The Benefits of a New Approach to Private Cloud

Just What Is the Cloud?

We hear about this mysterious cloud all the time, but just what is the cloud? At the simplest level, the cloud represents a form of outsourced services. Salesforce.com and QuickBooks.com are popular cloud services that can eliminate the need for an enterprise to purchase and operate servers and software. Instead of buying hardware, customers purchase cloud-delivered services as a service. The application, associated hardware, and related operations are also delivered as a service.

There are several types of cloud services. The two most popular are software as a service (SaaS) and infrastructure as a service (IaaS). The former delivers specific software application services. Popular examples are CRM and Office 365. IaaS provides data center infrastructure services (hardware, operations, management, etc.) so that organizations can create or host their own applications. Major IaaS providers include Google Cloud, Microsoft Azure, and Amazon Web Services.

For decades, there simply wasn't a choice between premises-based and cloud-delivered services in the communications industry. The premises-based solutions were the standard. Today, the communications industry continues to offer traditional premises-based solutions with the added option of cloud-delivered services. The primary cloud service is known as UCaaS or unified communications as a service. UCaaS has emerged as a viable and popular alternative that meets the needs of many organizations. However, there are trade-offs. Among them is the fact that UCaaS services are shared, public services, while many organizations want or require dedicated solutions.

Private clouds provide a third option that blends the benefits of premises-based

solutions and SaaS. However, in the past, managing private clouds has required advanced skills and expertise. Now, providers such as Mitel offer managed private cloud services. These services are built on a cloud infrastructure but delivered as a complete service. They combine the best benefits of private and public cloud offerings.

This new private cloud option gives enterprise customers three viable options for communications: traditional owned or controlled software in a data center, controlled software on cloud infrastructure, and public software as a service. The three options each offer several permutations that can be particularly beneficial for organizations with diverse or changing needs. Only a few providers offer all three options.

This paper examines the latest offer from Mitel: **MiCloud Flex.** It explains the new offer and how it complements and contrasts with Mitel's existing cloud service, **MiCloud Connect.**

The Mitel Cloud Portfolio

Mitel is a global communications products and services company with over 40 years of experience. It was a pioneer in traditional PBX equipment. It was also among the first to embrace IP-based communications, the first to support voice on a virtualized server, and an innovator in secure teleworking. The company has extensive experience in organizational communications and collaboration and a proven track record of upgrading its customers to the latest technologies.

Today Mitel offers two cloud-delivered communications services: MiCloud Connect and MiCloud Flex. The two services share the same core software that offers a full suite of communications and collaboration capabilities. The two platforms provide a consistent set of features that can leverage the same endpoints. This structure simplifies migrations, and in most cases, the two solutions are available from the same partners. Mitel is one of the few providers that offers premises-based, cloud-delivered, and hybrid options addressing customer needs as they evolve.

The differences between MiCloud Connect UCaaS and MiCloud Flex are most apparent (and important) to administrators and IT staff. MiCloud Connect is a turnkey, ready-to-go, fast and simple service. However, the limitation with all software as a service solutions is that they are optimized for general use cases — that is, they don't address specialized requirements. That's where MiCloud Flex comes in.

MiCloud Flex, which is built on Google Cloud, offers many of the cloud-delivered benefits that organizations are seeking, but with added control. Instead of a general, shared implementation for multiple customers, MiCloud Flex is a solution offered in a dedicated secure environment. That means that every organization on a MiCloud Flex solution has greater control over its own operating parameters.

The two Mitel cloud solutions have very specific use cases and offer rich telephony, collaboration, conferencing, and advanced features like contact centers and integrations. What's particularly compelling is having the choice to choose the ideal solution to match business needs, as most providers offer a one-size-fits-all solution.

MiCloud Connect

Mitel introduced MiCloud Connect in 2018 as a state-of-the-art UCaaS service. MiCloud Connect provides a simple yet effective cloud-delivered UCaaS option for enterprise communications and collaboration. The service offers a variety of features and options that enterprise customers can click to choose.

A key benefit of MiCloud Connect is the speed in which it can be implemented. The service is essentially ready to go. Because the service is pre-engineered and optimized for Google Cloud (in contrast to new implementations that have to be designed, resourced, and implemented), new accounts and new users can be configured in hours. It's a multi-tenant service, which means new companies (new tenants) can be seamlessly added to the existing service. Time to implement is thereby reduced, and there are no upfront customer costs or commitments. Although MiCloud Connect is a public, shared service, the controls in place ensure privacy as well as detailed management reports and capabilities.

MiCloud Connect is similar to other UCaaS services in that it is priced per user per month. This pricing model has the added benefit of being able to easily add or delete users as business requirements change. Organizations can select and administer services from a web portal. The resulting robust businesswide communication system can seamlessly expand across locations.

