RingCentral

Customer Engagement

TOP FIVE WAYS A CLOUD CONTACT CENTER ENSURES DISASTER RECOVERY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY

In 2018, California's wildfires affected an area of 153,336 acres and destroyed 18,804 structures, with most of the damage occurring within the first four hours. The community of Concow and the town of Paradise were destroyed within the first six hours of the fire, losing an estimated 95 percent of their buildings. In fact, an estimated 104 commercial structures were damaged while 514 were marked as completely destroyed.

While California is known for its beauty, sunshine, and laid-back mentality of its residents, the state is also notorious for dry, windy, and hot weather conditions from spring throughout the late autumn that can produce such devastating wildfires.

While natural disasters like the Camp Fire are heartbreaking losses for people, communities and wildlife, these natural disasters can be a death sentence for once thriving businesses, especially those without a comprehensive and updated disaster recovery plan.

Disaster recovery and business continuity plans to prepare for events like this have become must-haves for most companies, and are even mandated in certain industries. However, if you operate a contact center, it doesn't take a wildfire or earthquake to have a disastrous impact on your business. It could be as simple as someone unplugging a communications server, or an unsuspecting employee clicking on a phishing email with a virus that takes down the network.

From a snowstorm disrupting transportation to a construction crew severing an underground cable to a catastrophic hardware failure, any number of unforeseen events has the potential to disrupt your communications, cause a vital data loss, or prevent employees from accessing your business location.

Whatever kind of disaster impacts a contact center or critical call functions, it's hard to overestimate the impact of "out of service" messages or fast busy signals when customers call looking for help with sales or support. Even short periods of downtime can have significant direct and indirect impacts on your operations, financial health, and brand image.

First and foremost, if a disaster takes down your contact center, you stand to lose customers who either cannot contact your agents or reach the wrong department. According to a *Small Business Trends* customer retention statistic, 71% of consumers have ended their relationship with a company due to poor customer service.[1] And in the era of everyone being digitally and socially connected, dissatisfied customers also tend to spread the word, which can quickly cause widespread brand damage.

Plus, you may lose not just customers but also employees. Disasters can lead to increased attrition through everything from added job stress to injuries to protracted transportation

disruptions. For example, loss of communications at one facility can cause call volumes to spike at a second location and overwhelm agents. This excessive pressure and stress is one of the top 5 reasons for contact center agents to leave the companies they work for. The cost of hiring and training new agents only adds to other costs like purchasing new hardware, relocating office spaces, and employee time spent on recovery efforts.

Downtime, loss of vital customer data, or attrition of valuable staff due to a disaster could even risk your company's survival. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), up to 40% of businesses affected by a natural or human-caused disaster never reopen, and 43% do not reopen after a catastrophic data loss.[2]

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FEMA

HAVE THE RIGHT PLAN AND PLATFORM IN PLACE

This explains why disaster recovery and business continuity plans need to be a critical part of every contact center operation. In addition to training your people and putting plans and procedures in place, key requirements for the contact center include a technology platform that provides:

Microservices architecture: Take advantage of modern web architecture to isolate the various functions of your contact center solution to localize, minimize, and easily recover from any issue.

Triple geographic redundancy: All interactions are managed from three data centers simultaneously, so even if you lose two full data centers, you will be able to continue normal customer service from the third location.

Carrier-grade reliability: Be sure your system offers the premium availability levels of a carrier-grade network.

Mobile options: Employees need the capability to immediately switch to mobile devices or home computers.

Flexible call routing: In order to make quick changes to call routing rules depending on any evolving situation stemming from a disaster, the system must be flexible.

Scalability and elasticity: Agent capacity scales immediately to meet spikes in demand related to failure or an outage at one facility.

24/7/365 network monitoring: Proactive monitoring and support resolves any issues before they impact users.

24/7/365 vendor support: Because disasters can strike at any time, continual support ensures you get the help you need.

System health checks: Additional proactive testing ensures reliability and availability.

Remote management: Administrators can continue operations, manage the contact centre (including off-site agents), and change configurations from a location that is safely away from any natural or man-made disturbances.

Unfortunately, legacy call center technology platforms still used by many companies make it difficult to meet these requirements. Without costly investments in redundant hardware as well as software licenses, typical premises-based call center systems simply do not provide the flexibility and scalability needed to handle disaster recovery requirements. This can potentially leave your teams offline for hours, days, or even weeks. Relying on non-redundant premises-based technology can cause even longer downtimes as you scramble to procure and install new hardware and software, or perhaps even source a new vendor.

The advent of cloud contact center solutions changes all this because they do away with on-premises hardware, which is vulnerable to local outages or disruptions. From supporting

remote workers with the same virtual environment used by staff in the main facility to greater elasticity, a cloud architecture offers many advantages over traditional approaches.

The following are the five key ways a cloud contact center ensures disaster recovery and business continuity:

1. THE CLOUD ASSURES UNINTERRUPTED OPERATION WITH LOCATION-INDEPENDENT AND DEVICE-INDEPENDENT TECHNOLOGY.

Benefits ranging from cost to speed of deployment explain why companies are moving their call center technology platforms to the cloud. In addition, a properly architected cloud contact center inherently provides business continuity in the event of an outage or disaster.

