

# Operators Are Zipping By

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Most technologies offer a spectrum of options from basic to advanced—and most implementations fall in the middle. With contact centers, though, that's not the case. Here, organizations gravitate to the extremes. Sophisticated companies use specialized systems that are expensive to acquire and maintain. The rest make do with basic PBX tools such as ACD and hunt groups.

This distribution has not been by choice, but due to a lack of options. However, hosted services are changing that. For the first time, highly specialized call management solutions are available to organizations of any size, without the barrier of an upfront capital investment. Cloud services are replacing a variety of IT infrastructure and applications with simplified click-to-try services, including contact center options. One of these, Zipwire™, is a new, advanced, hosted contact center solution from Aspect—a firm that knows a thing or two about state-of-the-art customer interactions.

Aspect has been powering contact centers for over 40 years. Its technology can be found within the most advanced and robust multichannel contact centers on the planet. As a service, Zipwire makes Aspect's latest technologies accessible to organizations of all sizes.

## What's a Zipwire?

Zipwire sits at the intersection of two big transitions occurring in contact centers. Along with so many other segments of IT, a shift is occurring from premises-based solutions to cloud services. The other transition is from routine to exception-based interactions. The former is about the technology; the latter is about the calls. Because of rich self-service solutions, the repetitive and monotonous calls of yesterday's contact center are disappearing. Contact centers are processing requests that are more diverse today, and effective customer interaction is becoming a competitive differentiator. This trend has significant repercussions, from how companies train agents to the tools they use. Actions speak louder than the words, "Your call is important to us."

It is hard to come up with clever names for high-tech products and services. However, Aspect did reasonably well with Zipwire. The name, a play on zip line, conjures images of a fast downhill ride. That may seem like a stretch for a contact center solution, yet it works. It takes less than a minute to create an account, complete with a working telephone number. Then, just a few more clicks, to create agents. Not

once during the entire setup process is it necessary to deal with Sales Representatives or anyone from IT.

The full list price for Zipwire is \$119/month/concurrent agent. The pricing plan is both competitive and simple. The price includes one phone number (more can be added), but long distance minutes are additional. The number provided is just a number— use it as is, forward an existing number to it, or move/port an existing number to Zipwire. The service also offers competitive long distance rates—outbound calls are \$0.01/minute. All features are included in the core price, with only a few options, such as usage-based long distance. The only major add-on option is Voxeo's advanced IVR, which makes sense given that the rest of the pricing is per agent.

## Advanced Contact Center as a Service

Many organizations consider cloud services nothing more than a delivery alternative, but they are more than that. The classic lease vs. buy decision considers different financial models to procure the same good. But a hosted contact center delivers more than just a contact center. It is a robust

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service that grows and adapts to an organization's needs. It never requires upgrading, and it won't leave you stuck with a useless asset. A hosted contact center solution offers every feature as needed, without having to justify a long-term commitment. Cloud solutions are low risk and easy to pilot. Zipwire, in fact, offers a 30-day, unrestricted free trial for up to 25 agents.

The contact center is an ideal application as a service. Consider these Zipwire™ benefits:

- **No onsite hardware or software:** Zipwire is accessed completely via standard web browsers. It can be used with any phone system or with a softphone available within the service.
- **Evergreen:** The software is always current. No more downtime for planned (or unplanned) upgrades. The monthly price includes all maintenance and upgrade costs.
- **High availability:** Aspect hosts Zipwire in geographically dispersed distributed data centers.
- **Scalability:** Expand or downsize the contact center in response to business demand. Such fluctuations can be seasonal, advertising-based, or other.
- **Multi-location:** Easily implement multiple networked contact centers. This can include at-home agents or even a follow-the-sun model.
- **Predictable costs:** All features are included in the monthly rate. There is no need to plan for unexpected software or hardware updates or hardware replacements.
- **No commitment:** There is no requirement to sign a long-term agreement. Nor does Zipwire ask clients to commit to feature packs or agent quantities. Additionally, CFOs love Zipwire because all costs are treated as operating expenses.

When you add up those features, the choice seems obvious. Really, the only reason most organizations consider premises-based systems to be "normal" is because there were previously no viable alternatives. In fact, hosted services for voice only emerged about a decade ago with the advent of VoIP. Then, over the past several years, broadband networking became prevalent, and general cloud-based applications proved to be effective. Now the time is right for specialized applications like the contact center—and Zipwire seems well positioned to deliver compelling benefits.

### Zipwire Features

Zipwire itself is new, but the service leverages decades of contact center experience. Aspect has delivered innovative contact center solutions since the 1970s, and the company

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pioneered automated dialer and workforce management solutions. Aspect is highly focused on contact centers and customer interaction, with a customer list that boasts many familiar household brands.

Hosted contact center is a relatively new category, yet many competitive services have already sprung into availability. However, Zipwire has some compelling, notable features.

