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How to Choose the Right Cloud Solution Provider

Make your cloud migration smooth and sustainable

Among the many lessons businesses and their IT decision-makers learned from the pandemic, none has resonated more than the risks of relying on a network built on legacy technology.

Whether it's the overload of aging government systems, the security limitations of healthcare providers' outdated networks or the inability of businesses to support remote working, the inadequacies of legacy communications systems have been well documented.

Expensive　　**Underperforming**　　**Rigid**　　**Single point of failure**　　**Poor customer experience**

Executive takeaways

In this brief, you will learn:

1 The risks legacy technologies pose to businesses that continue to use them

2 Why organizations are accelerating their transition to a cloud-centric architecture

3 That platform-as-a-service and pure-play solution providers aren't your only options

4 How a consultative, pathfinder-style approach can make a cloud transition timely and sustainable

The real impacts of legacy technology

Today's organizations require modern-day connectivity options to support the accelerating demand for cloud-based apps—along with the continuity and uptime to ensure better employee and customer experiences.

Yet many organizations still rely on outdated legacy access technologies like Time Division Multiplexing (TDM), DS1 and DS3 access solutions, as well as copper-based services such as primary rate interfaces (PRIs), plain old telephone services (POTs) and Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS).

In addition to limited capabilities and overall obsolescence, legacy infrastructures also pose a risk to the businesses that use them: 90% of customer outages are tied to TDM and POTs facilities and equipment.[1]

This realization is causing a dramatic re-architecting of networks, built on the principles of modern infrastructure components and a distributed, cloud-first architecture that can securely scale to meet the needs of modern digital businesses.

90%

of customer outages are tied to TDM and POTs facilities and equipment[2]

The great cloud migration

In response, organizations have accelerated their migration timelines from legacy networks to cloud-based connectivity and communications solutions such as software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) and unified communications as a service (UCaaS).

In fact, IDC estimates by the end of 2021, 80% of enterprises will put a mechanism in place to shift to cloud-centric infrastructure and applications twice as fast as before the pandemic.[3] Further, technical debt accumulated during the pandemic will shadow 70% of CIOs through 2023, causing financial stress, inertial drag on IT agility, and "forced march" migrations to the cloud.[4]

Their challenge? How to migrate to the cloud in the fastest, most cost-efficient—and least painful—way.
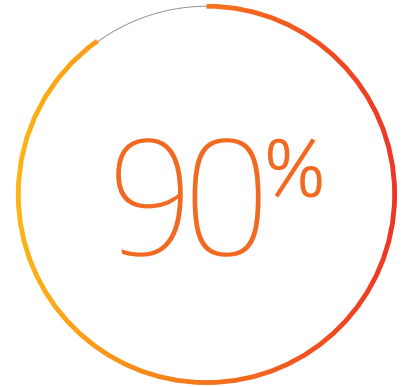
"As enterprises and services providers look to support the demands of ubiquitous, high-bandwidth, and low-latency connectivity to billions of devices, it's becoming increasingly clear that legacy network architectures will not suffice in a world dominated by mobility and cloud."[5]
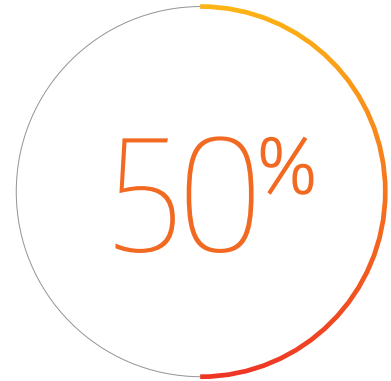
Rohit Mehra, IDC Vice President, Network Infrastructure

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Fighting the urge to play it safe

For their organizations to remain competitive and more resilient, CIOs need to accelerate the transition to cloud-centric IT. However, they are often reluctant to abandon their legacy networks. Due to their heavy investments in their current infrastructure—and the disappointments over earlier, over-hyped technologies— many CIOs prefer to stay with what they know.

They might feel locked in with their current vendor. Or their network is so unwieldy, they don't want to undo an architecture that's taken years to perfect. So it's understandable that they don't want to disrupt their day-to-day operations. But they also realize that today's fast-moving business demands can't be met with yesterday's networks.

The connectivity conundrum: how to migrate, whom to trust?

When it comes to moving company workloads to the cloud, every CIO is faced with a crucial decision: go with a vendor that can take the complexity out of the migration process, or do it yourself and assume the burden of complexity on your own. In practice, that means partnering with a cloud service provider or picking and choosing from an array of pure-play suppliers.

