Enterprise organizations around the world are increasingly turning to managed network and cloud services to reduce capital and operational expenses (CapEx and OpEx); enhance workforce productivity; increase agility; achieve more predictable costs; and simplify operations throughout the application lifecycle. Today's managed cloud-based services deliver high levels of reliability, availability, and security, which are all traditional, core attributes of carrier-class service provider infrastructures. But not all cloud services are alike. Public cloud services can be vulnerable to Internet intrusions. Private and dedicated cloud services – available from service providers to individual organizations – are far more secure and reliable.

Growth in Cloud Traffic:

The popularity of cloud services is driving massive increases in data center and network traffic, with global cloud traffic expected to grow by a factor of 12 between 2010 and 2015, reaching 1.6 zettabytes a year in 2015, according to the Cisco Global Cloud Index: Forecast and Methodology, 2010-2015. The same study predicts that by 2014 over 50 percent of computing workloads in data centers will be cloud based, resulting in a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22 percent.

The IDC Worldwide Managed Network Services 2010-2014 Forecast predicts global cloud services revenue to grow at a CAGR of 11.5 percent, expanding from $45.2 billion in 2009 to $77.9 billion by 2014. An April 2011 study by Forrester Research entitled "Sizing the Cloud" predicts that private cloud services revenue will grow from $7.8 billion in 2011 to $15.9 billion by 2020. The overall cloud services market will grow by nearly a factor of six, from $40.7 billion in 2010 to more than $241 billion, by 2020.

Unified Communications and Collaboration services providing value

The combination of private, hosted and managed cloud services with unified communications and collaboration services can reduce or eliminate the need to install, maintain, and upgrade onsite PBX equipment and applications. Each customer is provided with dedicated, virtual instances of each application, including software and hardware redundancy and availability.

Beyond the cost and operational benefits, private, hosted and managed unified communications help organizations increase teamwork and productivity, improve speed to market, enhance business process flexibility, increase customer satisfaction, and reduce travel expenses. The ability to deliver unified communications applications (including presence, IP voice, instant messaging, desktop and Web conferencing, and collaboration workspaces) to both fixed and mobile clients further adds to the overall value.

When it comes to private, hosted, and managed cloud environments, there are various approaches to security, reliability, and availability – some far superior to others. This is especially true for unified communications, where information confidentiality may be required and where the absence of reliable, available services may lead to the failure of business operations.

Security, Availability, and Reliability Challenges

In an era where business happens in an instant, the confidentiality of trade secrets, sales and customer information, and communications between employees, customers, partners, and suppliers is especially vital. Strategic advantage can be won or lost based on the availability and security of information – and reliable unified communications and collaboration services and information can often form the basis of entirely new business models.

Services provided over the Internet and public clouds, moving from large collocation data centers and out to insecure fixed and mobile devices, lack the rigid security and reliability of enterprise network and private cloud services. For enterprise unified communications and collaboration, these shortcomings are unacceptable.

By contrast, world-class, private, hosted and managed cloud services incorporate proven industry best practices, architectures, platforms, and technologies, and adhere to enterprise data center standards. These services also enable many new features based on virtualization and other more recent innovations.

Conclusion

Service providers offering services via the private, hosted and managed network cloud are incorporating stringent security, availability, and reliability features developed over decades in the most sophisticated enterprise environments and Tier 1 data centers. Computing architectures utilizing virtualization and based on multi-customer instead of multi-tenant infrastructure provide software and information isolation for each enterprise deployment. The defense-in-depth security strategy protects bare metal and virtualized assets, embedding security throughout all layers of the network to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data, applications, endpoints, and the network itself.

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