

Automated Microsoft NCE billing functionality helps Westcoast Cloud maintain peak performance

In January 2022, Microsoft launched a New Commerce Experience (NCE) solution, redesigning the Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) program and revolutionising the way Microsoft 365 licences are purchased.

With advanced sales capabilities, new rules and cutting-edge subscription management functionality, this new commerce experience has the power to transform CSP businesses – but with one caveat. CSPs do need to be equipped with powerful software to adapt and benefit from these Microsoft NCE changes.

One of these CSPs is Westcoast Cloud, a leading distributor known for its expertise in cloud computing solutions. An extensive network of partners allows Westcoast Cloud to offer a wide range of solutions to channel partners.

A dedication to staying at the forefront of cloud technology ensures that its VARs (Value Added Resellers) have access to the latest advancements in the industry, empowering them to drive their digital transformation forward.

With their strong industry reputation and accolades such as winner of CRN's Cloud Distributor of the Year 2021 and 2022, Westcoast needed to adapt and react quickly to the evolution happening in the CSP space. As one of the UK's largest MS cloud distributors, it was vital that Westcoast Cloud could deliver and maintain MS NCE products and services for their VAR and reseller network.



Westcoast Cloud, an existing PRD Technologies customer, asked us to rapidly implement critical new features within their existing 'Intelligent Billing Enterprise' platform, so they could take advantage of the opportunities presented by NCE with immediate effect.

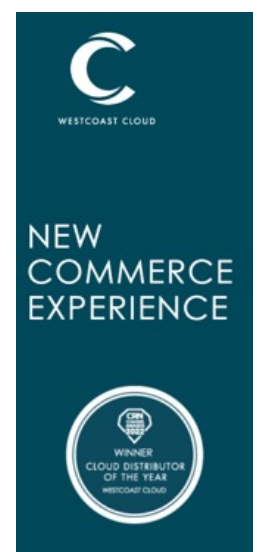
Overcoming Microsoft NCE billing challenges

The key change with the new Microsoft NCE format was the introduction of monthly subscriptions, to run alongside the previous annual subscriptions, but on an annual contract basis.

In the long-run, Microsoft NCE aims to reduce complexity and provide cost savings in return for longer-term commitments. Better pricing has been implemented to attract customers to engage in an annual arrangement, whilst 'pay-as-you-go' non-committed monthly pricing is penalised with a more expensive premium.

One of the biggest challenges faced by Westcoast Cloud, and other CSPs, was the time-consuming management of the new subscription processes, and the complexity of managing diverse license renewals. Alongside this, Westcoast Cloud needed to address a number of additional factors before the full scope of benefits could be realised, including:

- Calculation and application of 20% price increase for resellers not adopting the new NCE model and selecting to remain on the legacy model until it is phased out. Plus, calculation and application of a 5% promotional discount for early adopters of the NCE
- Amendment of the billing model for differing contract start dates, to switch them from calendar month billing (30 days in advance on the 1st of the month) to 'day of month' billing
- Set up of co-term billing, to synchronise new NCE subscriptions with existing NCE subscriptions, grouping multiple subscriptions into one simplified contract and invoice with the same termination dates
- Complex rate pro-rata handling functionality created for cancellation of units when crossing renewal date boundaries
- A high level of automations implemented for the application of discounts for MS promotions
- Enhancement of continuous data collection via APIs developed, to track usage for MS subscription status and updates
- Implementation of NCE auto renewals and subscription cancellations were required to significantly reduce manual workload





Delivering enhanced capabilities and functionality for Microsoft NCE services

We took the time to understand and manage the concerns and risks to CSPs as a result of these changes. That understanding enabled us to create the optimum solution for Westcoast Cloud, to ensure the continuation of their MS-licenced customer retention and their business success. This was our priority.

Our team then implemented the technical changes needed from Microsoft in terms of product, pricing, billing and subscription management, to support Westcoast Clouds continued growth in this area.

An option for NCE subscriptions to be cancelled with 7 days' notice and pro-rata charges applied was added. Our billing system also provides fully automated tasks for NCE and NCE legacy charges. Plus, the ability to automate the collection and processing of data for VARs and resellers from other NCE distributors was created.

In addition to the NCE functionality developments, we also built in the capability to extract Adobe services data for Westcoast Cloud via their provisioning platform, using API functionality.

Reaping the benefits of automated Microsoft NCE billing software

Our automated solution requires no, or minimal, user and admin support from Westcoast Cloud to manage the new NCE licence processing, creating huge time, cost and resource savings for their business.

All the NCE billing challenges faced by Westcoast Cloud have been effectively resolved within their 'Intelligent Billing Enterprise' software platform. These benefits have also filtered down to XMA and other Westcoast Cloud VARs.

We are now in a position to roll this solution out to other channel distributors, VARs and resellers.

"The team at PRD Technologies never fail to deliver innovative solutions, and yet again they have developed a range of functionality and system enhancements to our Intelligent Billing software in response to the billing complexities and challenges created by the new Microsoft NCE licensing model.

"They did this swiftly, safeguarding our retention of business in this area and empowering us to take advantage of the new opportunities created by the guaranteed revenue of annual Microsoft NCE subscriptions."

Mark Davies, MD of Westcoast Cloud

“ The sophisticated automations and intuitive business intelligence of their software has been instrumental in our growth. Since July 2021 our billing through the Intelligent Billing Enterprise platform has increased from £80 million to £126 million per annum. ”

Mark Davies, MD of Westcoast Cloud