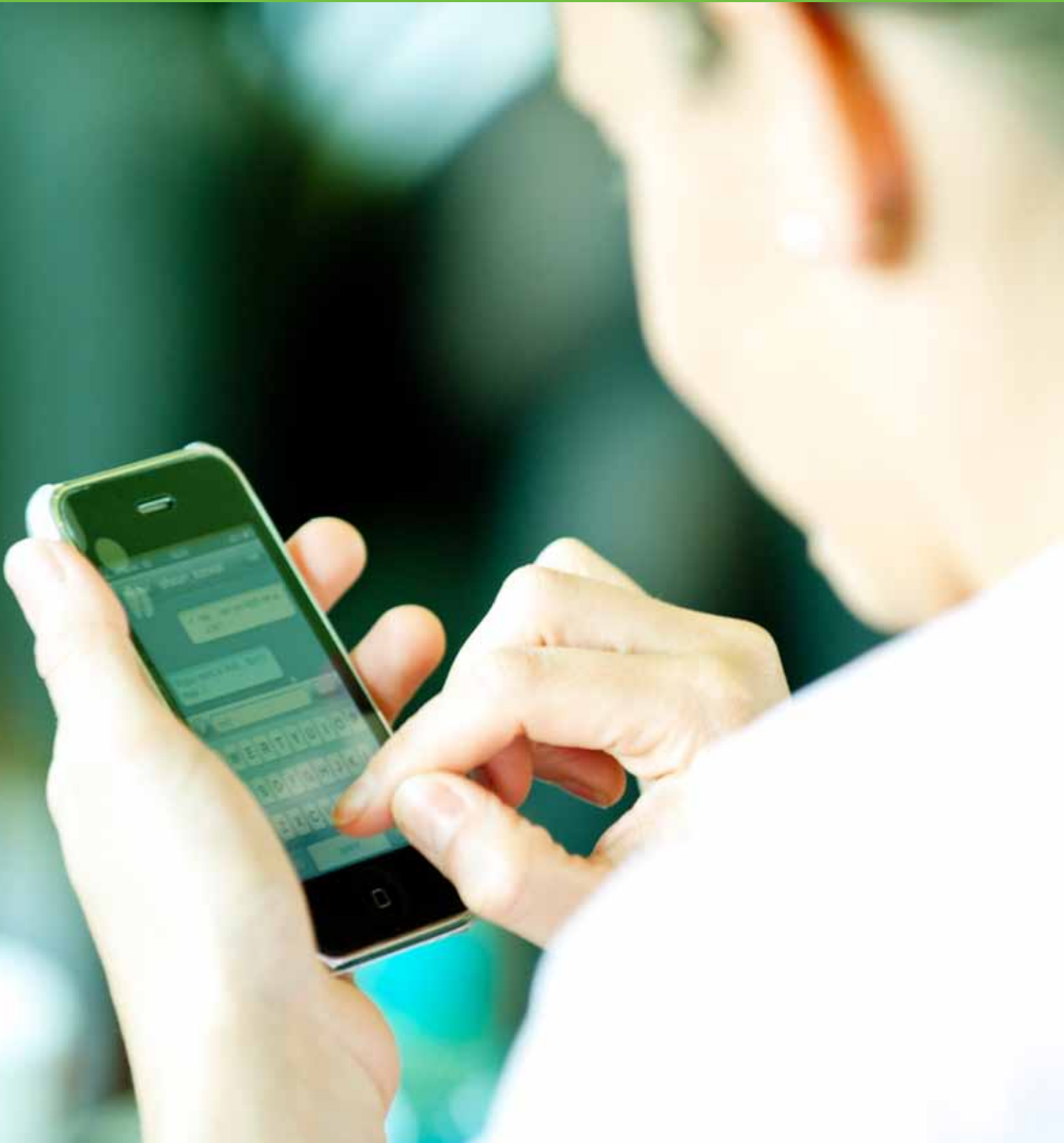


'Pay-as-you-go' Contact Centres Take Off



The advent of new-generation on-demand contact centres is opening up entire new markets for contact centre vendors and small businesses that were never before able to afford and manage the technology.

The ever-increasing pressures of doing business and the need to continuously improve customer service make the contact centre an invaluable communication channel in gaining competitive advantage. For many small and medium sized businesses, though, it is simply not economically viable to invest in the technology and skills needed to develop an effective contact centre.

As it turns out, they don't need to. With the new generation of managed services-based solutions allowing smaller contact centres to flexibly purchase technology services as and when they need to, the pressures of owning and managing their own contact centres are eradicated.

In addition to offering more flexibility, these solutions give smaller businesses the ability to offer better service to their customers and hold their own in the marketplace against far larger competitors.