First, it houses all contact center infrastructure and critical data in a cloud data center—situated far from any potential disruption at a local business facility. A top-tier cloud service provider typically duplicates this infrastructure in widely dispersed data centers.

Second, unlike legacy on-premises systems that trace their lineage to an era of hardwired desk phones, the cloud approach works with any device from anywhere there is an internet connection. Employees can use smartphones, laptops, tablets, or desktop computers to access the cloud contact center functions over landlines or via wireless networks. Consequently, in the event of a disaster, your agents can instantly fail over to mobile devices or softphones on computers at home or in temporary contact centers.

This capability to seamlessly support remote workers is also useful in the event transportation emergencies prevent some of your employees from going to the office.

The cloud also unifies all your multichannel communications. This ensures you can maintain connections with your customers, employees, and partners in the event of a crisis—even when phone lines are failing—and thereby maintain your SLAs and protect your business from revenue loss.

2. THE CLOUD AUTOMATES CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS.

In a disaster, availability of key personnel can be as problematic as availability of systems. With a legacy on-premises system, for example, someone would need to inform the carrier a disaster had occurred and request rollover of 1-800 numbers to forwarding numbers. And even then calls may not reach the most appropriate agents; agents may become overloaded as call volumes could suddenly double; or the person responsible for contacting the carrier to request rollover may not be available. With the cloud, there is no need to manually roll over numbers because remote and mobile workers access the same contact center system as in-office staff—whether in a disaster or during normal daily operation.

3. THE CLOUD SAVES THE COST OF REDUNDANT PREMISES-BASED SYSTEMS.

The conventional way of preparing for disasters in a premises-based contact center environment is to deploy a duplicate system. However, even after this considerable investment, depending on the severity of the incident impacting a location, there is still no guarantee that the duplicate system will be available to agents in the event of an emergency. Furthermore, the investment grows if management wants to achieve geographic redundancy.

Cloud-based systems completely eliminate investments in hardware and associated software licenses—not only for your primary environment but also for a redundant environment. Plus, if the provider maintains two or more data centers in widely spaced locations, geographic redundancy is built in.

4. THE CLOUD CAN COST-EFFECTIVELY BACK UP PREMISES-BASED CONTACT CENTER INFRASTRUCTURE.

Previously, investing in duplicate hardware, software, and licenses was the only way to assure availability of premises-based contact center environments. Now, cloud contact center solutions offer a simple, reliable, and cost-effective way to provide redundancy for legacy premises-based systems.

This capability to create a hybrid environment offers major advantages for organizations that want to preserve their investment in legacy on-premises systems—for the long-term, or just until they can replace an investment in outdated hardware with a cloud system. In addition to low initial cost and a predictable subscription model, many benefits provided by the cloud as a primary system benefit hybrid backup deployments. These include geographic redundancy, high availability, remote management, scalability, flexible connectivity options, and more.

In a major disaster, your backup systems may be needed for days or even weeks, so they must be reliable. With the cloud approach, the day-to-day operations continue "business as usual" during a disaster with remote staff monitoring systems 24/7. However, to assure the reliability of redundant environments, the cloud solution you choose should house the core infrastructure in the secure, Tier 1 data centers, and the network should be built with n+1 redundancy. This can guarantee the high availability required by contact center operators to meet their SLAs.

5. THE CLOUD SAVES COSTS.

Duplicating a premises-based installation—and then trying to deploy it in geographically dispersed locations—can run into millions of dollars. And even then it might still fail or not meet situational needs in case of every type of disaster. Hosted cloud contact center solutions have evolved to offer functionality on par with premises-based solutions but are faster and much less expensive to implement and maintain. Additionally, a monthly subscription model eliminates the sticker shock of providing redundancy by slashing capital expenditures to almost zero.

1. Small Business Trends
2. FEMA: Small Business Continuity Planning Integrated with Fire Department Pre-Plans

SUMMARY

Communication is often considered the lifeblood of business. However, many business functions can continue without phones. This is not the case with a contact center. If a disaster takes down the calling capabilities and other communication channels used by agents, the contact center grinds to a halt. The damage this downtime can cause to the brand reputation, customer loyalty, and top-line revenue can be dramatic.

This makes disaster recovery and business continuity planning a must for anyone in charge of contact center operations, as well as for IT leaders who must support the infrastructure. The high cost and inherent vulnerability of on-premises contact center hardware explain why many companies are moving to the cloud. And even in companies that are currently tied to investments in on-premises systems, the cloud offers an excellent and highly cost-effective way to provide redundancy. Hosted cloud contact center solutions—especially those with enterprise-class mobile technologies—further offer the critical capability for agents to switch over to mobile devices in a disaster.

Cloud contact center solutions provide the best way for your business to plan for and survive disaster. A well-architected approach not only houses all the contact center infrastructure and your critical data away from potential disaster sites but also ensures high availability by employing a state-of-the-art network required to bypass local problems.

For more information, please contact one of our solution experts. Visit ringcentral.com or call 855-774-2510

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of global enterprise cloud communications, collaboration, and contact center solutions. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises systems, the RingCentral platform empowers employees to work better together from any location, on any device, and via any mode to serve customers, improving business efficiency and customer satisfaction. The company provides unified voice, video meetings, team messaging, digital customer engagement, and integrated contact center solutions for enterprises globally. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading business apps and enables customers to easily customize business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.

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