9 Reasons to Make the Move to a Cloud Contact Center

Discover how shifting from an on-premise contact center can transform operations, contain costs, and improve customer and agent satisfaction.
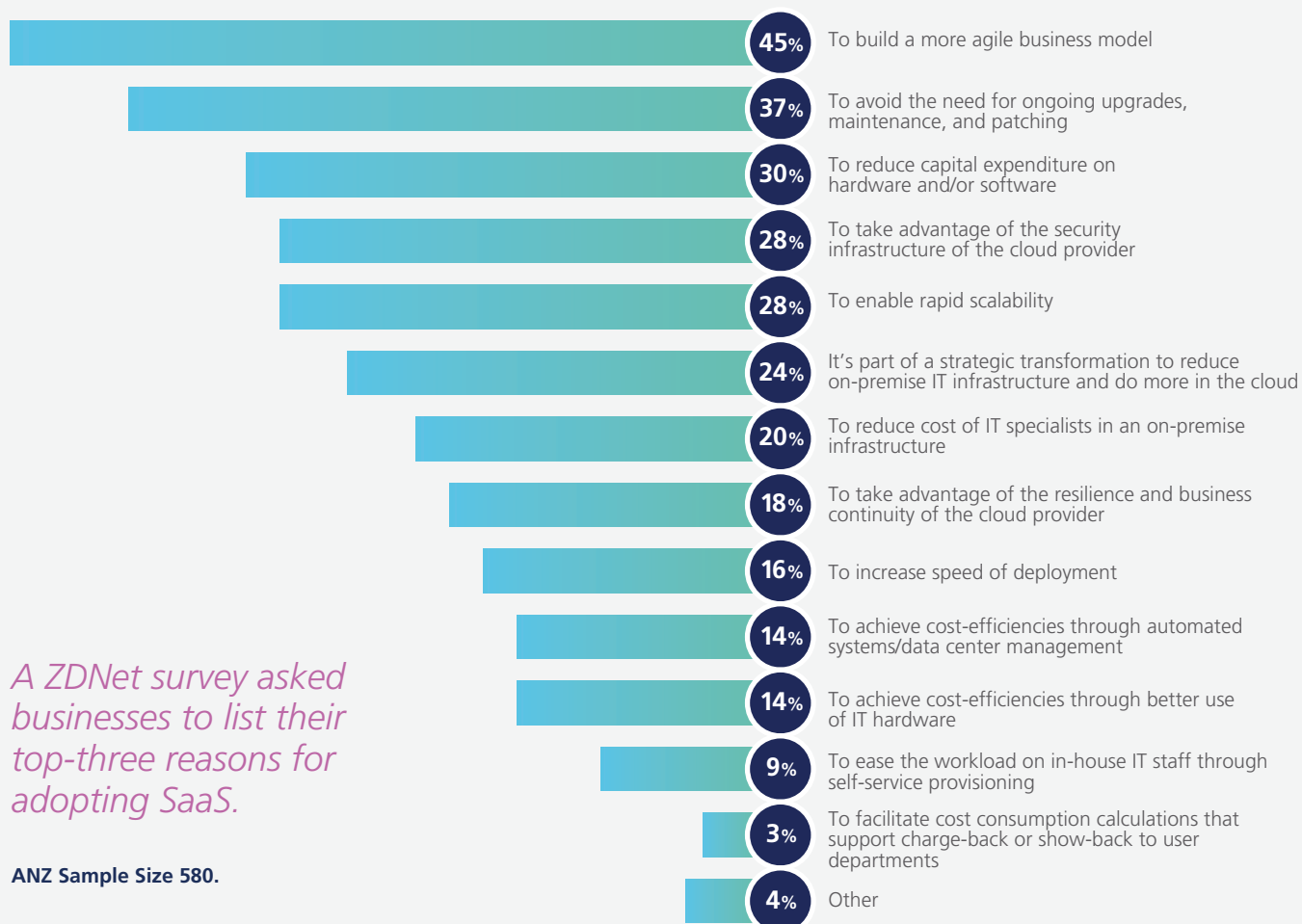
What a Maturing Cloud Means for Your Contact Center

It's become abundantly clear that the cloud is no longer the future—but the new normal. Enterprises rely on cloud computing for web-based meetings, email, file sharing, and more every day to reduce costs and administrative burdens while enhancing productivity.

