

Contact Centre Migration

Migrating to Cisco's IPCC

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How to migrate your contact center to Cisco's IPCC

Many contact centers are looking to take advantage of the premier functionality offered by Cisco's AVVID. In this article, Gary Ford discusses several steps to achieve this through migration.

Take a look in that switch cupboard. How old do you think your ACD/PBX is? At one time in the not so distant past that grey whirring box represented a significant investment for your organisation. Unfortunately, if you sit down and perform a total cost of ownership study, you'll probably find that your legacy switch is still costing you more than you would expect. Remember to take into account things like; how much did the last upgrade cost? What's the maintenance agreement like? Not only do you have to factor in the day to day running costs, but as you look to improve the functionality offered you may find that your system integrator will quote you a vast amount to provide that additional CTI enhancement your sales team need for their CRM package? Lets face it. A switch is for life, not just for Christmas. Or is it?

Before the advent of quality LAN solutions that brought about VoIP, the only telephony solution for an organisation looking to bolt services onto it's ACD was to purchase a vendor specific product or create an in-house bespoke solution. However with today's enhanced IP networks, and product offerings such as Cisco's AVVID, cost effective switch enhancements through software are a reality worth undertaking.

So you've read in the press about VoIP, it's a great idea, you can see the benefits in shrinking your call center running costs by reducing the number of tie lines between call centers. Also by having a converged voice and data network you can provide a whole host of new world applications to improve the functionality offered to both your customers and agents (important for reducing the high churn rate commonly associated with call centers). So why don't you go ahead and do it. With advancements in integration the journey towards an IP Contact Center is not as hard as you may think. In fact, Cisco Systems provide a proven migration strategy for introducing VoIP into the call center whilst preserving legacy investments.

The process of migrating your contact center to Cisco's IPCC can be as quick or as slow as suits your business requirements. By applying Cisco Systems IPCC migration strategy to your call center, the IP-centric architecture of the platform makes it possible to readily extend the boundaries of the contact center enterprise allowing your multisite call center to evolve into a location independent, enterprise wide, virtual contact center.

Let us first break down Cisco IPCC into its core components. Cisco's IPCC is made up of two main software platforms, the Cisco ICM (Intelligent Contact Management) and the Cisco CallManager. The Cisco ICM is a software platform that integrates with existing call center technologies and the new channels of email and web contact. It is designed to provide virtual contact center functionality across legacy environments. If you have multiple call centers that require call routing depending on agent skills and customer requirements, the Cisco ICM will allow your call routing decisions to be made with an enterprise wide view of the real-time agent availability. The Cisco CallManager software provides traditional ACD telephony features and functions to packet telephony devices such as Cisco IP phones, VoIP gateways and softphone enabled devices. Cisco IPCC combines the Cisco ICM and Cisco IP telephony solutions to provide a contact center solution based on IP. This enables agents to operate independent of a specific location.

Agents are also able to manage multimedia types such as voice, email, web and FAX which increases customer satisfaction and supports customer retention.

The migration to IPCC usually begins with a trial. A trial will allow your business development team and your solutions architects to discuss and document what they want to achieve, such as which types of new services you can offer to your customers. A Key driver in this area is the use of an IVR to front all calls before the call is delivered to an agent. An IPCC enabled contact center can use this IVR to collect a wealth of information from the caller, then by using intelligent call scripts in the Cisco ICM and the integration of your customer database, the call and all data collected can be delivered to an agents softphone. Not only does this feature reduce the time a caller spends talking to an agent, but it also reduces the amount of work your agents need to perform with laborious data entry. Cisco's IPCC can use traditional IVRs or even IP IVRs.

The first step to take on the migration path is to upgrade your call center to take advantage of the Cisco ICM. The Cisco ICM instantly transforms your call center into a virtual call center allowing call routing decisions to be made throughout the enterprise. The Cisco ICM allows you to increase the functionality and productivity of your existing call center equipment without the need or expense of replacing your legacy devices. As old ACDs expire it is now possible to replace them with the Cisco CallManager. As the ICM is transparent to the type of ACD used, it provides a seamless transition from ACD to IP ACD. Calls can now be routed through a Cisco gateway to VoIP enabled agents. As each of the remaining legacy devices expire, IPCC simply takes over their role, and all contacts are handled by one common routing engine.

One of the main drivers behind IPCC is the reduction of costs associated with telephony hardware and Telco charges, but remember that an IPCC solution can provide your company with an endless scope of functionality not previously possible with legacy switch hardware. When implementing an IPCC solution to your existing contact center, migration is the safest way to achieve this new functionality without any detrimental effect on your existing service. Cisco software platforms offer the customer a migration path from the old world to the new world of IP. Organisations can overlay the software platforms on their legacy systems, and then, over time migrate these systems to an IP based infrastructure as their business and technical requirements drive the need for more advanced solutions.

