Where to Invest Your IT Dollars in 2022

2022

One of the biggest challenges in 2022 will be supporting a new type of workforce. The pandemic forced companies across the nation to start working remotely. As the pandemic has continued, there are two new workforce models: remote and hybrid.

The hybrid model looks like it might win out in many organizations, with some employees working from home at least some of the time. Variations include some employees spending all their time in the office, while others work from home, and still others alternating between working in the office and at home.

Microsoft's 2021 Work Trend Index[1] surveyed over 30,000 people in 31 countries and produced some interesting results. For example, 66% of business leaders are considering redesigning their offices to support hybrid workers, and 73% of employees want flexible remote work options to continue even after the pandemic.

Other research indicates that hybrid workforce models are supported by 63% of high-revenue growth companies, while 69% of no-growth firms prefer either all on-site workers or all remote workers. Workers opted for a hybrid model 83% of the time.[2]

Regardless of what your workforce looks like in 2022, there's sure to be the need to support employees that are working remotely in some fashion. And that will undoubtedly be a big driver for where you invest in technology in 2022.

We see four areas that will be high on your technology list for 2022: the cloud, cyber security, networking, and contact center as a service (CCaaS).

1. THE CLOUD

The cloud is a critical component of supporting remote or hybrid workforces. The pandemic forced many organizations to move their communications and computing to the cloud to support remote work, and the results were beneficial. Gartner predicts that the percent of IT spending on the cloud globally will increase from 9.1% in 2020 to 14.2% in 2024.[3]

Recent Gartner surveys also indicate that almost 70% of organizations that are using the cloud plan to increase their cloud spending because of the change in the workforce dictated

by the pandemic. If you aren't taking advantage of the cloud, you may find yourself left behind as your competitors embrace it.

Here are some key benefits you'll receive from moving to the cloud for hybrid or remote work.

CONNECT FROM ANYWHERE

Your employees won't need to be in the office to connect to your on-premise servers to access computing power. In addition, you'll be able to communicate easily across the organization. Collaboration, which is a key capability for today's fast-moving markets, is facilitated because everyone is on the same system. They can share documents and edit them in real time, hold instant meetings, and much more using readily available collaboration applications.

COST REDUCTION

When you move to the cloud, you can trade hardware and software purchase costs for predictable pay-as-you go pricing. You'll be able to assign your valuable IT resources to mission-critical projects and away from mundane maintenance tasks.

IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

Connecting all of your employees with cloud-based apps will mean they'll have the information they need at their fingertips and an easy way to work collaboratively to make quick decisions. They'll spend less time searching for information and getting approvals, and more time getting things done.

Your investment in cloud computing and communication in 2022 will help your organization save money and become more agile.

2. CYBER SECURITY

When you start working in the cloud, you have the advantage of the cyber security capabilities provided by your vendor. Cloud hosts have the expert cyber security staff to ensure your hardware and software are safe.

However, you'll be responsible for the security of your cloud environment, and that environment is complicated by

supporting remote workers. A recent study indicated that 74% of organizations blamed vulnerabilities in their remote work technology for cyber attacks that impacted their business.[4]

You should consider an investment in cyber security that can take many forms, depending on how you support remote workers. McKinsey[5] recommends that cyber security teams act as strategic partners in making technology and business decisions to make sure cyber security concerns are addressed. Here are some key examples.

IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE SECURITY HOT SPOTS

Employees are now working from home in environments that haven't been designed for cyber security, so you may need to invest in training and equipment for remote workers. They need to understand their role in eliminating cyber security threats. For example, employees need to understand the importance of completing security patches on their home equipment, updating mobile software, and avoiding risky online behavior.

EXPAND CYBER SECURITY CAPABILITIES

The role of your cyber security teams doesn't disappear when you move to the cloud. Their focus needs to change to secure your new working environment. For example, security incident and event monitoring (SIEM) tools can be updated to include cloud-aware capabilities. You'll also need to monitor third-party apps to control their proliferation.

SECURE YOUR NETWORK

If employees use public WiFi on their work devices, it's a security breach just waiting to happen. Some experts recommend you require your remote employees to use a virtual private network (VPN) when connecting to the cloud. You can also significantly improve your security by implementing a secure wide area network.