With the wealth of benefits to be gained by moving to the cloud—including speed of deployment, cost-efficiencies, and easy scaling—it's no wonderthe shift toward all things virtual has been so pervasive and swift. What's more, as the cloud has matured, the potential drawbacks that once made enterprises hesitant to make the move are disappearing. Security is now robust, application integration happens with ease, and reliability is a given, not a question mark.

So now that the cloud has become not just viable, but essential, to stay competitive in a rapidly changing world, it's time to explore how the cloud can significantly improve your contact center operations. This paper will provide one compelling reason after another for why now is the time to begin moving your contact center to the cloud.

A ZDNet survey asked businesses to list their top-three reasons for adopting SaaS.

ANZ Sample Size 580.

%	Reason
45%	To build a more agile business model
37%	To avoid the need for ongoing upgrades, maintenance, and patching
30%	To reduce capital expenditure on hardware and/or software
28%	To take advantage of the security infrastructure of the cloud provider
28%	To enable rapid scalability
24%	It's part of a strategic transformation to reduce on-premise IT infrastructure and do more in the cloud
20%	To reduce cost of IT specialists in an on-premise infrastructure
18%	To take advantage of the resilience and business continuity of the cloud provider
16%	To increase speed of deployment
14%	To achieve cost-efficiencies through automated systems/data center management
14%	To achieve cost-efficiencies through better use of IT hardware
9%	To ease the workload on in-house IT staff through self-service provisioning
3%	To facilitate cost consumption calculations that support charge-back or show-back to user departments
4%	Other

Increase Capability, Not CapEx

Think about what it takes to keep your customers happy and your service agents productive. Flawless IVR and speech recognition. Automated call routing. Integrated screen pops that deliver the right data to your customer service reps along with the call. Intelligent outbound dialing. Blended contact functionality for seamless toggling between inbound and outbound calling as well as chat, email, and social. Call recording and workforce management. Integrated training, coaching, and supervisory monitoring options. And complete CRM integration.

In an on-premise contact center, these demands take a toll on limited budgets and the IT resources needed to acquire and maintain the infrastructure, and to keep it all working together. And not surprisingly, the more contact center locations you have, the greater the complications. Receiving consolidated reports across centers, for example, can be a real nightmare when technology stacks differ even slightly—a highly probable scenario given that each site deploys upgrades and new equipment on its own schedule.

See Physical Resource Requirements Plummet

Unlike on-premise contact centers, with the cloud your service team isn't constrained by the hardware and software available at a specific location. Instead, agents, supervisors, and administrators simply need access to a web browser to deliver consistent, state-of-the-art customer service.

The cloud service provider, not you, takes care of all the phone lines, software and hardware upgrades, security, and backups. What's more, scaling up capacity requires only a phone call, not an investment in more boxes, and can be accomplished almost immediately instead of waiting for IT to fit another install into its already overburdened schedule.

This ability to shed hardware and a physical footprint—and all of the maintenance and management that go with them—is one of the most significant advantages that cloud-based contact centers have over their on-premise counterparts.

All of these advantages are achieved without capital expenditure. The beauty of the "Service" in Software as a Service means that you pay a monthly expense out of your operating expense budget, no CapEx required.

Why Hybrid Solutions Are Inadequate

You don't want to defeat the purpose of moving to the cloud by choosing a service provider that offers only a hosted version of premise-based software. This could leave you still in need of on-premise session border controllers, gateways, and other equipment.

Likewise, moving to an IP-based contact center won't deliver full cloud advantages, because you'll still need to build out and maintain a large data center and IP network.