One such solution, Dimension Data's Interaction on Demand (iOD), is rapidly gaining traction at its pilot site in Johannesburg, South Africa, where it is delivering immediate business benefits and clear advantages over on-premises systems in terms of cost, flexibility, and reliability.

The pay-per-use format of the solution is attracting a growing number of customers who recognise that they no longer have to invest in contact centre infrastructure to be able to talk to their customers, and small and medium businesses are going this way.

Contact centres are a highly specialised business that can absorb more resources than most small companies can afford. Technology has evolved to the point where the network plays a significant role in the overall solution offering, which means that we are able to provide contact centre functionality in a far more flexible way than ever before.

The benefit of on-demand contact centre solutions like iOD is that they enable companies to control operational expenses and focus budgets on core business areas. Speed and agility are key elements in meeting market requirements, but this can often mean over-investment in capacity to meet peak requirements as opposed to normal business loads.

Although it is still a fledgling market, on-demand contact centres represent a major shift in the dynamics of the broader contact centre industry. For one, it makes nonsense of the traditional approach that on demand contact centre solutions are merely a stop-gap solution until an in-house system can be purchased. Market researcher Frost & Sullivan expects the market's acceptance of on-demand contact centres to grow at a healthy pace, predicting more than 30% compound annual growth (CAGR) by 2012.

Part of this acceptance is based on a growing realisation that it is no longer cheaper to build and run an on-premise contact centre in the long-term, even when software licences and hardware costs are amortised. As many savvy businesses are realising, this approach does not fully take into account the ongoing operating

expenses associated with a contact centre – including the costs of IT staff to deploy; the maintenance, support and upgrading of the system and hardware; and secure and reliable facilities with appropriate network and telephone connections.

Interaction on Demand means that costs can track market demand increasing and decreasing the number of agents to match the business requirements. With no capital investment, monthly fees are proportionate to the exact business requirements, but the choice of contact centre functionality and the comfort of knowing that the technology platform will support your business requirements well into the future remain the deciding factor.

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Further benefits of on-demand contact centre offerings include:

- **Speed-to-market.**
The back-office infrastructure is already in place, so the time it takes to get a service to market is greatly reduced.
- **Usage-based pricing.**
Clients pay only for the functionality and the agent seats used, and can scale easily for busy periods and growth.
- **Reduction of risk.**
The secure data centres and support professionals monitor and manage user communications 24x7.
- **Simplified management.**
One team takes responsibility for solution design, application updates and version control, protecting smaller businesses against the ravages of technology obsolescence.
- **Predictable costs.**
There are no hidden costs related to staff, support, upgrades and maintenance – a boon for cash flow and cost management.

The reality is that iOD delivers the functionality of a modern on-premise solution for a low subscription fee that is typically a fraction of the operating expense of on-premise solutions.

Simply upgrading and maintaining contact centre kit is extremely time-consuming and expensive. With an on-demand approach, the supplier manages the technology, and constantly keeps it pegged at n-1 (that is, one level behind the latest release). This way the user gets to focus on their core business, and only their core business.

Another feature of the iOD package is that customers retain full control of the

About CIS

With our broad spectrum of contact centre integration, self-service, workforce optimisation, interaction management, hosting, cloud, outsourcing solutions and managed services, we help our clients streamline their contact centre operations improving productivity, increasing

efficiency, and enhancing customer experience. We touch over seven billion customers in interactions every year via contact centres and self-service channels we've planned, designed, integrated, and managed on behalf of our customers.

agent, and the solution simply delivers the technology to the point of use. Customers choose both the functionality and the number of agent licences they require on a monthly subscription basis. The customer retains full control of the agent – and more importantly, of the client interaction.

All the hardware resides in two secured and mission-critical data centres at Dimension Data's Bryanston Campus. The feature-rich functionality ensures that smaller businesses can offer their customers contact centre functionality that is usually only available to larger organisations.

The secure data centres deliver impressive functionality over an IP network, allowing agents to access the features from any location served by a broadband connection. The technology is linked to the customer site via diginet leased line from our site to the customer site. The flexibility of the package makes it practically 'pay as you go', with service level agreements in place to ensure a seamless service. And this is the crux of the service, says Numerous suppliers can install the infrastructure,

but supporting and maintaining this infrastructure effectively is what really takes time and expertise.

The supplier hosts, monitors and manages the contact centre applications 24x7 and ensures that the risks and costs are kept under control. The contact centres provide full redundancy, as the infrastructure is split across two data centres, and critical components are configured in duplex mode to provide enhanced business continuity capabilities.

Smaller businesses can now make decisions about contact centre solutions that are very different from those available only a few years ago.

With on-demand solutions, they can now get superior functionality, greater security, flexibility, and scalability – at a far lower cost of ownership than ever before. It opens up immense opportunities for small businesses and contact centre suppliers.

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