

Siebel CRM in the Cloud: Extend, Reach, Flex

As the overall technology landscape has evolved and advanced over the years, enterprises that are not already functioning in the cloud are moving fast and developing cloud migration strategies so that they can continue to adapt to latest solutions and versions in order to stay competitive. Oracle too had to adapt fast and launch Siebel CRM in the cloud, to ensure that Siebel CRM continued to be a preferred and comprehensive CRM platform, with a well-stocked data model and deep industry functionality.

Enterprises did have the option to switch to competing software that had already been operating in the cloud, but switching from their running Siebel CRM to another platform entirely could mean several gaps that would be hard to fit or expensive to transform. If the shift is required due to outdated functionalities, but upgrading Siebel CRM seems cumbersome, then instead of changing platforms enterprises can augment and extend Siebel by moving to the Oracle cloud which offers a full-featured Siebel CRM application. They can easily tap into and maximize cloud opportunities, while retaining an enterprise view with deeply rooted integrations.

Why is it OK to modernize Siebel CRM

So your existing Siebel solution seems dated, but it remains critical to your business. How can you revitalize your existing Siebel CRM implementation, achieve modern UX, improved functionality and improved usability? Thanks to Oracle's continued investment into making applications available on the cloud, Siebel CRM is now available with additional features without further capital investment, and without having to get fresh licenses. Enterprises no longer have to worry about extensive hardware upgrades and can stretch their Siebel CRM application, as their needs demand. Oracle also allows a hybrid platform approach, that is, a combination of on-premises and cloud implementation.

Siebel CRM in the cloud gives enterprises a lot of flexibility, scalability, mobility and freedom to extend their Siebel implementation, without affecting Siebel's purpose to track customer lifecycles. They can boost agility of CRM application enhancements and continue building stronger customer relationships by offering a combination of highly tailored CRM application with the convenience of cloud. With Siebel CRM in the cloud, enterprises have always-on access to the right tools required to handle transactions, analytics, and customer engagement.

The Race to the Cloud

Every enterprise has asked this question when comparing their Siebel on-premises to a cloud migration. Cost reduction obviously is the first benefit that comes to mind, but over the years the pressure on IT teams to cut costs has reduced and there is more focus on innovation and digital transformation. Enterprises want to free up their IT resources and channel them towards improving business operations. Cost reduction is the baseline or the starting point when comparing the pros and cons of Siebel CRM on-premises vs cloud. With that in mind, here are some key areas that will have a direct impact on financial investments required:

Application Software Maintenance

When it comes to application software maintenance, there is a lot of scope for reducing costs with maintenance costs for Oracle applications being high, without enterprises really seeing any value in investing in software maintenance or getting much in return. In the case of Siebel CRM, Oracle started investing most actively in the application 2013 onwards with the release of the Siebel Innovation pack, and then caught real impetus 2016 onwards with the launch of Siebel on the cloud. While Oracle will continue to offer support for legacy Siebel implementations, it is going to get increasingly expensive to maintain those product lines because the real investments and innovations are happening in the current versions and in the cloud. So do enterprises want to continue to pay heavily for maintenance in functions needing innovation without getting new or transformational features in return? Investing in a cloud-based Siebel CRM system is a more efficient and cheaper option to continue getting new features and new releases.

Software Stack

In any enterprise the IT system has multiple layers and stacks like the web server, web application server, security and operating systems and so on, which together add up to licensing and support costs that are required. These are other software related costs that must be considered in the total cost of ownership of an on-premises system. Additionally, IT resources are required to upgrade and maintain compatible release levels of the stack with the current version of the application. Even if an enterprise

Key cloud enablers from Oracle

- Siebel IP2017/18/19 are now “cloud-ready” releases and have been re-architected to take advantage of of IaaS clouds
- With IP2017 Siebel has introduced Siebel Management Console. This feature along with silent install capability allows for customers to scale up and scale down enterprise as needed.
- Web-based Siebel Composer tool provides real-time modifications also there is no need of local installation and can be accessed from anywhere. This made Siebel SRF free and no dependency on compilation and migration.
- Workspace feature facilitates parallel development
- With the release of IP2017 the only thing that customer will have to “lift and Shift” will be their database. All items needed to be migrated now reside in either the installation itself or within the database tier. SRF is no longer part of the Siebel migration need.

