



UC On-Premise or in the Cloud? 8 Questions to Ask

Unified communications has traditionally been deployed on-premise, but the pull of the cloud is strong. Recent research from InformationWeek found that more than half of business technology buyers use on-premise UC today, while 30 percent use a blend of on-premise and cloud-based UC, and 13% use hosted UC exclusively.

Here are eight questions to ask to help determine which deployment model is right for you.

Why Choose On-Premise UC

Hosted UC is growing by leaps and bounds, especially as organizations shift applications to the cloud. But there are many reasons that **on-premise UC** will be a favorite choice for years to come.

1. **Do you want the control of on-premise systems?** Most companies have a long history of buying and managing their own IT systems. They have an existing IT infrastructure and a well-trained staff who is comfortable with managing IT systems — and managing vendors. If you like the comfort and control of running IT in-house, then an on-premise UC system is for you.
2. **Do you need deep UC functionality and to integrate with other applications?** Cloud-based UC supports the same communications applications as premise-based UC, including voice, instant messaging, presence, and conferencing, but the top on-premise vendors typically have many more features than hosted providers. If you need to take advantage of full UC functionality, support favorite mobile devices, or want call-center capabilities, for instance, an on-premise solution is a better approach. Many organizations integrate UC processes directly into their workflow, and so integration with a core insurance application, for example, might not be possible with a hosted UC system. In that case, the advanced UC capabilities and custom integration of an on-premise UC system are necessary.
3. **Do you have stringent business continuity and compliance requirements?** While all businesses depend on the incoming flow of calls to operate, an unplanned disruption could be catastrophic for some. Many healthcare providers and government agencies prefer on-premise UC system so they can ensure communications with customers and constituents even when a disaster strikes. Similarly, many financial firms prefer to maintain their UC systems in-house because they are under strict regulatory requirements that govern the protection and storage of sensitive customer information.
4. **Do you prefer IT investments as capital expenses?** Many organizations prefer to make capital investments for IT infrastructure and depreciate the costs over time. An on-premise UC system can be cheaper over the long haul if you anticipate that you'll need a lot of changes. And it can be less expensive to own if you have many people at one location or many workers who don't spend a lot of time on the phone.

Why Choose UC in the Cloud

Cloud UC is a good fit for many organizations, especially for small and midsize businesses.

1. **Do you want predictable monthly costs for your phone system?** Cloud-based UC allows you to shift communications costs to an operating expense (opex) and eliminates the need for an upfront capital investment. Costs are more predictable, too, because you typically pay a monthly fee based on the number of locations and users. In addition, schools, healthcare providers and government agencies that can fund their communications costs through federal government subsidies, such as E-Rate, will find the opex cost model of a hosted UC system particularly appealing.
2. **Do you want to deploy UC rapidly?** Satisfy your business needs quickly with hosted UC. You don't need an IT staff to buy, install and configure your UC system and related servers and storage, as you do with an on-premise system. That alone can cut the deployment time from months to weeks — and give your workers the modern communications tools they need to be productive. Hosted UC is a simpler way to connect at-home and mobile workers. Plus, you can deploy only the unified communications capabilities you need, and easily add services, such as call recording, on-demand conferencing, or fax, as the business need arises.
3. **Do you want a UC system that's simple to maintain?** With UC-as-a-service, you can focus on your business and your customers — and not spend precious time tinkering with your phones. You don't have to worry about your UC system going out of date, even as the pace of technology change accelerates. With cloud-based UC, maintenance and support are vastly simplified and upgrades are automatic.
4. **Do you want to pay as you grow?** Whether your business is growing rapidly or needs to scale down in a pinch, a cloud-based service can adapt without major capital expenses — or over-investment. You can use cloud UC to fulfill peak demand for certain functions, such as conferencing, or for temporary deployments.

The Choice is Yours

With ShoreTel, you can have it both ways – **on-premises** or **in the cloud**. The choice is yours.

ShoreTel's on-premise UC system brings together IP telephony, instant messaging, video conferencing, mobility, presence and collaboration. It's brilliantly simple to use and manage. Our purpose-built IP architecture is designed for 99.999% availability. ShoreTel's UC system allows you to grow as needed, across sites or even countries. But no matter how big you grow, your IT staff can easily maintain the system from anywhere on the network.