Who is Moving to Hosted/Cloud IPT and UC?

A new survey suggests that large enterprises may be open to the idea, and getting ready to move over the next couple of years.

The subject of Hosted/Cloud IPT and UC has drawn a lot of attention, but much of the focus has been on smaller businesses. The assumption is that these companies, which may lack the resources and purchasing power of larger enterprises, are the low-hanging fruit for hosted/cloud communications services. But a new survey seems to suggest that larger enterprises may also be very interested in hosted/cloud.

The InfoTrack division of T3i Group has produced a report under its InfoTrack for Unified Communications (IUC) program, "Enterprise Demand for Disruptive Unified Communications Technologies", September 2012. This report is segmented by Medium (ME) defined as 500 to 2,499 employees and Large (LE) with 2,500+ employees. The report covers a wide range of IT subjects, but this blog focuses on IP Telephony and Unified Communications.

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IPT and UC Implementation Paths

The first survey question of interest is, "What is the current and future processing environment for IP Telephony and UC Applications?" The answers are divided into the medium enterprise and large enterprise segments, as well as IPT and UC. The respondents to the survey could select one of four implementation answers:

*Stand-alone Hardware/Software Systems
* Corporate Data Center
* Hosted/Cloud Computing
* Don't Know

The survey asked respondents what they're currently using and what they expect to be doing in 2-3 years. The medium segment foresaw little change in this time frame, but the large segment was another matter. For large enterprises, use of the corporate data center was expected to decrease from 57% to 37%, with hosted/cloud services increasing significantly; the standalone solution saw little anticipated change, as indicated in the top half of this figure:
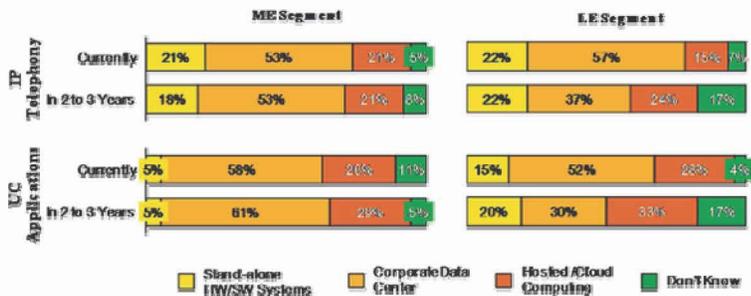
Source: InfoTrack End-user Primary Research, 2012

A surprise was that 17% of large enterprises did not know what they would be using for implementation in 2 to 3 years. This seems to indicate that they are undecided or in the midst of analysis to determine their best course of action. They may also be ambivalent about committing to any particular implementation plan.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the answers about UC applications, shown in the bottom half of the figure above. The medium segment did not anticipate much change from the current to the possible implementation in 2 to 3 years, except that the Don't Know answer actually decreased by more than half.

In contrast, the large segment became more focused on hosted/cloud computing and also became increasingly undecided, with the Don't Know answer jumping from 4 % to 17%.

Selecting Hosted/Cloud Service Providers

The next question in the report was, "What type of service provider is your company using for hosted solutions implemented in the Cloud?" There were five categories covering three areas of implementation--IPT, UC, and Social Networking.

About half of the medium-sized respondents selected a national service provider for IPT and UC; the large segment was a little less dedicated to the national service providers. Both the medium and large segments saw non-traditional IP PBX vendors such as Microsoft and IBM as the next-best means for implementing IPT, UC, and social.
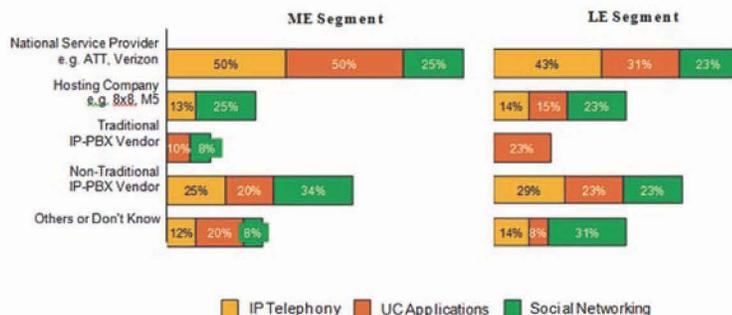
Source: InfoTrack End-user Primary Research, 2012

The interesting differences between the medium and large segments are evident when the focus was on attitudes about using a traditional IP-PBX vendor for hosted UC. The large companies favored traditional IP-PBX vendors for UC more than did the medium segment.

When it came to social, the large segment was much more undecided than the medium segment--in fact, "Others or Don't know" was the most-often-chosen category among large enterprises, with 31% selecting this option when it comes to social. In contrast, just 8% of the medium segment chose "Other or Don't know" for social; the medium segment cited "Non-traditional IP-PBX vendor" as their top choice for social.

Conclusions
At this time, it appears that the large enterprise segment is more focused on Hosted/Cloud than is the medium. For the medium segment, the Corporate Data Center remains the primary implementation method for both IPT and UC, while the large segment is much more open to reducing the role of the corporate data center over the next 2-3 years. If borne out, this could be a significant hit on the hardware and software vendors of IPT and UC.

Text that's linkedInfoTrack is a division of T3i Group, a research and consulting firm specializing in the business communications industry.