Infrastructure Cost and Maintenance

It is always the enterprise's responsibility to purchase and maintain servers and related storage devices for their on-premises deployments, which means heavy costs in terms of equipment, complex cabling and routing and utility bills (energy utilization), operators and upgrade and maintenance. While costs have somewhat leveled out with commoditization, the time and effort invested for regular maintenance is at the expense of innovation. Imagine how much enterprises could save on the cost of running these systems 24x7 if they ran all of it in the cloud.

Managing Technical Resources

Moreover, hiring and maintaining IT support staff to work on the Siebel CRM system is neither easy nor cheap. IT teams are being asked to contribute to an enterprise's profitability and not just keeping systems functional. As most IT budgets continue to be dedicated to maintenance and their resources, businesses want to channel them towards core business functions where they contribute to the revenue. In such a scenario, moving Siebel CRM to the cloud will make it easier for internal IT teams and third-party vendors to upgrade and/or fix the application to ensure it performs optimally with the minimum effort.

Having said all that, migrating Siebel to the cloud will also eliminate the complexities faced by an enterprise at least in maintaining and supporting application servers. Siebel CRM performs multiple functions from lead generation, customer management to customer experience.

Here are some operational benefits of moving Siebel CRM to the cloud:

Access anywhere

The benefit of any application being on the cloud applies to Siebel CRM as well, i.e. it can be accessed from anywhere anytime. For customer service reps and sales teams this feature is essential because it gives them access to work even if they are traveling. A full-featured Siebel CRM system is available on the cloud and can be easily accessed through a web browser or application, via any device.

Continuous delivery

On-premises Siebel CRM's tooling and development processes can be dated and could fall short of today's agile environment and requirements. This demands innovative Continuous Delivery for Siebel DevOps with automated Siebel code management and deployment process with full version control which are supported by recent 'cloud-ready' versions of Siebel. This allows agile Siebel deployments and releases, and support for Siebel repository and non-repository objects, so deployments can be delivered faster and more frequently.

Shorter procurement cycles

Traditional deployments have extended procurement processes with each stage being time intensive and requiring large investments and multiple approvals. Moreover, each of these

processes have to be repeated for different enterprise environments such as development, testing environments and production environments which adds to the overall cost and could delay an on-premises implementation. Such concerns do not exist in a cloud implementation which allows augmenting resources without much hassles.

Stay agile, Scale with ease

By moving their Siebel CRM implementations to the Oracle cloud, enterprises can incorporate the newest upgrades and patches faster and with minimal disruption. In addition to this, often enterprises are unable to accurately measure their requirements and end up under sizing environments for initial phases, post which they are unable to cope with growth in later phases. With Oracle cloud, enterprise can scale their Siebel CRM application resources up or down at any time and only pay for the computing capacity they use.

Sizing and scaling in Siebel CRM not dynamic though it has provided features of scale up and down of resources. To add up server it requires huge time like procurement of servers, installation of application and then configuration. However in the cloud, you can create and store images of the servers and dismantle real virtual server from the stack. The server configuration will still be available on Siebel CRM gateway but it will automatic shifts load to available servers.

Next time when you want to scale up Siebel CRM, just get the new host and install the image on the server. It will be automatically available under Siebel CRM and load will be shift on it equally.

Redundancy and ability to recover easily from downtime

When Siebel CRM on-premises implementations fail they need to be managed on a case-by-case basis. Malfunctioning components have to be procured and replaced. Key components like the Gateway have to be clustered using expensive clustering software and deployment is still limited by its ability to handle only one failure in the primary gateway. When Siebel CRM is in the cloud, such issues can be easily managed within the intrinsic features of the cloud. This means enterprises can build low cost stand by disaster recovery for their existing Siebel CRM deployments and incur costs only for the duration of the outage and the initial set up and testing.