Physical phones are not required to use MiCloud Connect; however, Mitel is one of the few UCaaS providers that produces its own phones. Having

both options produces a more feature-rich and integrated experience than most other UCaaS providers can offer. This distinction is important. With its rich history in premises-based solutions, Mitel can offer either a mixture (hybrid) solution that facilitates migration to the cloud or a solution optimized to leverage both premises-based and cloud-delivered services.

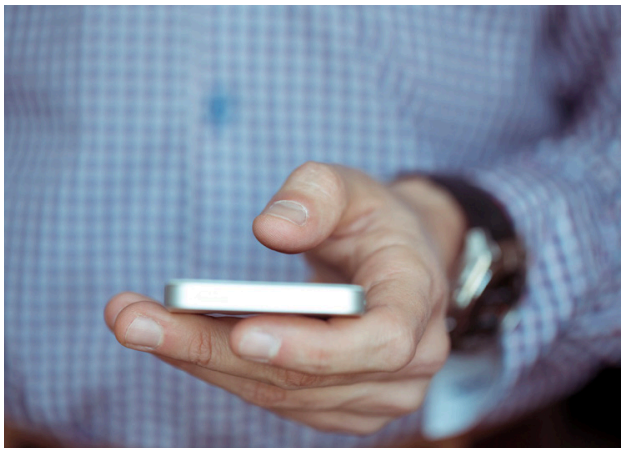
A business utilizing MiCloud Connect is free from the burdens of operations, backups, disaster planning, and capacity planning. Only light administration such as user management is required. There is no need for maintenance contracts, advanced administrative training, or weekend upgrades. The service typically appeals to small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 500 seats. It's especially attractive to organizations that want to outsource the operation of their communications systems.

MiCloud Flex on Google Cloud

MiCloud Flex is designed for businesses that want to leverage the value and simplicity of cloud-delivered services, yet want to retain greater control over their communications solution. MiCloud Flex is built on Google Cloud, and combines the benefits of a dedicated secure instance and cloud-delivered infrastructure. The offer is effectively a prebuilt, optimized, and managed private cloud service.

These choices are attractive to larger organizations that A) require customization and control, and B) have the resources (internal or trusted partners) to properly design, implement, and manage a private cloud solution. That second part is usually the limitation. Most enterprises only implement one communications solution, which means the engineering and administration is a one-off process.

MiCloud Flex effectively packages the engineering with ongoing and continuously updated best practices. This solution allows organizations to leverage Google Cloud without the need to become a cloud IaaS engineer. Because the MiCloud Flex offer is engineered specifically for Google Cloud, it offers cloud benefits such as security, scalability, and global coverage, yet remains a dedicated, controlled service. Customers can customize systemwide parameters, set default values, and select integrations that meet organizational requirements. Ultimately, it's a cloud-delivered service that can be molded and optimized to exact specifications.



As communications have evolved and expanded, they have become more complex. We have come a long way from the simple PBX appliances that were so common just a decade ago. Mitel is addressing this in two ways. First, it has optimized MiCloud Flex for Google Cloud. This significantly simplifies the design-build aspects of implementation and operations. Secondly, its partner network can optimize implementations to customer needs.

MiCloud Flex can be implemented as a single, enterprisewide solution or paired with existing solutions such as premises-based solutions and Mitel or other UCaaS. The solution can support a range of different sizes, complexities, and industries. While there are no official limits, the service is expected to be most attractive to organizations with 100+ seats that value control alongside cloud-delivered benefits such as increased reliability, security, scalability, and global availability.

Mitel's portfolio, built on a common framework, allows its customers to separate the deployment model decision (premises-based, cloud, or hybrid) from user experience. The deployment model can change as requirements change, but the user experience and devices don't need to — effectively allowing deployment changes to occur without user training.

Why MiCloud Flex?

MiCloud Flex is not a new offer, so a closer examination of the solution is warranted. To better appreciate the gap it fills, let's look at the evolution of UCaaS.

Enterprise telephony is arguably over 100 years old, but phones weren't on every desk until the 1960s. That development was enabled both financially and technically by the PBX. The term "unified communications" (UC) emerged in the early 2000s, when voice over data networks became possible. Prior to UC, telephony was completely isolated. It had separate terminals (phones), servers (PBXs), wires and jacks, and providers. IP-based communications ended the segregation.

Initially, UC was about convergence — converging voice and data infrastructure into one. Then came new capabilities and converged applications such as unified messaging, which combined voicemail and email. IP technologies also extended the short-distance limitations of traditional telephony, enabling a single provider to support multiple, even global locations.

