

## Bringing the cloud down to Earth

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With cloud computing part of its DNA, a telco is ideally positioned to be an enterprise's trusted partner in its IT transformation and deliver on cloud computing benefits. End-to-end quality of service for cloud computing services is made possible by a telco's reliable, secure, high-performance network. Telcos are used to meeting ever-higher demands in a world where connectivity is crucial and where services do not tolerate downtime.



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Cloud computing adoption is all about creating trust. The current IT evolution began with telecoms networking. As the enterprise IT landscape evolves, operators are showing that network and long-term expertise in managing complex information systems are core strengths when addressing the cloud computing market.

Migrating to the cloud raises many questions for companies: Where do I start? When does it make sense to virtualize? What happens with my legacy IT? Which cloud services should I choose? How do I ensure that what I entrust to a partner can be returned to me?

The most important question is: Who can help me with this transition?

Professional services are part of the answer that a telco can bring to accompany businesses throughout their cloud journey. Also, a telco's willingness to remain technology agnostic and to partner with other IT players to bring companies the best available solution is another way to earn trust and promote cloud adoption.

The last step to building this crucial customer trust is to deliver on the cloud computing promise: on-demand access to reliable, secure and high-performance IT tools that result in a boost in corporate innovation and improved worker efficiency.

**Cloud is network: no network, no cloud**

End-to-end Quality of Service for cloud computing services is made possible

by a reliable, secure, high-performance network. Typically, a telco is able to commit to delivering end-to-end Service Level Agreements because it controls the quality of its own network. Cloud computing can act as an extension of a telco's managed network services like MPLS-based VPNs (*Multiprotocol Label Switching-based Virtual Private Networks*), which are known for high availability and optimized user experience.

Being able to build a strong and long-lasting customer relationship is another key element in creating trust. Telcos have recurring service models in which they engage with customers for the long term. Companies around the world trust telcos for critical network services and can now trust these same providers to manage their IT in the cloud. Telcos are used to meeting ever-higher demands in a world

where connectivity is crucial and where services do not tolerate downtime.

With the network on their side, operators also have direct experience with networked data centres, the life-blood of cloud offerings. We operate data centres around the world and have extensive relationships within the data centre market. With both the network and data centre infrastructure, telcos have the central components of cloud computing at the heart of their businesses.

### Transforming IT

A telco plays a dual role as a cloud services provider - consultant and collaborator. When thinking about IT transformation as it relates to cloud, companies need to work with a service provider that can be their trusted guide on this complex journey. In its consultant role, a telco can work with a company to create a detailed transition roadmap that is specifically tailored to the company's unique needs. Migrating to cloud services is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Telcos should assess which part of the company's IT should migrate to the cloud while taking into account the company's IT legacy and business objectives. As a trusted partner, not just a technology provider, telcos can assist companies in understanding the overall impact of IT transformation as a revolution of business models, moving Capex to Opex, and ensuring a positive total economic impact and visibility into cost considerations.

As a collaborator, a cloud service provider should be a technology agnostic player in order to propose the best offers in terms of variety, quality of service, and reversibility and in order to be exhaustive in its approach to meeting customers' needs. It is with these considerations in mind that trust will be built and the market for cloud services will evolve. The players that will ultimately succeed in the cloud market are the ones that are strong partners and create trust not only in their own businesses, but also across the whole cloud computing value chain.

### Only the beginning

There's no denying that cloud computing adoption is still hampered by customer fears, especially concerning critical applications. As operators, telcos are already putting a lot of effort into educating the market and dispelling the fears and misperceptions of cloud computing. The

cloud computing evolution is underway and slow uptake in this new delivery model does not mean that it is not already redrawing the corporate IT landscape.

As telcos continue to develop cloud computing offerings, they need to be realistic about what can be developed internally and what should be obtained through partners. Telcos that best develop cross-discipline partnerships will ultimately offer customers the most comprehensive and advanced cloud services. Telcos that take advantage of the opportunities presented by cloud computing will be the ones that are savvy aggregators of cloud services (whether their own or services from other providers). As billing systems, contact points and technology platforms multiply, a single point of contact when it comes to cloud services will certainly make an IT department's life easier. In time, CIOs will see the difference in cloud providers.

### Making good on promises

As enterprise IT departments reshape themselves into high added-value internal service providers, they need the support of trusted partners. If you are a potential enterprise user of cloud services then the challenge is to re-equip your IT organization over time to do things this way. It is a process of adaptation.

The cost-saving aspect of cloud computing has so far been the most instantly recognizable, and therefore perhaps the most appealing, aspect of cloud computing, but there is a much larger opportunity to explore related to how cloud computing can drive revenue and increase profitability. According to research firm Yankee Group, less than 25 per cent of IT budgets are available for innovation. Cloud computing is a way to do more with less and conserve budget to drive innovation within the business.

In fact, cloud computing is making applications and services possible that simply were not possible before - when either the user needed to be in a set location to use them or they were too costly to implement in a traditional IT environment. When services are unbundled from infrastructure, it gives the developers of these applications and services an opportunity to get really creative with improving efficiency. Cloud computing allows enterprises to minimize risk and to innovate while benefiting from built-in flexibility and decreased barriers to market entry.

### Cloud consumers

Generation Y in the workplace is a growing telecom challenge for enterprises. Although Gen-Yers do not regularly use terms like 'cloud computing', 'unified communications', 'web conferencing', 'knowledge management', 'telepresence', 'video-conferencing' or 'CRM' (Customer Relationship Management), they already use and benefit from these technologies and applications in their daily lives. They want their personal devices - smartphones, laptops or tablets - to work seamlessly wherever they are and would expect their work technology to be on par with, if not more advanced than, what they have at home. To recruit the best and brightest talent, companies cannot afford to put their employees 'back in time' when they are at work. They need to embrace new technology not only to attract new customers, but also to recruit and keep high-value employees.

This consumerization of IT has become a reality for enterprises today and one of the key challenges for their IT departments. They need to rely on a service provider that can help them integrate and manage the many different devices while providing necessary enterprise-grade applications, reliability, governance and security. The days of limiting devices and requiring standard device configurations are over. For today's end-users, cloud computing enables them to work anytime, anywhere and from any device while protecting the company's intellectual capital.

### Bright horizons

Telco cloud offerings are continually expanding and reaching more customers with reliable services that meet their customers' needs. Hype is being replaced by tangible offerings with clear business benefits. As the journey continues, cloud computing will evolve with trust and flexibility at the heart of each successful service offering.

As this trust grows and adoption flourishes, we may see the term 'cloud' fade from our lexicon because it will no longer be important as a differentiator. Instead, companies will expect providers to solve their IT challenges in the most efficient and effective way, knowing that it will usually be some combination of cloud computing services and a more traditional IT environment.

Not many things in life are certain, but we can be sure that the best is yet to come on the cloud computing scene. ●