For a true cloud contact center, look for a service provider that leverages cloud ecosystems, bundles telephony with its service, and grants access to agents via a standard web browser.

Speed Deployment Without the Risk

Let's face it, the service-level expectations of today's customers are going nowhere but up—which means improving contact center performance has never been more critical. But upgrading on-premise systems to meet these demands can take many months. And these long lead times to configure, secure, integrate, test, optimize, and customize your hardware and software can drive dissatisfied customers to your competitors—negatively impacting your bottom line.

Even after you've completed an upgrade, there's no guarantee that your on-premise contact center will be capable of doing everything you need it to, especially since satisfying customer expectations is becoming increasingly complex.

Get a Proven Solution in a Fraction of the Time

With cloud-based contact center software, since Internet connectivity and a standard web browser are all that's required for agents to do their jobs, you won't need to acquire, install, or maintain mountains of hardware. And as costs decrease, so do risks because you'll be implementing a fully tested solution from day one.

Configuring a cloud solution can be radically faster than an on-premise solution, thanks to intuitive management tools, including pre-built connectors and open-standards tools that integrate your CRM with customized or in-house software. In just a few days, you can have a cloud contact center with an IVR, ACD, predictive outbound dialing, and blended inbound and outbound capabilities. More elaborate setups, such as multiple communication channels, organizational units, and campaigns require only weeks—and deeper integrations and customization up to a few months depending on your needs.

And cloud solutions give you the flexibility to adjust at will, freeing you from the configuration lock-in that is common with on-premise solutions. This means new features and enhancements can be added on the fly to increase agility and market competitiveness.

Cloud contact centers are designed to help your team maintain peak efficiency and effectiveness, since everyone is working with the same software version, regardless of location. This uniformity helps you consistently deliver the heightened level of service your customers expect.

> I've been involved in other on-premise solutions, and it's a lot of effort…it takes anywhere from six months to two years to implement.
>
> I would recommend going with the best-in-class cloud solution.
>
> Chittaranjan Desai
> *Director of Central Applications and Support*
> **Siemens**

Attract and Retain Top Talent by Enabling Remote Work

Your customer service is only as good as the agents who deliver it. Since a service representative is often the first contact customers have with your brand, it's vital to employ and retain top talent capable of performing at a level that reinforces the image your company is trying to project.

With on-premise contact centers it can be extremely complicated to enable work-at-home agents—making it harder to attract skilled representatives who don't wish to relocate or prefer to work off-site. If you do attempt to grant access to remote workers, it's both time-consuming and costly since you have to extend physical technology all the way to off-premise agent sites.

Onboard Remote Workers with Ease

Cloud contact center infrastructures are virtual by definition. With nothing to install or maintain on individual computers, you can get a remote agent—or remote supervisor or manager—set up in a matter of minutes.

Cloud software is also location-agnostic, so features such as routing, call monitoring, and call blending can operate independently of physical sites without complex coding.

The ease with which you can bring remote workers on-board makes it financially and operationally feasible to deploy employees based on their specific skills, not their location. That translates into an infinitely larger talent pool to draw upon, allowing you to assemble the optimal team for your unique needs. Remote agents can also augment those in physical locations, helping you ramp up for seasonal sales or new marketing campaigns and easily span all time zones for 24/7 contact center coverage.

In short, the cloud gives you far greater flexibility when it comes to agent recruitment and retention—a significant advantage in today's competitive landscape.

30% INCREASE

Retention rates for remote agents are 30% greater compared to on-premise agents.

Service Continuity: Another Advantage of Remote Agents

Devastating tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, and building fires can temporarily interrupt on-premise customer service operations—or worse yet, bring them to a complete halt. But remote agents who are geographically dispersed mean you'll always have representatives outside of the affected area who can stay connected and continue to serve your customers.

