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Supporting SMBs in their Journey to the Cloud

The SMB Experience In The Cloud

Mass Migration



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The shift to the cloud has proven to be much more than merely a passing fad. Consumers and businesses alike are migrating to the cloud in large numbers. Once they understand the significant advantages that cloud technology has to offer, it's really a very easy decision to make. In fact, SMBs (Small and Medium Businesses) make up the majority of cloud adopters.

And although SMBs have yet to move their entire business to the cloud, it has been estimated that an overwhelming 92% of them are using at least one cloud solution. But this number barely touches the potential for market penetration – by 2017 the average number of cloud applications in use among SMBs is expected to grow by over 130%, as the realized benefits motivate them to integrate the cloud into their businesses on a larger scale.

Benefits realized

It's worth repeating the benefits of moving business applications to the cloud:

- > Easier access, storage and analysis of data
- > Cost savings
- > Ease of working remotely
- > Scalability
- > Automatic updates
- > Security
- > Reliable disaster recovery

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Of these, by far the most cited benefits are the first two. Almost 69% of businesses consider the data capabilities the number one benefit, along with 34% believing that moving to the cloud has saved them money. Both are very compelling arguments for adopting cloud technology. 95% of respondents who have moved to the cloud believe that it benefited their company.

Microsoft vs. Google

These are the two major players in office productivity suites, and it should come as no surprise that this category of business applications tops the list of must-haves.

Choosing between them is a lot like comparing a Cadillac Coupe with a Mercedes-Benz Sedan. They are both powerful and reliable, offer customizable options, and come with first-class standard features. But look closer; when you see who is driving you will notice an interesting yet subtle difference.

The applications that come standard in Google's G Suite include Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs and Google Calendar, and while the Google suite enjoys significant market share (adopted by over five million businesses worldwide), they are more popular with small, young SMBs in industries such as Internet, Marketing and Software.

By contrast, Microsoft's well-known Office 365™ suite, featuring apps like Outlook, Word, OneDrive and Skype for Business, is chosen more often by larger, more established organizations that include Financial Services, Manufacturing, Retail, Construction, IT & Services and Not-for-Profits.

However, when it comes right down to it, Mercedes-Benz models far outsell Cadillacs, despite both being luxury brands. Likewise, Microsoft's Office 365™ is the most-used cloud application among businesses.

The Need for Cloud Support

So, what is holding back small- and medium-sized businesses from fully embracing the cloud?

63% of SMBs feel "overwhelmed with the number of technologies available" for business, and, as a result, delay moving to the cloud. Consumed with the day-to-day running of their own companies, and inundated with "cloud noise" (cloud noise is simply the hundreds if not thousands of cloud-based applications or services that are constantly promoted online) they postpone their decision, often making no decision at all. They may get their feet wet, but then cannot bring themselves to jump right in.





This is especially true for busy people such as SMB executives. Sometimes “good enough” keeps business owners and managers rooted in the old, familiar ways of doing things.

Part of the problem is that many SMBs do not have the resources to see a project through from end to end. While enterprise managers can leave the technical and cloud decisions to their IT departments, many SMB managers do not have the same luxury. Only 19% of SMBs have full-time IT staff at their disposal, and often those people don't have the training and experience in new technologies. This is especially true for cloud-based technologies.

Accordingly, hampered by a lack of the right resources, or the right advisors to help them make a selection, many SMBs are not able to take advantage of the wide range of benefits the cloud offers along with the robust applications available in market today.

However, the cloud is not going away, and in order to remain competitive, most SMBs will be best served by learning how to adopt the right cloud computing applications for their business. And because it is expected that an estimated 78% of them will be on the cloud by 2020, earlier is better than later.

Clearly, many SMBs will need to look externally for support on their way to the cloud.

Turning to Service Providers

The next four years will see a significant change in the number of SMBs migrating to the cloud. Hand in hand with the demand for cloud expertise is the expected rise in spending for technical support. This represents new opportunities for service providers to define new value-based programs and packages for SMB clients.

It is reasonable to expect that 75% of SMBs will first turn to their main service provider for their cloud-based services, with 45% of SMBs highly likely to look to their service provider for technical support.

Some of the reasons SMBs value their service providers include:



Bundling of services: SMBs see the potential for cost savings if they are able to bundle core services they receive from their service providers such as broadband with other cloud applications.



Simplicity: Reducing the number of vendors an organization has to deal with will result in time-savings, and makes for an easier integration within their business model.



Single bill: Buying cloud services from their primary service provider also allows businesses to receive a single bill for both their traditional communication services and their cloud applications and services.



