

Time for call centres to go on a tech diet?

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Contact centres can be a heavy expense for the organisation. They are also a much-needed one. Call centres form the centre of gravity for customer engagement, providing people with immediate support and information with personalised interactions.



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The call centre sits in an ecosystem supported by artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots and the omnichannel, each element supporting the other to deliver truly interactive and relevant customer support. But, like anything, if one part of the chain isn't implemented or managed tightly, it can be the weak link that breaks the customer connection.

For most companies, the call centre is a complex investment. On one hand, it's a customised space populated by trained individuals who really can connect with the customer to resolve issues or manage queries. On the other, the technology that drives it can be a big cost consideration in terms of CAPEX, maintenance and space. They are often considered a necessary but expensive purchase the business just has to live with.

Mindset

So, what if this perception could change? What if, thanks to the evolution of device and system and cloud, the business could reduce these costs?

When legacy infrastructure comes to the end of its life, then one consideration could be to move the end-point hardware from large machines to micro PCs. They are just as effective and as capable as larger desktops, but cost less, use less power, and are easier to implement and maintain.

Micro PCs can easily be transported in bulk so a refresh of an old call centre is much quicker and easier versus the long delays and expensive transportation issues associated with desktops. They are offloaded more rapidly, simply installed and provide instant access to multiple features and applications without hassle.

Benefits

What's even more beneficial, certainly for the individuals who work in the call centres, is the amount of space they use. From a towering device that squats on the desk using up valuable real estate to a tiny PC that can be attached underneath the desk or mounted neatly behind the monitor. The micro PC can save up to 30cm of space on a desk which can make a huge difference to the overall size requirement to house the call centre and translates to a massive cost saving on rent.

The reason why micro PCs have risen to prominence over the past few years is because of how rapidly technology has evolved. Things are just getting smaller. Components are smaller. This makes it far easier to build a micro desktop with superb functionality than ever before. They also don't compromise on their features – a micro PC is just as capable a workhorse as a traditional one. For the call centre, the company should consider investing into micro PCs that have built-in Wi-Fi as this further reduces the pressure on infrastructure by cutting cabling requirements significantly. This can be further enhanced by adding in Bluetooth connections for cordless accessories such as keyboards, mice and headsets.

Because the micro PC doesn't have any moving parts compared to the traditional desktop, it's also less prone to hardware failure associated with wear and tear. A larger PC can also more easily be bumped, moved, or shaken during the course of the average day which can affect the lifespan of the components inside. However, the micro PC can be mounted out of the way so it's automatically safe from spills, bumps or shocks.

Long-term benefits

The key to their success and to their ability to cut costs also lies in the cloud. The micro PC can perform as efficiently as a larger form factor, but the move to the smaller size should be accompanied by a move to Software-as-a-Service solutions that, by their very nature, also minimise the cost to the company. There is plenty of research that points to the value of cloud solutions for organisations looking to streamline so it's a solid step for the company looking to reshape its contact centre spend.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly within the South African context, the smaller form factor PC is far less power-hungry than its weightier counterpart. The amount of uninterrupted power supply (UPS) required for the micro PC is around one-tenth of the 200 watts needed by the typical desktop. When you multiply that across 1, 000 seats in a call centre, suddenly the power costs make a lot of sense as well. This saving can potentially pay for the entire investments over a period of three to five years.

The benefits that come with the move to micro PCs in the contact centre are far bigger than the device itself, making it a sound choice for companies committed to ensuring exceptional customer service without breaking the bank.

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