Reduction in incidental costs

On-premise customers pay hardware support costs, virtualization licensing, support and data center costs, and so on. These costs can be reduced by moving Siebel CRM to the Oracle cloud. Moreover, hardware platforms typically have end-of-life dates, which means when a particular hardware/platform is no longer supported, customers are forced to buy new hardware, also incurring a long procurement cycle. But in the cloud, even if instance types are 'End of Life' an enterprise can simply upgrade the platform instances to new instance types at no cost for the upgrade.

Ensuring continued performance

Even though performance testing should be carried out before any major, and long term, change to a Siebel CRM environment, most customers only test the performance of their application during the initial launch in the yet to be deployed production hardware. Once the deployment has been underway for a long time, either due to lack of environments, in some cases, IT teams do not test the performance for later releases due to the expense and lack of the environments available. Moreover, the added risk of discovering performance issues later in production can be easily eliminated in the cloud. Any particular environment can be imaged and simulated just for performance testing duration and only used when needed and can be dismantled if not to be used again.

High availability

Designed correctly, a minimum of 99.95% uptime can be achieved when implementing Siebel CRM on the Oracle cloud, and that too at no additional cost.

Is Oracle cloud the only option?

Customers with on-premise Siebel CRM implementations face issues with limited environments, like test environments could have a newer release compared to production, which means that if a performance issue was found in production the enterprise will have no way of provisioning a performance debugging environment. But this is very easy to achieve in an Oracle cloud implementation.

And to ensure that Siebel CRM stays agile and is not restricted to specific environments, Oracle has also certified its Siebel CRM Applications suite to work as efficiently on the Amazon Web Services (AWS) infrastructure. The key components of the Siebel CRM application, that is the Siebel Gateway Name Server, the Siebel Server, and the Webserver with Siebel Web Server Extensions can also be deployed to multiple Amazon cloud instances supported by an Amazon Elastic Load Balancer. The Siebel Database can be setup on Amazon RDS for Oracle.

Siebel CRM also supported in Microsoft Azure platform and is certified for the same.

The Closing Argument

We strongly recommend migrating your on-premise Siebel CRM implementation to the cloud, and recommend that you select a cloud host that can seamlessly support all the features of your Siebel CRM implementation. A dedicated cloud host will be able to handle your software so you don't have to switch to another software you aren't familiar with. A dedicated cloud solution allows you to get the most out of Siebel while expanding your options for using your software.

When you decide to use Siebel on the cloud, you are gifting yourself more mobility and collaboration and will be able to access Siebel CRM via a browser or application. Your employees can work from home, go on business trips or work in the office and still stay updated. Siebel CRM in the cloud also supports better collaboration because your team can better coordinate work and have constant access to live data. It's easier for your team to stay connected and work more productively regardless of physical location.

Siebel CRM drives business objectives by providing analytical insights from customer data. Enterprises rely on business transaction and customer engagement data to support operations, initiate marketing programs, and capture the lifetime value of a customer. Siebel CRM has high business value for service managers, sales representatives, and key decision makers in securing sustained profits. By moving it to the cloud, you will be maximizing the benefits of Siebel CRM including areas such as maintaining data of no immediate business value, managing data in non-production environments, securing data for privacy and compliance and keeping production data at optimal levels.

Author



Santosh Borse

Sales Head, North America Oracle Practice, LTI

Santosh has over 23 years of experience with Sales and Enterprise Application Consulting background. He has vast experience leading and delivering quantum improvements in the supply chain from strategy to process redesign to technology implementation in both a consulting and multiple industry supply chain setting. Proven track record of working with client leadership to develop Enterprise Application strategy, build a digital roadmap and deliver true innovation to a global marketplace.

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