

Cloud Communication: Keep Connected Cut Costs & Achieve Your Goals

By Mike Pugh

It's not just a way to do more with less.
It's a connector and relationship-builder.

Molly Pinney, founder of the nonprofit Global Autism Project, faced a tricky dilemma: The very success and growth she and her team had worked so hard to achieve made it nearly impossible for them to stay connected.

With the rapid growth of her New York-based foundation, Molly found herself spending 60% of her time abroad training teachers and therapists to provide care to autistic children. Her organization was succeeding! But her demanding global schedule, which didn't fit the traditional 9-5 workday model, made it harder to keep connected to donors, partners, and staff. And contrary to the public's misconception about the term "nonprofit," Molly's organization — like yours — can't run on well wishes alone. (If only!) Molly needed a way to keep in contact with her team but didn't have the budget for a large enterprise telecommunication system.

Molly's research led her to cloud communications — Web-based, lower-cost alternatives to various communication services like phone and fax. No more expensive long-distance landline phone charges or international mobile roaming rates. No more costly analog phone and fax lines. Now Molly and her team stay connected 24/7 with "virtual" phone and fax systems, which allow them to do everything they used to do with their old telecommunication services — more, actually — anytime, from anywhere.

Just one example: With Molly's travel itinerary — Ghana, Peru, and Kenya — she can't always find a conveniently located fax machine.

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And she regularly needs to review, sign, and send important documents. The solution? Molly uses an online fax service, which lets her send, receive, edit, and sign faxes by e-mail.

If your organization is facing tightened budgets — or if you're simply growing quickly, like Molly's team, and need to expand your infrastructure to keep everyone connected — there are a number of ways cloud communication solutions can help. Here are a few examples:

Go Wherever You're Needed Without Missing a Thing

Like Molly Pinney, you might be most valuable to your organization when you're at industry events, talking with donors, networking, training volunteers — not behind your desk. But can you afford to be away from your office? What about all of that, you know, *work*? Cloud storage lets you store and access important documents online, so you can work whenever and wherever the need. If your staff is always bringing you documents to review, sign, and fax, use an online fax service (Molly uses eFax®) — and do it all from anywhere, using any WiFi device. Yep, even your mobile phone.

Hire the Best Staff Wherever They Are

Until recently, staffing your organization meant finding the best-qualified local people and setting them up with (expensive) digs in

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your offices. Not anymore. Thanks to the Internet, mobile technology, and cloud communication services, you can grow a “virtual” staff composed of the most talented workers *anywhere*. A virtual phone service like eVoice® (Molly’s choice), with professional greetings, toll-free numbers, and advanced call routing (even to mobile phones) means you can build a seamless staff that can communicate anytime and present a professional image to your donors, partners, clients, and the public no matter where they are — your headquarters, remote offices, or even from home.

Use the Cloud to Raise More Funds

One great cloud-based fundraising technique that an innovative nonprofit can borrow from the for-profit world is e-mail marketing. The right cloud-based e-mail-marketing program lets you easily design custom newsletters and other messages for your e-mail lists. You can segment your lists by geography, date of the most recent donation, or by other criteria — so you can design the right messages for the right people. You can also review reports of how your recipients are responding to your message — online, from anywhere — to help you improve the next one. It’s fundraising without the guesswork.

Pay As You Go

That’s right — many cloud communication services offer a pay-as-you-go model, usually month-to-month and without long-term contracts or set-up fees. This can be the ideal solution if your organization needs to staff up for a short-term initiative — such as a fundraising period or political campaign — and you can just as quickly scale back down, removing those cloud services you no longer need.

If your nonprofit is trying to do more with less in today’s tough economy, cloud communications might be the innovative answer you’ve been looking for. 

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To the Cloud and Beyond

For more innovative communication strategies, including cloud technology, see these articles at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members:

Ten Reasons to Move to the Cloud (Vol. 32, No. 3)

Is It Time to Consider New Ways to Communicate? (Vol. 25, No. 4)

Reach New Supporters with Multichannel Tools (Vol. 29, No. 2)

“Are You Ready for the Cloud? Use This Checklist to Be Sure” in “Briefs” (Vol. 31, No. 6)

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