

# THE MODERN CONTACT CENTER: FINDING VALUE IN CLOUD-FIRST, API-DRIVEN MODELS

*A No Jitter Industry Insights Report*



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## Executive Summary

Many contact center operators find themselves at a crossroads. They must find ways of increasing agility, and running more efficiently and cost effectively. They've got to dig themselves out of the past and propel themselves into the future. And this they must do amid a rapidly changing market. As providers consolidate, contact center operators can face uncertainty about ongoing iteration and support for their installed products. Managing a traditional contact center has never been more challenging.

Fortunately, the use of cloud-delivered applications and cloud-resident infrastructure and platforms for core business requirements has continued trending upwards and moving upmarket. Uptake of cloud communications, including contact center functionality, is no exception. In alignment with emerging corporate strategies prioritizing cloud options, organizations of all sizes increasingly are finding value in migrating from outdated, inflexible, and complex on-premises contact center systems and tools to cloud-based contact center software.

## The Modern Contact Center: Finding Value In Cloud-First, API-Driven Models

If you ask consumers to describe a contact center operation, the images they'd conjure up undoubtedly would include headset-crowned agents toiling away at desktop computers in private little cubicles lined up one row after the next. What they wouldn't consider are all the backend processes that go into making that contact center hum — the call volume forecasting, inbound call routing, IVR call flow mapping, multichannel coordination, account verification, problem escalation, workforce management, and so on. Also escaping notice, beyond the phones and computers, is the collection of hardware and software supporting all of these and the many other workflows of today's contact centers. And never mind that many contact centers no longer operate in that “big room of agents” model but rather rely on a network of far-flung agents working from their homes and other remote locations. That's all OK, because no matter how complex the backend operation, the goal is to present a great experience, with the customer none the wiser about all the pieces that must fit into place to make that happen.

### Challenge of the Traditional Contact Center

Of course, maintaining smooth and seamless operations is no easy task for the enterprise. To be effective, today's contact centers must meet customers where they want to be met — be that on the phone, via the Web, through email or a chat interface, or in a video call. With each channel has come yet another internal system to manage, tool to integrate, workflow to support, data set to cull, and report to produce, as well as more training to conduct and workforce skills to manage. In many cases, contact centers end up having evolved into overly complex, multivendor environments that are not only difficult but also costly to support and manage. Security problems can arise, and performance can suffer. On the other hand, some contact centers find themselves so tied to legacy systems, processes, and reporting that they're paralyzed by the idea of moving forward. Many contact centers have become too rigid, tied to inflexible workflows and reporting processes, as well as outdated systems and tools. Unable to keep up to date on process improvements, they've lost their ability to adapt quickly to changing business requirements.

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With these types of scenarios all too common, many contact center operators find themselves at a crossroads. They must find ways of increasing agility, and running more efficiently and cost effectively. They've got to dig themselves out of the past and propel themselves into the future. And this they must do amid a rapidly changing market. As providers

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Such a move can prove a win for the three key contact center stakeholders:

- ▶ Contact center managers looking to simplify their environments while maintaining a high level of availability and keeping pace with the state of the art
- ▶ IT executives wanting to consolidate tools and increase agility
- ▶ Financial managers watching the budget with an eye toward reduced capital outlays and a goal of shifting the contact center from cost center to profit center

Consider results from No Jitter Research's 2016 Cloud Communications Survey, conducted in late August and early September. This survey assessed the attitudes of the No Jitter audience about using cloud services to meet enterprise communications needs. All but a handful of survey respondents — 226 out of 255 enterprise respondents — acknowledged the benefits of using cloud communications, regardless of whether their particular organizations had made the move from the premises to the cloud yet. The three most compelling factors they cited were:

- ▶ Reduced total cost of ownership (TCO) compared to premises-based solutions
- ▶ Agility — meaning, the ability to add features, functions, and/or users quickly to respond to business needs
- ▶ System resiliency/disaster recovery

What's more, concern over adequacy of features and functionality is not a significant issue for respondents whose organizations aren't using cloud communications services yet. Rather, nearly half of these respondents name security (40%) and loss of enterprise control (17%) as the primary reasons their organizations have opted not to use cloud communications at this point. When respondents were given the opportunity to answer an open-ended question about why they weren't using cloud, "corporate policy" surfaced repeatedly as a mitigating factor.

