TOP 6
REASONS TO
MOVE TO THE CLOUD

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Contents

What You'll Gain From This eBook

You've probably heard a lot about the cloud recently. Everything from smartphones to systems are made better by the cloud. However, most of us don't understand exactly what the cloud is. It can seem intimidating and complex, but it's actually quite a simple concept. In fact, you are probably already using the cloud.

This eBook will help give you an understanding of:

1. What the cloud is

2. The top 6 reasons to move your business to the cloud

3. Key considerations to make when moving to the cloud

Introduction: What is the Cloud?

You might be surprised to find out that the concept of the "cloud" is really quite simple, and you are most likely already using it.

The term cloud simply describes IT technologies provided as a service, rather than a physical, tangible product that is purchased outright. Ever used Gmail or Yahoo! Mail? They are examples of cloud technology. How about online banking, or file-sharing applications like Dropbox, iTunes or Spotify? You guessed it – these are all part of the cloud!

By putting your business' IT in the cloud, you will eliminate the costs and complexity of purchasing, configuring, and managing hardware and software. Cloud providers create and use applications that offer safe storage of your company's critical information in secure data centers, which are maintained by IT professionals.

These applications are available over the Internet, so that all you and your employees need is a workstation or mobile device, an Internet connection and passwords to access data. Everything else is configured and maintained by the host provider, saving your enterprise time and money.

Cloud offerings generally have the following attributes:

Service Based
Hosted by a vendor or service provider and available over the Internet

Scalable & Elastic
Scale up or down by adding or removing resources as needed

Shared Resources
Use a model of shared resources to provide robust offerings at a reasonable price.

Metered by Use
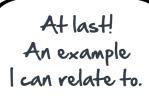Multiple payment models allow you to pay just for what you use

Internet Based
Services are delivered through familiar Internet platforms

Email in the Cloud: An Example

To better understand the cloud, let's use email as an example. Email is a technology that is used by nearly every business. The cloud can simplify a business's email offering and reduce overhead.

To set up email for your organization in the traditional manner, you would need to acquire server and storage hardware, make arrangements for appropriate power and cooling, and hire staff to design, implement and support the email infrastructure. If the needs of your organization change (i.e. new employees are added) or a new functionality (such as an archiving solution) is desired, you would have to upgrade or acquire more hardware and have your staff redesign and re-implement the solution. This could create potential outages and unwanted downtime in the process.

To set up email in a cloud infrastructure, you simply contact the cloud provider and define your requirements. Your email is then set up to your specifications in the cloud and ready for use. No servers to worry about, no cables, no problem. If your requirements change, the cloud provider can leverage their infrastructure to accommodate modifications without capital expense or downtime.

At last! An example I can relate to.

Using the Cloud

Of course, email is not the only offering to be found in the cloud. There are many cloud hosted applications, as well as cloud-based virtual workspaces that allow remote and mobile workers to have access to the same work environment as in-office users. There are even cloud infrastructure providers that allow server and other IT infrastructure to reside in their cloud framework.

The Bottom Line

Not every business function can reside in the cloud, but as cloud technologies continue to mature, the options increase. Every company owes it to themselves to evaluate their IT needs and infrastructure to see if the cloud can add value and reduce costs.

Electricity: A Metaphor for the Cloud

A good metaphor for the cloud involves one of life's most important commodities – electricity. To obtain electricity for your home, you certainly don't need to buy a large generator, stick it outside your house and fuel it all day and night so you can turn on your lights and other appliances. No, you pay an electric company to bring electricity to your home and you pay for what you use each month. If the equipment breaks, the electric company is responsible for repairing it. If you move, you provide notice and turn off your service. The billing stops, you don't return anything and you don't throw anything away. This is essentially how cloud IT business services work.

The Top 6 Reasons to Move to the Cloud

1

Reduced Costs

"Getting out of the Hardware Business"

Setting up an IT system requires significant investment to purchase hardware, whether it's multiple servers and workstations, or networking equipment such as routers and switches. Computer equipment can also become obsolete quickly, requiring additional expenditures to update your company's systems.

In the cloud, all IT resources and applications are maintained and managed offsite so that your company typically pays only for the services it actually needs and uses. IT staff is reduced or eliminated because the cloud provider performs most of the maintenance. And because there are no unexpected costs due to hardware failure, your organization's IT budget is easier to project.

"Per Seat, Per Month Pricing"

Software licensing (such as Microsoft applications) continues to be very costly for organizations. Rather than purchasing software licenses outright, and managing your user licenses inventory, a cloud provider can offer you a "subscription" to these licenses on a per-month, per-user basis for a flat monthly fee. This monthly subscription program is called a "Service Provider License Agreement" (SPLA) and can only be offered by certified partners.

The Top 6 Reasons to Move to the Cloud

2

Budgetable

"Knowing Your IT Costs"

Moving to the cloud allows you to obtain a very clear picture of how much you will spend on technology each year. Your critical hardware, software, support, maintenance and management will be provided to you for a flat monthly rate. You will no longer have to worry about replacing servers, or purchasing additional software licenses when issues come up. This generally results in little to no unexpected IT costs for the year!