3. NETWORKING

When you move to the cloud or support remote workforces, you'll need to invest in a networking solution that supports cloud apps and employees working remotely. Your network also

needs to offer always-on, high-speed connections and high-level cyber security.

Before the advent of the cloud, cyber security was managed by controlling access to the network perimeter. When you move to the cloud, your cyber security plan must address security beyond the network perimeter and into the cloud. That's why new networking solutions are becoming more popular.

THE TRADITIONAL SOLUTION

When organizations needed to support access to their systems by remote employees such as salespeople on the road or the occasional remote worker, they commonly used VPNs. A VPN creates a "tunnel" into the resources they need beyond the network perimeter. The user initiates a session and ideally disconnects when they finish their work.

But, VPNs will send all traffic through the connection, so even non-work traffic runs through an organization's gateway and out to the internet. Another issue with VPNs is that heavy traffic can overwhelm your VPN, causing it to shut down or reduce throughput to a crawl. If you use VPN connections for remote workers, make sure to plan carefully to avoid an overload.

SD-WAN

Software-defined wide area networking (SD-WAN) is quickly becoming a popular network solution for long-term connection by a large number of remote workers. SD-WAN architecture uses a software controller to direct traffic intelligently. The controller is also application-aware and can route traffic using the best alternative among all the communication avenues available.

SD-WAN allows your remote workers to connect directly to your cloud, but it has native security features to help avoid cyber security attacks. In addition, since it uses the best route for traffic, applications that require extremely fast response will use the fastest connection and improve worker productivity.

4. CCAAS

Contact center as a service (CCaaS) is a solution for call centers that is becoming more popular as remote work is becoming more common, but there are many benefits of CCaaS beyond supporting remote workers.

Deloitte recently published its 2021 Global Contact Center Survey and uncovered some interesting facts about CCaaS from the contact center leaders they surveyed.

- 32% had contact center cloud technology in place at the end of 2020

- 75% planned to move to the cloud within two years

- 79% planned to add more AI capabilities within two years

More leaders are recognizing that it's essential that they take advantage of the agility and scalability of the cloud to remain competitive. They're using customer service to help achieve business growth. A CCaaS approach to call center operations has many advantages.

EXPAND YOUR CANDIDATE POOL

With CCaaS, you have a much broader talent pool to choose from. You're not limited to a geographic area, and you can attract high-quality workers who will only accept a position where they can work from home.

GIVE EMPLOYEES QUICK ACCESS TO CUSTOMER DATA

You can often integrate your CRM capabilities with a CCaaS solution. That integration allows your call center staff to personalize the service they provide. Your staff can quickly discover the history of contact with customers to ensure a consistent customer experience. In addition, other employees, such as salespeople, will have a complete record of customer contact.

MEET YOUR CUSTOMERS WHERE THEY ARE

Your customers can contact your organization using the channel they prefer, whether it's the telephone, email, or website chat. It's another way to improve the customer experience.

IMPROVE REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT

CCaaS solutions offer a dashboard for call center employees to help keep them focused and engaged. Many organizations establish internal competitions based on meeting goals that employees can track themselves.

Supervisors and managers have more insight into operational data and can easily identify skill gaps and coaching opportunities.

2022 WILL BE AN EXCITING YEAR

In 2022, many organizations will be working hard to normalize their hybrid or remote workforce. If you're among that community, the technology you choose to invest in will have a big impact on how successful you are.

The four technologies discussed here work together to make working remotely not only possible, but preferred. And, they work together to make remote work even more productive.

Moving applications to the cloud, including contact center operations, with the right network and cyber security opens a new world of possibilities for reducing costs, improving productivity, and increasing the competitive advantage you have in your marketplace.

SOURCES:

1. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work

2. https://www.apollotechnical.com/hybrid-working-statistics/

3. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-11-17-gartner-forecasts-worldwide-public-cloud-end-user-spending-to-grow-18-percent-in-2021

4. https://www.cepro.com/news/study-finds-link-between-cybersecurity-attacks-and-remote-work-technology/

5. https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk-and-resilience/our-insights/a-dual-cybersecurity-mindset-for-the-next-normal

7 Ridgedale Avenue
Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927
201.934.7400

www.safari-solutions.com

2022

SAFARI *solutions*
STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGY PARTNER