Align Capacity with Elastic Demand Quickly and Efficiently

It's a challenge that has existed as long as contact centers have been in existence: coping with interaction volumes that are constantly in a state of flux. These swings can be due to seasonal sales, new campaigns, product upgrades, or other factors that can send volumes surging—or bad news, natural disasters, or slowdowns that cause demand to plunge. These spikes and dips often come without warning, making it difficult to align resources with changes.

That's especially true with on-premise contact centers. It takes so long to add software seats, phone lines, and the agents who will use them, that it's nearly impossible to ramp up on demand. And making purchases based on worst-case scenarios can exhaust your budget on equipment that sits idle during slower times. Missed opportunities and wasted resources can easily become the status quo because of the inflexibility of your physical infrastructure.

Pay As You Grow for Just-in-Time Efficiencies

A major benefit of cloud contact centers is that they can scale almost instantly. With a single phone call, you can adjust both your resources and costs in mere hours. That's because cloud vendors already have everything in place, ready to launch when necessary. Intelligent, highly automated tools facilitate the rapid setup of seats and phone lines—at a reasonable and predictable cost.

Because you pay only for what you need when you need it, there's no need to guess at peak capacity or slack times, allowing you to seize sales and customer service opportunities when they arise—while eliminating the wastefulness inherent in on-premise centers.

10.9% DECREASE

Contact centers using cloud technology report an average 10.9% annual decrease in service costs.

Source: Cloud Contact Center: Customer-Centricity with Greater Agility & Less Cost, Aberdeen Group, July 2017.

Eliminate In-house Software Upgrades

Since it's always imperative to boost agent productivity, improve customer satisfaction, and equip supervisors for success, it's natural to try to keep your software updated with the latest features, capabilities, and performance enhancements. But upgrading on-premise software comes at a price.

Beyond the monetary costs, there's the inconvenience of having to install upgrades across the network, on every server and individual workstation. These time-consuming and highly complex processes can monopolize expensive IT resources for months. In the meantime, you have agents working with different versions of the software, which can result in problems and confusion.

Shift Upgrade Costs and Complexity to Your Provider

Cloud contact center software is implemented and maintained in the cloud, making the upgrade process invisible to your staff. New features and capabilities are added—after being thoroughly tested—behind the scenes so there are no disruptions to your agents or operations. Once your cloud contact center provider completes an upgrade, agents have instant access to it the next time they open their web browser and log in. This allows your extended team to always work with the same software version, regardless of physical location, leading to tighter integration, enhanced service continuity, and improved reporting.

Cloud service providers operate on a pay-as-you-go basis, so their success hinges on continually improving solutions and offering leading-edge technology. Their customers get new features sooner, without the cost, frustrations, and lag times inherent in on-premise upgrades. And that translates into greater agent productivity, more efficient operations, and highly satisfied customers.

> What happens often with an on-premise solution is that after a year or two, so much custom development has been done that the products become unstable. They are unsupported. Upgrades become extremely painful.
>
> Marc Flaum
> *Senior Information Architect*
> **Citrix Systems**

Accelerate Application Integration and Customization

Of course, contact center software doesn't operate in a vacuum. It has to integrate with other business-critical software, or agents can't navigate among multiple applications and data sources to uncover the necessary information to assist customers. But bringing together CRM, billing, finance, and other solutions to provide a seamless experience for agents is easier said than done.

As we've noted elsewhere, integration in a physical contact center is error-prone, time-consuming, and costly. And valuable IT resources can be tied up for months performing repetitive tasks instead of putting their skills to better use.

Leverage Automated Tools to Bring Contact Centers Online Faster

On-premise IT teams often spend significant time getting things up and running whenever a new application is added to the mix. But cloud solution vendors employ experts whose only job is to perform these integrations for customers. This gives them insight into the data-sharing and workflow automation required by enterprises like yours—whether that be screen pops, account histories, click-to-dial, on-demand information such as billing and shipping, or other tasks.