**SLA:** It's easy to get excited about the features of a given service, but it's also critical to look at the service level agreement (SLA). An SLA is effectively the warranty. It's what the provider promises to deliver in terms of availability. Remember, if the provider's service goes down—so does yours. This danger has given rise to the myth that organizations should avoid the cloud and host their own solutions. At one time, that may have been true, but rarely today. In many cases, cloud providers offer an advantage with their large, geographically dispersed data centers, as is the case with Zipwire. That's why most organizations report increased uptime after moving to a cloud service. Zipwire backs its offer with a 100% uptime SLA. If the service goes down, Aspect pays its customers. When looking at hosted contact centers, demand an aggressive SLA.

**Webchat:** Something like five years ago, "call centers" became "contact centers" because the interactions involved more than telephone calls. Unfortunately, most of the re-invention was brochure-ware. The vast majority of contact centers, indeed, still only process telephone calls. However, that is beginning to change, and the enlightened have the advantage. Generally, self-service options have become the customer's first choice for interaction. The problem is that when things don't work right, it can be frustrating to abort and start over by telephone. Webchat enables customers to interact with a live agent directly from the website. In itself, that interaction isn't particularly difficult. The hard part is integrating the chat into the contact center. That means routing the chat to the right agent, tracking it, reporting it, and even recording it (transcription). Zipwire facilitates the integration of webchat. The code for the website is an easy-to-embed snippet. The skills-based routing engine knows how to route chats as easily as calls. The big difference: An agent can handle only one call at a time, but the number of simultaneous chats is configurable.

**Recording:** "This call may be recorded for training and quality purposes"—it's a common phrase, but the underlying technology isn't trivial. Call recording is one area where small business contact centers are at a clear

disadvantage. Zipwire™ makes call recording fairly simple. There are many options for what to record (by IVR branch, by agent, based on thresholds, etc.). It's even possible to record all calls. Zipwire includes call recording, with up to 30 days of storage, as a standard feature. Longer-term storage is available.

**IVR:** Zipwire includes an interactive voice response (IVR) unit in the base price. It is multi-lingual and programmed via a friendly wizard. This standard IVR also offers the ability to integrate with services such as Salesforce.com. For example, a customer can enter an account number or other identifier for automated queries. If the call still goes to the agent, that information pops up on the agent's screen—no more having to ask for the same information twice. For more advanced applications, Zipwire customers can add the Voxeo CXP IVR as an option, thanks to Aspect's 2013 acquisition of Voxeo—one of the most powerful IVR platforms on the market.

Zipwire can serve both inbound and outbound contact solutions. It has, of course, a robust reporting engine. Agents log in through a web browser and can immediately route calls to any number—or download (once) the softphone plugin to make/receive calls directly from the browser. Really, Zipwire offers too many features to list, but prospective customers should understand that Zipwire is a complete solution.

In fact, the solution is so rich that customers might take pause to wonder about support—which is another Zipwire differentiator. Zipwire provides three types of support, all built into the core offering. The first is online documentation,

which is very rich, with lots of hypertext-related content. View it online, or download the PDFs. An online support ticketing system includes both a public forum and private tickets. Of course, Zipwire also happens to have a contact center, staffed with a deep bench of live engineers whom Aspect calls "Customer Advocates"—again, included in the price (and trial). The customer advocates can help with advanced solutions such as an integration with a CRM.

### Pilot a Contact Center?

Previously, it was impossible to try a contact center before you bought it—but cloud services change that. Aspect is so confident in Zipwire that it will pay for the trial. The completely free trial includes all features, including a working number and support. During the pilot, organizations considering Zipwire should push all features—including webchat and call recording, and use the service with both existing phone systems and softphones—as well as test Zipwire's support.

Overall, Zipwire is worth a look for most types of companies. Aspect has done an excellent job of bridging its premises-based expertise into a new cloud service. The result is quite robust, at a compelling price. Aspect has an aggressive roadmap for the Zipwire service, such as advanced call recording analytics, which are expected later this year. These improvements indicate that, as with most cloud services, Zipwire will continue to get better, in contrast to premises-based solutions that are designed for obsolescence. The combination of existing offerings, the free trial option, and anticipated improvements makes Zipwire an intriguing development in the world of hosted contact center solutions.

Visit [Zipwire.Aspect.com](http://Zipwire.Aspect.com) for additional information.

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#### About Zipwire™

The Zipwire contact center was designed as a pure cloud solution that combines Aspect's 40-year contact center heritage with Voxeo's 15 years of global cloud hosting expertise. The Zipwire contact center in the cloud brings multi-channel contact center capabilities that are reliable, scalable and simplistic for organizations with needs ranging from 2 - 250 seats as well as large enterprise needs up to 500 seats. Our easy solution doesn't bury capabilities in complexity, making it possible to deploy an inbound, outbound or hybrid contact center solution with robust features like multi-session chat, fully-featured agent and supervisor desktops and advanced reporting and recording capabilities – reducing your go-live effort and overall resource allocation. With pay-as-you-go pricing that scales with your business and a 100% uptime service level agreement (SLA), our Zipwire contact center gives you the reliability and simplicity you expect from the cloud with the robust multi-channel communications capabilities your business needs to deliver a superior customer experience. It's just that simple. For more information, visit [zipwire.aspect.com](http://zipwire.aspect.com).