Service Provider Benefits for Supporting SMBs in the Cloud

Increase Adoption

One of the keys to minimizing churn rates is to ensure that users are actually using the services they subscribe to. If they are not taking advantage of their full package of services, users are less likely to renew their package when the subscription period ends.



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What does this mean for service providers?

By providing premium cloud support to SMB customers, service providers can open up new channels to increase adoption of cloud applications. For example, if a customer calls for assistance in trouble-shooting a cloud application and the provider can properly diagnose and solve the problem quickly, that customer will be far more likely to continue using the application. If problems persist, they may be just as likely to throw up their hands and return to their old way of doing things, abandoning their cloud strategy.

Become a Trusted Partner

Strengthening relationships with customers can only lead to customer loyalty and higher customer lifetime value. By becoming a trusted IT Advisor and delivering support to SMB customers for all of their cloud services, a service provider will earn that loyalty, and their customers will be more likely to purchase additional cloud services without considering competitors.



Bundling/Upselling Opportunities

Delivering high-quality IT support presents a plethora of situations where bundling and upselling become possible.

When a customer finds a source they can rely on, they are much more likely to consider other options and add-ons and want to turn to that trusted source for more.

For instance, you've gone to your favourite tailor for a custom-made suit, but before you leave the store he is able to sell you the perfect tie, a couple of shirts, and a pair of socks. Why? Because you trust him to make the right decisions for you. But before you leave the store, he has one more item to offer – for a few dollars more, you can get a second pair of pants in case the first pair shows wear before the suit jacket does. It is great value, and a prudent choice.

The customer not only spends more money, he is happy and more satisfied with a broader range of products that suit his needs.

In the same way, a positive experience for a customer who calls on their provider for technical support is prime for additional sales, increasing customer loyalty.

It's the ability to define that "extra something" that makes a provider stand apart in an environment of fierce competition and high churn rates.





What it takes to Support this Journey

In order to become a trusted cloud partner within the SMB market, service providers must be able to support their customers through every stage of their journey to the cloud. More specifically, support during pre-sales, migration, onboarding and post-deployment is needed to ensure the most seamless customer experience possible.



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Pre-Sales Support

Before moving to the cloud, SMBs need to decide what cloud services are the right fit for their organizational needs. Managers that don't have in-house IT staff are often overwhelmed with information – different vendors, different products – and may be intimidated by the whole process.

That is where expert sales support comes into play. Service providers who can engage with these SMBs, listen to what they describe as their greatest needs, and then point them toward the right solution will be ahead of their competition.

Take Microsoft Office 365™ as an example. Even if an SMB decides Office 365™ will be their cloud productivity suite of choice, they still have to choose between the different plans Microsoft offers: Business, Business Essentials and Business Premium. A savvy sales agent will understand what package will best serve the needs of the SMB they are selling to. They can assist in the decision-making and then walk the client through the purchasing process, eliminating a major pain point for the customer and building loyalty along the way.

Onboarding Support

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It is critical that service providers take whatever time and effort are necessary to provide excellent onboarding for customers who have made the move to the cloud. Without proper onboarding support, users will be much less likely to use the service they subscribed to and may not realize its full value. For example, 44% of surveyed IT personnel said that Office 365™ end-users were unfamiliar with their browser-based experience, resulting in a difficult transition to the cloud. When you consider the high churn rates in the industry, onboarding support is critical to customer retention and loyalty.

At the heart of creating a seamless onboarding experience for SMBs is properly training them on how to use their new services. Company admin training sessions along with relevant documentation (FAQs, demos, etc.) should be offered in order to get personnel excited about their new applications and eager to adopt.

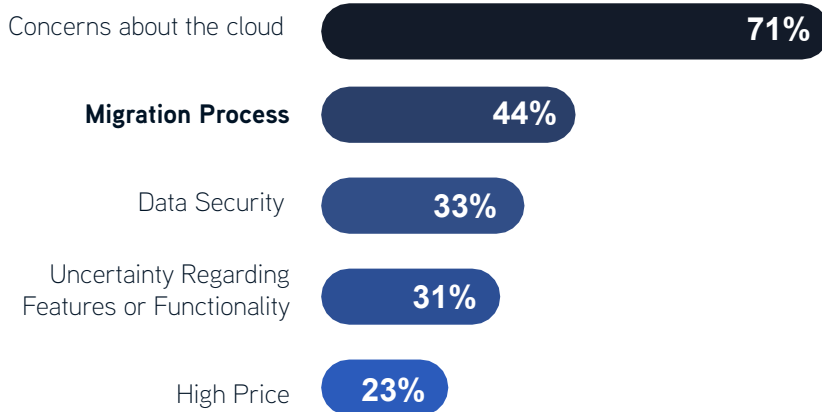


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Migration support

One of the most significant inhibitor for SMBs considering moving to the cloud with Office 365™ is the migration process itself.