The sheer volume of successful integrations conducted by cloud providers has led to intelligent, highly automated tools that allow their customers to set up new contact centers with impressive agility. Here are some of the tools available to help your IT team quickly build connections between applications and your cloud contact center infrastructure:

- **Pre-built integrations.** If you use leading CRM solutions—Salesforce.com, Oracle RightNow, NetSuite, and other popular products—chances are good that you can start to enhance productivity in just hours with customer data sharing and workflow automation.

- **Open application programming interfaces.** APIs make it easier to get your in-house CRM and other apps such as billing, shipping, and inventory to interoperate with your cloud contact center.

These tools also help you complete customizations efficiently, or swap out CRM and other systems whenever the need arises, without worrying about lengthy integration projects.

> A core part of our business is processing leads we receive from our website and getting them onto the dialer. It's highly important that we're contacting prospective customers as quickly as they're requesting us to.
>
> Lee Hasson
> *Director of Business Intelligence*
> **Open English**

Gain Greater Security at a Fraction of the Cost

It's frequently headline news today: Enterprises that handle credit card and bank account numbers, health data, or other sensitive customer information are particularly attractive targets for cyber criminals. Like them, you've likely gathered a tremendous amount of information about your customers that you'd prefer to keep out of the hands of unscrupulous competitors. These potential vulnerabilities make protecting your contact center information of the utmost importance, as a security breach can mean not just a financial loss but loss of reputation as well. And since security technologies and protocols are always evolving, it can be a real challenge ensuring your defenses are current.

Illicit activity isn't the only threat you face. Issues such as a flood in your data center or an electrical problem that ruins your encryption servers can be just as disruptive to operations and costly to remedy.

Benefit from Economies of Scale

Cloud contact centers have to offer the highest levels of security available to avoid losing customers, so they pour vast sums of money into hiring security experts and developing tools that protect every layer of the cloud infrastructure. Cloud vendors also stay up to date on the latest protective protocols and trends to ensure that your customer data always remains safe.

Here's how they protect sensitive data that passes across the cloud infrastructure:

- **Design.** Geographically redundant network operations centers protect mission-critical systems with measures like fully redundant subsystems, compartmentalized security zones, intrusion detection, vulnerability management, and biometric access controls. The centers, which operate 24/7, comply with the highest levels of security-industry standards and are linked together via highly secure VPN/MPLS connections.

- **Expertise.** Cloud providers employ teams of security professionals whose only job is to safeguard customer data. These professionals also achieve third-party certifications to ensure their knowledge base is thorough and current.

- **Transparency.** Sophisticated cloud security standards such as the Security, Trust & Assurance Registry from the Cloud Security Alliance, encourage greater transparency among cloud providers, keeping users fully aware of what they're doing to protect data.

As a result, you get state-of-the-art technology, vast expertise, and unwavering vigilance that far surpass what your enterprise could achieve on its own—without assuming the enormous financial burden that comes with this top-tier security.

> Our research finds the cloud is more secure than most data centers and it's safer.
>
> Daryl Plummer
> *Vice President*
> **Gartner**

Enjoy Single-Vendor Simplicity

Building an on-premise contact center is highly complex, with all of the hardware, networking components, layers of software, security, phone lines, and services that go into it. Then there's the building itself, plus electrical, cabling, and HVAC to consider.

But the real complications arise from bringing together all these components—supplied by a multitude of vendors—and getting them to work in harmony. Especially since contact center designs are never static and new boxes, applications, and other components always need to be added or swapped out.

Experience Greater Convenience and Cost-Effectiveness

Cloud contact centers let you skip the months of compatibility research, installation, configuration, testing, and extensive training required by a physical site. Your cloud vendor, and the ecosystem of technology partners they engage, provide everything you need. What's more, the entire solution has been validated to work in other installations before your cloud infrastructure ever launches.

Many vendors bundle their services and capabilities to make solutions more cost-efficient. Bundles can include inbound and outbound telephony, including long-distance, local, and toll-free numbers. You can also find full-featured solutions with sophisticated capabilities that help increase agent productivity and effectiveness, provide quality assurance, and include best-practices management tools.

