

Cloud Solutions for Business: CPaaS Extends the Cloud-Based Family Tree



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Businesses have come a long way in the cloud, haven't they? Although its origins stretch back to the 1950s, the cloud has only recently revolutionized the way people live, work, and do business. During that time, a lot of people have wondered just what the cloud is.



Cloud solutions for business let organizations get the most from the cloud without managing all the infrastructure.

You've already seen several generations of cloud solutions for business, so it may be helpful to understand them in terms of a cloud-based family tree. Cloud progenitors may have names that resemble an alphabet soup — such as SaaS, UCaaS, PaaS, and IaaS — but they've created fundamental building blocks for the way you do business today. Here's a look at their influence on business processes and how they are related to CPaaS, which stands to take business communications to the next level:

Early Cloud Solutions for Business: SaaS, UCaaS, PaaS, and IaaS

Pro tip: Whenever you see an acronym with "aaS" in it, chances are, it's one of the cloud solutions for business that is provided as-a-service.

The family tree begins with SaaS, which stands for "software-as-a-service." It's probably what comes to mind first when you think of the cloud. In the SaaS model, a cloud vendor hosts the business application and delivers it to customers via the internet. This means the customer doesn't have to invest in or maintain the infrastructure that would have been required to run that software on premises. Instead, the customer just pays for the number of licenses needed. Meanwhile, the vendor handles software updates and infrastructure administration behind-the-scenes, freeing up the customer's IT team to focus on other projects. One popular example of a SaaS product is unified-communications-as-a-service (UCaaS), which features unified voice, messaging, video, and conferencing all in a single solution.

Platform-as-a-service (PaaS) might best be thought of as SaaS's nerdy cousin. Geared toward application developers, it provides a complete cloud infrastructure expressly for creating software. In essence, it gives developers the ability to develop, run, and manage applications without having to build out networks, servers, and storage just to get that done.

Infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) might be nerdier still, and it tends to have less name recognition than its PaaS and SaaS kin. It offers highly scalable, automated, self-provisioned, fully operational virtual data centers in the cloud. In this scenario, customers have far more granular control over the environments than in a PaaS setting. In both the PaaS and IaaS models, customers generally pay for consumption of services, as they would with a utility.

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A New Cloud Generation: CPaaS

So, what is CPaaS? Communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) is a recent addition to the family, and it could change the game in how businesses communicate with their customers. Any company that wants to compete or innovate in today's market must provide a high-quality customer experience, and real-time communications play a key role in making sure this goes off without a hitch. Until now, most companies' options in this area were limited. For example, if they wanted to provide direct access to customer service via video chat in their app, the logistics and costs involved with provisioning that level of communications connectivity were daunting, to say the least.

Using CPaaS, businesses can embed robust cloud communications services such as voice, video, or messaging directly into their customer-facing applications using APIs, often with minimal coding. CPaaS scales seamlessly according to a business's requirements, leveraging the provider's deep experience in communications technology — not to mention global carrier relationships that secure attractive pricing — to create a truly exceptional experience for the customer.

Why CPaaS is Valuable to Businesses

CPaaS has taken an important step beyond its cloud predecessors. Although CPaaS also lives in the cloud and shares their DNA to a certain extent, those relatives can be considered more foundational infrastructure services rather than strategic assets that enable a business to differentiate itself from the competition. Likewise, SaaS solutions were focused on streamlining business processes and making internal operations more efficient.

However, CPaaS represents the next evolutionary stage of business value: integrating business applications with APIs. Why is this a game-changer? It helps businesses outpace the competition by bringing products to market faster. Through the marriage of contextual

data with communications channels, it also empowers customer service professionals to provide far more personalized and useful customer interactions than were possible before. The benefits of CPaaS go way past efficiency, affecting an area directly linked to the bottom line: customer loyalty.

The cloud family tree, originally an acronym-heavy diagram of core business services, just got a lot more interesting thanks to CPaaS. If your company wants to deliver a better customer experience, you might want to explore how CPaaS can make that possible.

Contact Vonage Business to learn more about how cloud-based communications can aid your company.