Can the company provide client references?
- How many seats are currently in use and where, and what the solutions are used by their clients?
- Can the company provide examples of set-ups and use this experience with you?

#### **Infrastructure Considerations**

- What are the minimum requirements needed to start and will this involve upgrades of all the existing contact centre systems?
- How much resource will need to re-directed within the centre to start – IT and Telephony team time?
- Is there additional hardware or software to install on-site?
- What bandwidth and reliability issues should we address with our ISP?
- Are there additional costs required to integrate additional solutions in the future and existing back office applications now?



## Data Protection and Access

- Can you access your data outside of the provided contact centre environment (e.g. sales or marketing queries and reports)? What remote tolls are provided and do they cost extra?
- How is your data separated from other clients' data?
- How does the provider return data to you at the end of the agreement?
- How does the centre integrate their local data and applications with the hosted application?

## Network/Hosting Environment

- What tools are given to help maintain control, minimise business risk, and maximise service quality?
- Does the provider give 24x7 monitoring and support?
- Superior providers give performance and campaign support – do they? Where are they based and is it included?
- What is included in the Service Level Agreements and does this include reliability and availability?
- What business continuity and disaster recovery procedures are in place and are they included?

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### Ultra Communications

Ultra Communications are the leading provider of Pay-As-You-Talk, Network contact centre services, including Predictive Dialling, Inbound/Call Blending/IVR and Voice Recording. The non-geographic nature of our services supports home-working and multiple-site operations. Ultra are fully Ofcom compliant, and are a complete Disaster Recovery, risk-free solution.

Ultra record over 3 million agent talk time minutes per month and have an established, long-term customer base.

For more information, visit <http://www.UltraASP.net>.

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