By choosing an all-in-one vendor that bundles the services you need, you can expand your current contact center operations or roll out new cloud centers quickly and without the headaches of on-premise sites.

What to Look for in a Cloud Contact Center Vendor

Here's a handy checklist of features to consider when evaluating and comparing potential cloud service providers:

- ✓ Complete telephony services, including local, long-distance, and 800 numbers
- ✓ Local ID for outbound dialing
- ✓ Automatic call distribution (ACD)
- ✓ Computer telephony integration (CTI)
- ✓ Interactive voice response (IVR) and speech recognition
- ✓ Agent desktop applications
- ✓ Call-blending capabilities
- ✓ Supervisor monitoring and coaching
- ✓ Outbound dialers, including predictive, preview, and progressive
- ✓ Additional communication channels, such as email, chat, and social
- ✓ Workforce management
- ✓ Recording and quality monitoring
- ✓ Pre-formatted, ready-to-run reports
- ✓ Custom reporting capabilities
- ✓ Intuitive dashboards
- ✓ Self-service administration for moves, adds, and changes
- ✓ Agent script-building capabilities
- ✓ Telephone Consumer Protection Act compliance for outbound operations
- ✓ Omnichannel capabilities, including phone, chat, email, and more

Free Up IT Resources for More Strategic Initiatives

One of the realities of on-premise contact centers is that nothing happens quickly. It's not that IT isn't willing or doesn't have the skills to implement IVR scripts, adjust call flow and routing strategies, or help launch and optimize new campaigns. IT teams simply don't have the time.

Supporting your contact center may be only one of IT's responsibilities. Even if you have a dedicated IT team for your center, configuring, updating, repairing, and swapping out ever-changing technology can exhaust more hours than there are in the workweek.
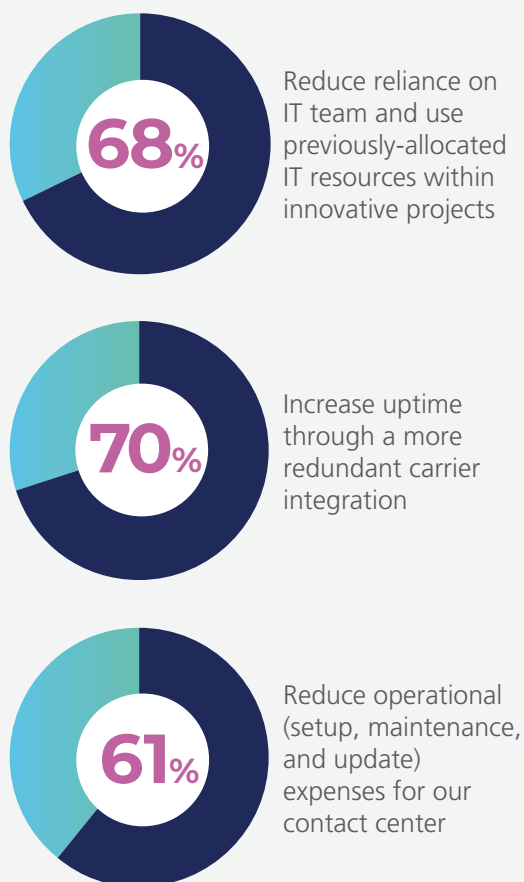
Obviously, you can't put your business on hold while you're waiting for IT support. So call routing, workforce management, and reporting can all suffer. Worse yet, delays can cost you revenue and customer loyalty.

Place Contact Center Control in Business Users' Hands

Cloud contact center infrastructures are specifically designed to be easy for your agents, managers, and supervisors to manage and use—no technological expertise required. Graphical point-and-click tools replace cryptic codes that demand specialized knowledge. This level of intuitiveness allows you to define and launch campaigns, upload and manage call lists, create skills-based routing, monitor operations, produce and refine reports, even adjust blending parameters on the fly—all without assistance from IT. And your IT team can then move on to more strategic initiatives.

