In Part 4 we discussed the fundamental differences between Cloud and Hosted solutions. This month we are back with the fifth and final part of the Channel Cloud Xchange Webinar!

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Ian Hunter, Editor

Education, Education, Education. What level of understanding must our reseller community achieve to sell cloud services and models to the channel? Ian Hunter finds out.

Ian: Andy Lockwood, at TalkTalk you are the owner of the largest nextgen networks in the UK and transformation to a cloud based model has been on your agenda for many years. Is it important for resellers to have a deeper understanding of the different infrastructure deployment models for Cloud, such as Private, Public, and hybrid or is it more important for resellers to know what applications are suitable for which model and how to sell them?

Andy Lockwood: Firstly, yes, it's important that resellers understand the range of services available and the different deployment models. It is also important that they have understanding at a level to allow them to talk to their customers about the appropriateness of the solution. They aren't the designers so they don't need a designer level of understanding, but they do need a solution level of understanding.

One of the things you (Ian) and I have spoken about in the past is how we can educate partners to make the transition from an on premise solution to a cloud based solution and I do think that is a key issue we have to address as a

channel and as service providers.

As I mentioned earlier we have a major education event coming up in May to educate partners. This will highlight what the solutions are, and what is available today. For us, this is a major commitment to educate partners as to what the hosted services are and how they can help customers make the economic argument for taking on hosted services.

In summary, it is important to understand but at the right level. We don't expect our partners to be able to build a cloud service but we do expect them to be able to take a customer's requirements and interpret those and explain how a cloud service can meet those requirement s as an alternative to an on premise solution.

Ian: Would some of your advice be depending on the circumstance? There may be a mixed environment where perhaps the best solution is PBE but perhaps with other applications that might be Cloud. Some people may have invested a lot of money in PBE system over the years.

Andy Lockwood: It is absolutely a mistake to force a customer down a road that is not right for them. We have to make sure we are offering the very best solution available to us. I think everyone on this call is exclusively a cloud service provider. We have added hosted into our portfolio because we see they provide different solutions. They are not the only alternative and quite often when we talk to customers we are offering a combination of hosted and on premise solutions to fit their needs. That's why it is so important that we understand the customer requirements.

Dave Dadds: We are unique here I think because we only sell cloud based hosted solutions, but we did previously sell PABX so have experience in that area too. From our point of view it is more around the focus of the reseller to what they want to sell. We have found it is more the exception when a hosted service won't fit the solution. Sometimes it doesn't quite fit the purpose but these days that really is rare. As humans we are creatures of habit and if you have always sold PABX systems then that's probably what you are going to keep on selling. With a

Dave Dadds
VanillaIP

Rob Hutton
Mitel

Andy Lockwood
TalkTalk Business

salesman that is focussed purely on the hosted and has the understanding, done the leg work, done the deals, you are going to get those type of deals closed.

You don't need to fall back on the CPE at all. That argument is getting stronger quarter by quarter as everything else improves like connectivity, handsets and all the other elements. The other thing about this is that this isn't just one solution from one person. This has got a whole load of dependencies from numerous manufacturers and that creates a challenge. The days when Mitel produced the solution from end to end, when it was all a lot more controllable, are gone. Although we do get challenges we don't think that you have to sell CPE.

Rob Hutton: We are seeing something that is really successful. Customers are requesting or indicating that they do have a virtualisation strategy and want to move to a hosted solution in the future. I think where Mitel have been really strong is that we can sell them CPE today and all the licensing, applications and handsets can be move into a virtualised environment or a cloud

environment later on. That is where we feel we can make a strong case to the customer. They may be buying a PBX system today but that investment may mean they have a virtualisation strategy or hosted strategy they want to implement 2,3,5,or 10 years down the line. We would say to that customer that you can buy your PBX today and move that into the cloud down the line. For example, they can get their PBX today from one of our channel partners and that can be deployed into TalkTalk's data centre and TalkTalk can support and service the customer. It is investment protection that Mitel brings to the marketplace which I think is key.

Ian: Thank you for attending our webinar. Thanks to our Panel, It's great to get feedback from our attendees. I look forward to seeing you all in Manchester for the Convergence Summit.

That concludes our Channel Cloud Xchange Webinar. Thank you for reading.