## The Cloud Contact Center Opportunity

Overall, half of the 255 survey respondents use a hosted cloud communications service, with almost one third already housing or planning to house their contact center in the cloud in the next 12 months. Specifically, 22% of respondent organizations rely on cloud-hosted ACD/call center/contact center capabilities, while 10% are set to bring on those capabilities in next 12 months. In addition, No Jitter Research survey results clearly show all sizes of operations are turning to the cloud. While the greatest number of agents in cloud-based contact centers falls in the 1-to-499 range (60%), one-third of respondents have between 500 and 9,999 agents. (A fraction of respondents indicate they have more than 10,000 agents in the cloud.)

## How Many Contact Center Agents in the Cloud?

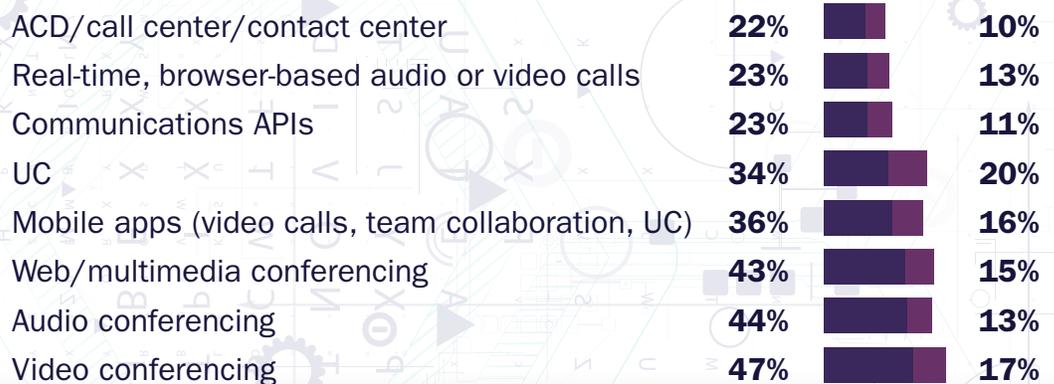


No. of respondents = 106

As the No Jitter survey shows, enterprises are increasingly trusting the cloud for all of their communications workloads, with video conferencing (47%), audio conferencing (44%), and Web conferencing (43%) being most in use at respondent organizations today. These are followed by mobile applications, for capabilities like video calling and team collaboration, in use among 36% of respondents. The use of traditional enterprise communications services in the cloud is on the rise among this group, with nearly two-thirds of these respondents indicating their organizations intend to bring on additional functionality into the cloud in the next year. For example, 34% of respondents already use cloud-based

## Which Functions Are Hosted in the Cloud Today?

*Two-thirds of respondents already use or plan to use cloud contact center services in the next 12 months*



No. of respondents = 128

unified communications services (IM/presence, conferencing, voice and video calling) and another 20% who don't said they will be adding such functionality within the next 12 months. Likewise, 28% get PBX/call control functions from the cloud; 11% will do so within the next 12 months.

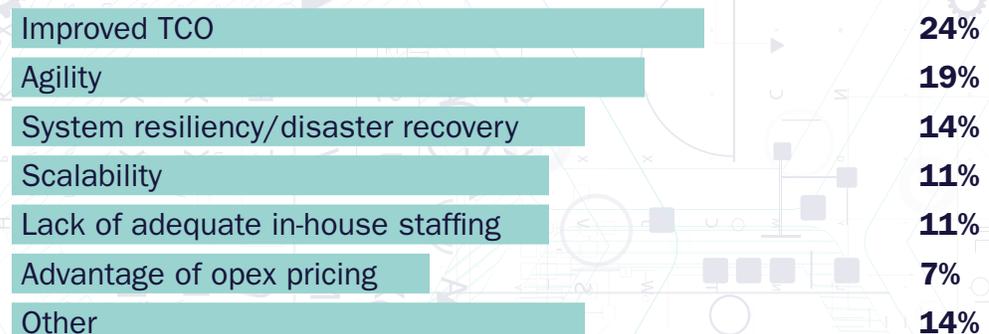
## Selecting a Cloud Contact Center Provider

Once a company has decided to move contact center operations into the cloud, it will face no shortage of options from which to choose. A starting point for evaluations might be to consider an incumbent from the enterprise's premises-based contact center operation, but the No Jitter cloud communications survey shows no consensus on that being the best route forward. In fact, respondents are fairly equally distributed among four different models: migrating to cloud services based on an incumbent's communications platform, migrating to a cloud communications platform provided by a non-incumbent vendor, migrating to a hybrid that combines cloud and premises-based versions of an incumbent's platform, and migrating to a hybrid that combines a different vendor's cloud platform with an incumbent's on-premises platform.