Within the industry, CIOs have a bewildering array of options as to how and with whom they can team up to move them. Moreover, the choices a CIO makes will have lasting effects on the business—for better or for worse.

Cloud service providers

The platform-as-a-service space has many key players, such as AWS, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud. Providers like these offer the advantage of removing the complexity of cloud migration with an out-of-the-box managed solution. The downside? A CIO has to approach it with an "it's good enough" attitude and accept that they may not be getting a solution that's optimized for their business.

Cloud solution manufacturers

For the CIO who prioritizes best-of-breed components, it makes sense to go with a solution provider such as VMware, Fortinet or Cisco. In this instance, the CIO assumes the burden of designing a cloud infrastructure that combines those components and making them run properly. As with any DIY approach, the odds are high that the company will lose time getting their new cloud network off the ground—especially if it's the first time the CIO has attempted a migration. And that's at the expense of the business.

50%

of business network infrastructure assets are aging or obsolete[6]

30%
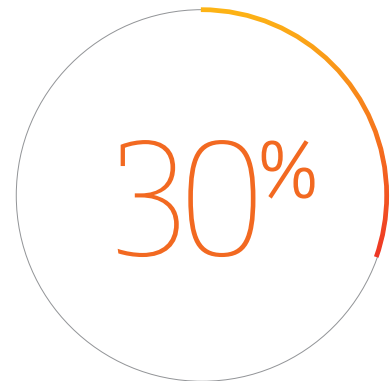
of the U.S. workforce will be working-from-home multiple days a week moving forward[7]

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Is it really the best tool for the job?

Ultimately, the problem with both of these approaches is that they favor vendors. Account managers from providers and manufacturers are compensated for what they sell, regardless of whether or not their recommendations are best for the business. They will offer products and services from their respective portfolios. But they won't necessarily sell the CIO the best tools for the job.

A third way: technology partner as pathfinder

To develop the optimal, least-disruptive cloud solution, the CIO needs to partner with a provider that takes the time to learn the organization's business model and challenges—deeply—and work with the CIO's team to architect a solution that draws the best of both worlds: a robust platform with best-in-class hardware and software, encompassed by a migration strategy that minimizes disruption to the business and maximizes the value of the proposed solution. That migration strategy should acknowledge the organization's current state and be prepared to work within the legacy systems—not simply propose a rip and replace. It's a consultative, pathfinder-style approach that honors the investments the enterprise has made in legacy technologies while transitioning it to the cloud in a timely, sustainable way.

Cloud connectivity, communications and security—guaranteed

With a cloud-optimized network and proprietary software solutions, Windstream Enterprise is a certified market leader in product innovation. Our managed services streamline operations, enhance productivity and protect critical data and brand reputations. We offer high-performance networks, collaboration, security and connectivity, as well as unrivaled service guarantees and an award-winning management portal. And our team of technology experts ensures our clients' success, because that's what they are compensated for.

OfficeSuiteUC®, SD-WAN Concierge™ and other cloud-based Windstream Enterprise solutions are backed by our WE will Commitment, our promise to you that we will deliver a network and voice solution that meets your business needs, for an unmatched, fully supported experience.

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Conclusion

An IP-based network is only as good as the communications provider supporting it. There is great value in having a network provider who treats you as a business partner by making the effort to understand your business and by responding quickly to your needs and your questions. To truly make the move away from a legacy network worthwhile, do your due diligence and don't settle.

1. Windstream Enterprise customer data.
2,6 NTT. 2020 Global Network Insights Report. Accessed March 3, 2021.
3,4 "IDC FutureScape Highlights What Will Happen Next as Enterprises and the IT Industry Respond to the Disruptions Caused by COVID-19."
     IDC, 27 Oct. 2020. Accessed September 8, 2021.
5. Carrie MacGillivray et al. "IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Future of Connectedness 2021 Predictions." IDC, Oct. 2020. Accessed September 8, 2021.
7. Global Workplace Analytics. Work-at-Home After Covid-19. Accessed February 7, 2021.

About Windstream Enterprise

Windstream Enterprise is a managed communications services provider, delivering nationwide, cloud-optimized network and industry-leading services—such as SD-WAN and UCaaS—through our award-winning portal, WE Connect.

To learn more about Windstream Enterprise visit windstreamenterprise.com

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