



In Part 3 we looked at the on-going battle between CPE and Cloud solutions. We are discussing crucial differences between cloud and hosted this month.



Ian Hunter,
Editor

Channel Cloud Xchange

Cloud and hosted is on offer, but can you spot the difference? Our expert Xchange panel discusses with Comms Business.

Ian: What type of cloud based model does Gamma supply and why have you chosen this route?

Alan Mackie: To summarise Gamma strategies around cloud services it is fair to say that we are focussed on centralised voice and that is what we deliver to our channel partners. We have made a choice that we need to deliver choice to our channel partners on how they want to deploy those services. They can take a complete service from Gamma, such as Horizon Complete Hosted Unified Comms service, which is entirely supported by Gamma end to end as an alternative to a PBX package. That is a well known model that has been in the market for a while. That is a model a lot of channel partners want to take to market.

In addition to that we also can provide components for cloud based services. We provide a SIP trunking element but interestingly in the last 18 months a lot of what we provide in SIP is into data centres. We are delivering SIP trunking services and inbound routing services into customers and into channel partners who might be building their own cloud based services. Voice is just an element of the service they want.

Gamma Telecom and Mitel have done some

work with channel partners that are providing their own BCDM model and we have provided the connectivity. The partner has been running the model themselves because they wanted the control to run that platform.

From a Gamma point of view some channel partners, and end customers, want a complete package and for some voice services in the cloud is just a part of the applications that they are trying to host. We are not going to stand up and say we have all the answers to the cloud services that are available. We can deliver key components such as cell phone management, connectivity and SIP trunking into someone else's model so they can add in CRM systems or whatever is key to them as an organisation.

One of the key components of the conversation is application, if you are going to sell cloud you need to understand that application inside and out to sell to the end customers. You then need to work out how you are going to deliver that. Having that application knowledge, that is focussed in a vertical or focussed in a specific sector, is a really good way in for a channel partner to build a cloud service.

What did we choose as a model? We choose choice, and gave our channel partners the choice that they are looking for.

Andy Lockwood: We focus on providing both cloud services and cloud infrastructure. We have just launched a new data centre, which is a significant investment for us. We had been getting partners asking us about not just commercial models but how we can help them with things like environmental awareness. Our network now uses entirely green energy and our data centre uses the highest power efficiency of probably any data centre in the UK. That is really important when making users understand their commitments when it comes to things outside of the commercial side.

We are bringing capacity online in blocks of 200 racks and this investment should keep us and our partners with the right kind of asset for some time. In the data centres we are providing a range of hosting and co-location services for partners. We are finding we are not selling stand alone co-lo services but as part of solutions. In the data centre we also provide hosting services and hosted network services. We have a hosted contact centre service that allows businesses to host and manage contact centre services without having to invest in on-premise services. Because it is based in the network it allows businesses to create different types of contact centres, such as a home worker based contact centre solutions.



Alan Mackie
Gamma Telecom

Andy Lockwood
TalkTalk Business

Andy Burton
Cloud Industry Forum

This is becoming increasingly popular as end user businesses look to offer more flexibility to employees and save on premises costs.

The reason for mentioning this is that offering cloud services to businesses or hosted network services to end users can address a number of different end user requirements. As we are building our argument to help our end users understand why a hosted, or cloud, service might be a better solution than a common or premise solution we need to be aware of all the different reasons as to why cloud is can offer advantages to the end users.

Ian: How do you draw a distinction between hosted and cloud and if there is one what is that distinction?

Andy Lockwood: A colleague of mine came up with a phrase in a meeting the other day which I thought was quite good so I will share that. If you don't know what it is you call it Cloud and if you do know what it is you call it Hosted. I think there is a lot to be said for that. We talk about Cloud as if it is a nebulous panacea to all the world's problems but it's not. When you get into the detail of it we are talking about services and solutions that are hosted in data

centres and networks and, for me, that is the difference. You will find TalkTalk being very specific about hosted services because that is what they are and we do fall into using the word Cloud. Cloud isn't sufficiently definitive for what we are trying to achieve. In May we are holding a hosted conference to educate partners on the difference between hosted and cloud and to define what hosted services are.

Andy Burton: I think this is all about language. In the general population of people looking at what we call "the cloud" typically people think of that as accessing IT or telephony as a service. In simple terms when people use the word "Cloud" this is what they mean. They are not thinking about it as technology necessarily in terms of a hosted private infrastructure or whether it is a hosted cloud infrastructure. The difference between the two at a pragmatic technological level is that a hosted infrastructure, if it is not cloud, is typically taking something that would be deployed on premise and putting it offsite and enabling network access with the appropriate permissions. Something that is a Cloud service, typically would have to have this delineation between hardware and software so that the software would continue operating regardless of

the hardware sitting underneath it. It migrates more than just a virtualisation migration over a bunch of hardware it is the way in which service continues to operate regardless of the technology platform on which it sits. This is why cloud facilities tend to be very large and capital intensive and actually you have a more throw away attitude towards hardware because they are using a pool of resources and the software of the solution that is cloud based sits across the top of that. Practically there is a technical difference between the two but from a consumer perspective they will interchange hosting and the cloud and it is a bit of a nonsense argument for most people because they will think of it as one and the same thing.

Look out for Part 5 next time where we scrutinise the cloud opportunity for the reseller community. Thanks for reading...