Enterprises now had several new options regarding their telephone services. They could continue with customer-owned solutions or purchase UCaaS. At least initially, smaller customers opted to go with UCaaS, such as Mitel's current UCaaS option, MiCloud Connect.

The customer-owned solutions continued to evolve in several ways. They became software-based solutions and moved away from proprietary hardware. These software applications could be run on virtualized servers or hosted in remote data centers. As IaaS became viable, many customers opted to host their solutions with providers such as Google Cloud. This final approach is emerging as a best practice, and this brings us to MiCloud Flex on Google Cloud.

Why Google Cloud?

Mitel evaluated all major cloud infrastructure offers and chose to work with Google for several reasons. The linkage builds on a previously announced successful partnership resulting in Mitel's use of a Google Contact Center AI (CCAI).

It's important to note that Mitel is partnering with Google Cloud and the Google Cloud Platform. Google Cloud is the enterprise-focused division of Google that offers the Google Cloud Platform and G Suite. Google Cloud is separate from the Google business associated with search and has no advertising-related revenue. The vendors together offer extensive unified communications and customer engagement features built for virtualization, containerization, and microservices, on a global public cloud platform.

GCP Benefits

Mitel selected the Google Cloud Platform for its security, reliability, speed, innovation, and geographic reach.

Security: About a decade ago, many considered enterprise data centers more secure than cloud-delivered infrastructure. That debate now favors IaaS. The Google security model is an

end-to-end process, built on more than 15 years of experience focused on keeping customers safe on Google applications. GCP maintains a rigorous set of processes and standards that address safety, privacy, and security. This includes compliance with specifications such as SOC 2, HIPAA, and GDPR. Additionally, Mitel and most enterprise customers can securely connect to GCP over private network links.

Reliability: Have you ever been denied the ability to do a Google search because the service was down for maintenance? Google Cloud offers enterprises the same reliable technologies that Google uses to support (billions of) searches and host YouTube videos. These highly reliable technologies are regionally distributed around the globe. Google's backbone network uses advanced software-defined networking and caching services to ensure fast, consistent, and scalable performance.

Speed: Performance is critical. Google Cloud Platform offers several advanced tools for benchmarking and improving performance, including PerfKit Benchmarker — a benchmarking tool used to measure and compare providers — and PerfKit Explorer — a visualization tool for creating and editing dashboards.

Innovation: A cloud platform simplifies IT resources into a consistent development, management, and control framework that can automate and simplify tasks and create operational efficiencies. Google Cloud is anchored in open-source technologies that facilitate creativity and innovation. GCP is at the forefront of cloud innovations such as microservices, Docker, and Kubernetes.

Global reach: Google Cloud services are available in locations across North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. These locations are divided into regions and zones. Customers can choose where to locate applications based on latency or other requirements. Google Cloud's footprint spans 61 zones and over 130 points of presence across more than 35 countries worldwide.

The Google Cloud Platform offers lots of advantages. Mitel has productized this service and relationship, and now it's easier than ever for organizations to benefit from one of the largest cloud platforms. It means less latency and more accurate services. Top it off with state-of-the-art security and performance that can handle hundreds of thousands of concurrent connections, and you have a platform that can set your business up for long-term success.

Some notable companies using the Google Cloud (Compute Engine or App Engine) include Spotify, HSBC, Home Depot, Snapchat, HTC, Best Buy, Philips, Coca-Cola, Evernote, Domino's, Feedly, ShareThis, Sony Music, and Ubisoft. Google Cloud provides Mitel customers with a purpose- built

infrastructure, a Google-controlled hardware stack, a private encrypted global network, layered data center security, internal privacy and security expertise, and a robust security auditing/certification program.

Mitel and Google

Mitel and Google Cloud are expanding a fruitful partnership. Mitel was one of the first providers to integrate with Google Talk a decade ago. Mitel was among the first Contact Center companies to embrace Google CCAI. Mitel's solutions integrate with Google Calendar and G Suite, and MiCollab leverages WebRTC technologies made available by Google. Now MiCloud Flex on Google Cloud takes this partnership to a new level.

It's a strong partnership as the two companies don't directly compete. Both are leaders in their respective categories. Both provide a complementary component to the other, and both serve a global customer base. Most importantly, both are committed to providing reliable, secure, and adaptable services to enterprises of all sizes.

Final Thoughts

There's been tremendous confusion about premises-based, hybrid, and cloud-delivered solutions, in part because the technologies keep evolving. For example, premises-based solutions are now rarely premises-based, but rather hosted in a data center. MiCloud Flex offers a refined evolution of the private cloud model. Organizations that previously rejected private clouds due to complexity, costs, and/or the expertise required should take a fresh look at Flex. Mitel has come up with a solution that optimizes the benefits of public cloud services, such as scalability and global reach, yet provides the control that enterprise administrators require.

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