With critical success factors such as reduced complexity, availability, scalability and agility in mind, here are five key factors any organization should take into account when evaluating cloud contact center providers:

**Cloud Infrastructure:** A contact center platform deployed in data centers operated by global cloud providers such as Amazon Web Services (AWS) can provide several advantages. These include global reach; resiliency, with geo-redundancy within regions; and scalability on demand. In addition, in-country contact centers that run within an AWS or other public cloud provider's local data center allow businesses to meet data residency and data sovereignty mandates. And, despite lingering reticence among enterprise cloud hold-outs, security of a contact center operation is often boosted in the move to public cloud infrastructure, with providers like AWS having

### Most Compelling Reason for Using Hosted Cloud Service?



No. of respondents = 255

some of the most advanced techniques and stringent protections in place. What's more, IT can keep tabs on enterprise cloud initiatives when it can house all solutions, including the contact center, in the same public cloud infrastructure.

**Modern Design & Architecture:** The availability of application programming interfaces (APIs) facilitates integration between the contact center platform and adjacent processes like analytics, customer relationship management, IVR, and workforce management. An API-based platform will support a variety of such integrations out of the box, but also ease custom development for integrations particular to any contact center operation. This approach will allow IT to select best-of-breed tools for contact center capabilities as needed, while ensuring ease of integration into the contact center platform. This best-of-breed approach can even extend to the traditional core capability of a contact center: voice. With an API-first cloud contact center platform, a company can select telephony and messaging APIs, for example, from cloud communications platform providers such as Twilio or Plivo rather than relying on traditional telephony systems.

APIs are also part and parcel of the modern application architecture built on microservices. In a microservice architecture, complex applications are broken into small, independent processes. These processes communicate with each other using language-agnostic APIs. Use of microservices enables contact center solutions providers to iterate rapidly and deliver new features and functionality on a faster schedule than possible when working in hardware, where interdependencies can be problematic during upgrades and enhancements.

**WebRTC Support:** With WebRTC support, contact center operators can optimize multichannel support, with agents able to launch voice calls, chat sessions, and/or video sessions from within their browsers — no plug-ins or telephony systems required.

**Ease of Migration:** In the No Jitter survey, nearly 60% of respondents using hosted cloud communications services do so through multi-tenant environments. Multi-tenancy is a hallmark of the cloud-first approach, whereas single-tenant solutions are the vestiges of legacy, on-premises communications solutions. In multi-tenant environments, all customers receive the latest features, functions, and security updates as they become available. This means they are always up to date on the latest and the greatest capabilities from their providers — no struggling to update on-premises systems and, as the case may be, keep them in sync with cloud iterations.

**Professional Services & Support:** As much as a cloud migration might solve contact center woes, and as fast and easy as cloud solutions can be to implement on your own, understand that this is no trivial exercise. In fact, one of the biggest opportunities of a cloud migration is a complete reassessment of outdated processes, workflows, and reports, and finding the right strategic consulting partnership for this work is an imperative.

A cloud contact center provider's professional services group should be able to deliver high-value customizations for the particular needs of any enterprise. In addition, larger and more complex contact centers should carefully evaluate availability of premium support and technical account manager programs — the cost of which can often easily be offset by efficiencies gleaned in internal staffing requirements.

Cloud-hosted software alone will not solve everything. Moving a contact center into the cloud should not be a DIY project, especially as IT and contact center skills will need refining for the move to the cloud. Consider the cloud contact center as a partnership between the enterprise and cloud solutions provider.

## Conclusion

More than half of all enterprise respondents in the No Jitter survey said the value of the cloud is either clearly identifiable or underestimated, with TCO, agility, resiliency, and scalability being top benefits. When it comes to the contact center, global reach and speed of getting agents up and running are other key selling points. With so much potential and so much at stake, the time has come for organizations of all sizes to rethink their approach to the contact center and consider a move to the cloud.

## About Serenova

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