Moving your contact center to the cloud doesn't mean transferring control from IT to a technology vendor. It means putting control directly into the hands of your contact center team—which can lead to a better-performing contact center.
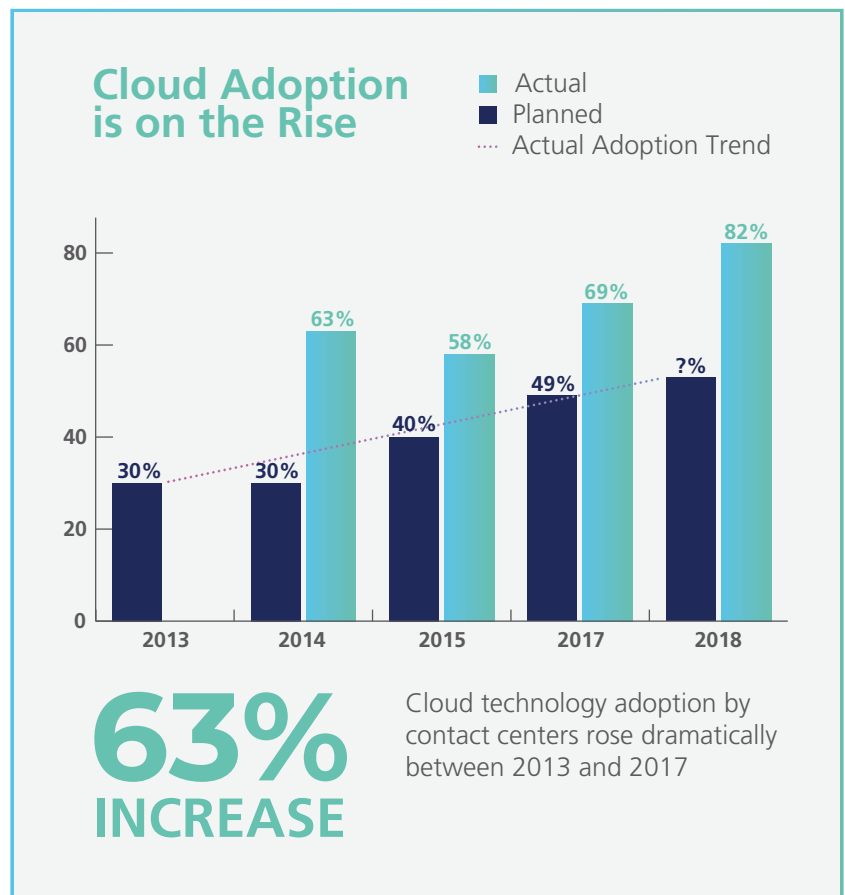
What Makes Contact Centers Invest in Cloud Technology

68% Reduce reliance on IT team and use previously-allocated IT resources within innovative projects

70% Increase uptime through a more redundant carrier integration

61% Reduce operational (setup, maintenance, and update) expenses for our contact center

Source: Cloud Contact Center: Customer-Centricity with Greater Agility & Less Cost, Aberdeen Group, July 2017.

Gain the Strategic Advantages of a Cloud Infrastructure

Throughout this paper, we've outlined the financial and operational reasons for shifting your on-premise contact centers to the cloud. We've shown how this strategic move can reduce hardware costs, speed deployment, enable agents to work remotely, streamline upgrades, accelerate application integration, scale up or down on demand, boost security, eliminate multi-vendor headaches, and free up IT resources.

With so much to gain, it's to your advantage to begin looking at migrating your on-premise contact center operations to the cloud.

Cloud Adoption is on the Rise

■ Actual
■ Planned
···· Actual Adoption Trend

Year	Planned	Actual
2013	30%	
2014	30%	63%
2015	40%	58%
2017	49%	69%
2018	?%	82%

63% INCREASE

Cloud technology adoption by contact centers rose dramatically between 2013 and 2017

Source: Cloud Contact Center: Customer-Centricity with Greater Agility & Less Cost, Aberdeen Group, July 2017.