Top 5 Office 365™ Inhibitors



Service providers must address the specific concerns which hold back SMBs from making the decision to migrate to the cloud.

- > **Disruption to workflow:** SMBs rely on certain tools, such as email, in order to conduct business. It is vital to create an automated migration process that ensures no downtime of essential services is experienced.
- > **User setup:** For an email migration to be considered complete, SMBs want their users to be completely set up on their email service. It is therefore



essential that partners have the ability to automatically set up users and retain their personalized preferred settings and extensions, such as signatures and calendars.

- > **Testing:** SMBs want to be reassured that, upon completion of their migration, everything is working as it should and they are receiving their emails properly. Reliable testing tools must be in place for performing migrations.

SMB customers will become positive brand activists if their service provider is able to provide an end-to-end seamless migration experience. In fact, 18% of SMB cloud customers actively refer other SMB customers based on their own experiences. These brand advocates can help organizations capitalize on the North American SMB cloud business applications services market, which is expected to reach \$12.5 billion by 2018.

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Ongoing Support

Hands down, the best way to build loyalty and customer retention is by offering ongoing support. It is the essential "next-step" after onboarding and migration to the cloud.

If users have to rely on documentation for guidance and support, their satisfaction rate will drop substantially. Providers must be there for them, delivering expert technical support 24/7.

Let's revisit our scenarios from above. If you buy that Cadillac or the Mercedes and your dealer doesn't show you how the dashboard systems work, you:

- may not reap all the benefits of the technology,
- will spend a lot of valuable time teaching yourself how to use them, and
- will be less likely to return to that dealer when your lease is up.

Likewise, if your tailor sends you to someone else to fix a split seam or can't make the jacket fit just right, you will probably find another store to shop at.

But if both the car dealer and the tailor can satisfy your needs, they will likely be the recipients of your business when it's time to change, upgrade or add new products or services.



People buy from people they know, like and trust. By extension, that buying pattern is extended to your service provider brand.

By providing product knowledge, technical skill, and strong, dedicated support, service providers can build both loyalty and new revenue streams, making the whole experience of migration to the cloud beneficial for everyone.

The AppHelp Advantage

Developing an offering capable of supporting an SMB from the pre-sale support phase all the way to the post-migration ongoing support phase can be a hefty task which takes heavy investment and time in finding the right people, technology, and platforms. If a service provider does not have the required resources or expertise to make this happen, partnering up with a third-party can allow to let them focus on the core aspects of their business, leaving technical support to experts.

Partnering with AppHelp can give service providers access to over 10 years of experience in providing premium technical support, from the connected home to the workplace. Premier North American and European brands such as Bell, Windstream and Virgin Media are currently using AppHelp for their respective white-label, premium technical support offerings.

AppHelp services include (but are not limited to):

- > Cloud application support
- > Office 365/G Suite (pre-sale, migration, onboarding & ongoing support)
- > IoT device support
- > Backup system deployment & configuration
- > Detection and removal of viruses, malware & spyware
- > PC tune ups & optimization





Conclusion

While it is difficult to deny the immense benefits that SMBs can realize from moving to the cloud, it is understandable that many feel unprepared and hesitant to make the transition alone. Their lack of in-house IT and cloud expertise makes it almost impossible to decide between all the cloud applications on the market and make sure they can operate with them smoothly.

Service providers should be ready to capitalize on this opportunity by becoming their trusted cloud partner. Doing so successfully can lead to increased adoption, more loyal customers, and additional chances to increase margins and revenues by bundling and upselling.

Offering technical support at every stage of the customer's cloud journey is necessary in order to give the customer peace of mind, while establishing your brand as a trusted advisor. Partnering with an established, industry leader like AppHelp allows service providers to focus on what they do best and know that their support offering will be top-of-the-line quality.



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ABOUT APPHELP

AppHelp delivers solutions that “help” businesses and consumers be more successful with their adoption and use of the latest in technology and cloud services. By leveraging a unique combination of technology and human capital, AppHelp ensures customers have the support they need as they traverse the customer journey. With millions of technical support incidents solved, and decades of experience assisting people with technology, AppHelp is proud to power the technical support programs for premier brands across the globe, including Comcast, Cincinnati Bell, Rogers, Bell, Telus, Windstream, Virgin Media, Panda Security and more.

Ready to take your cloud business to the next level? Email us at sales@appdirect.com or visit www.apphelp.com.



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