Predictable IT costs can help organizations budget for the future. If you already know what you will pay each month, you will have the ability to focus on your mission and your core competencies, rather than putting out small IT fires and worrying about how to pay for unplanned infrastructure purchases.

The Top 6 Reasons to Move to the Cloud

3

Increased Security

"Maintain the integrity of your data"

Data security is a major concern for many businesses. As part of the cloud hosting providers' service level agreement (SLA), extra precautions, such as greater security measures, must be practiced in order to keep your valuable information protected from intrusion or theft. Cloud computing best practices therefore include higher levels of password protection, additional levels of physical security at the hosting site, and other advanced security measures designed to protect your business' sensitive financial information.

Data is stored in state-of-the-art, highly secure facilities that generally feature power redundancy, 99.99 percent uptime, and daily backups. Few businesses can match the levels of physical security offered by the cloud and IT support is only a phone call or email away.

The Top 6 Reasons to Move to the Cloud

4   Remote Accessibility

"Access Your Systems Anytime, Anywhere!"

Moving applications and data to the cloud allows any authorized user to connect to your virtual office from any location with an Internet connection. Whether you use the cloud to host software, email, or your company CRM, you and your employees can have 24x7 access to data. This type of anytime, anywhere accessibility often results in the kind of productivity and efficiency that is essential in the global economy. It can give your business a competitive edge by allowing your team to more readily focus on the business and your customers' needs.

5   Scalability & Versatility

"What if My Needs Change?"

The beauty of the cloud is that it is entirely scalable. It grows with you. Cloud computing provides the flexibility to scale IT infrastructure up or down, depending on your business needs. This means that your organization does not have to make provisions for future requirements. If the company needs more RAM, hard drive space, or CPUs, each can be added quickly, often in a matter of minutes. If you hire more employees, the additional software user license subscriptions can be easily added to your solution. The same applies if you need to downgrade IT resources. It's like technology on demand!

The Top 6 Reasons to Move to the Cloud

6

Processing Power

"Making us Work Better!"

Mobile computing, which allows users to access the Internet on the go, is essential in business and personal life. While most portable devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and notebooks, are less powerful than the average workstation, hosting in the cloud boosts the power of these devices to closely match the performance of workstations. This is because most of the processing is performed on the cloud server, not on the portable device.

One thing is certain; the way we do things is changing. We expect information to be available anywhere, anytime, and exactly when we demand it to be. The cloud can satisfy these requests and make things easier. It allows for a mobile workforce and makes us work more efficiently. And, as with anything else in technology, it's only going to get better from here!

Getting Started

5 Considerations When Moving to the Cloud

If you are thinking about moving some or all of your business applications to the cloud, below are a few things you'll want to consider:

1. Implementation & Integration

- **Planning** – What are your goals for moving to the cloud and what barriers might stand in your way? Migrating to a cloud environment requires careful planning and execution.

- **Compatibility** – How will the solution integrate with your existing systems? Work with your IT person to confirm that your current applications can communicate with those moving to the cloud.

- **Flexibility** – Can the solution easily adjust to your changing needs? You should be able to make changes quickly and smoothly, with the least amount of service interruption possible.

2. Cost

- **System Complexity** – Is your infrastructure suitable for the cloud? If your systems are custom-built or overly complex, it may be more cost effective to host, manage, and support them internally.

- **Hardware Costs** – Should you purchase your own hardware or use a cloud provider? A financial analysis can help you determine the cost benefits of purchasing and managing hardware on your own versus outsourcing to a cloud provider.

- **Cost Variations** – Will your monthly costs fluctuate? Certain components like user counts can become a variable expense that could increase or decrease depending on your usage requirements. While this kind of flexibility can result in a lack of predictability, it can also be beneficial in that you only use and pay for the resources you need.

5 Considerations When Moving to the Cloud

3. Availability & Performance

- **Bandwidth** – Do you have enough Internet bandwidth for the solution to perform? If not, can you purchase more? Connecting to servers and applications in the cloud requires sufficient bandwidth to access and transfer data.

- **Uptime** – Will your systems be available when you need them to be? Once you move your critical systems off-site and to the cloud, it is important that you have the ability to access and connect to your information when needed.

- **Support & Maintenance** –If there is a hardware, software, or connectivity issue, how quickly can the problem be resolved? Cloud solutions must be proactively managed and maintained by a vendor with qualified IT expertise.

4. Data Security & Protection

- **Data Protection** – Who has access to your data? No one outside of your organization should own or be able to retrieve your data; it is your intelectual property.

- **Hardware Security** – How protected are the physical systems that are storing your data? Only authorized individuals should have access to the data center(s) holding your information.

- **Backup & Disaster Recovery** – What happens in the event of a major hardware/software failure? It's crucial to have an effective backup and recovery plan in place in the event that your systems crash or you lose access to the cloud.

5 Considerations When Moving to the Cloud

5. Standards & Regulations

- **Compliance** – Does moving to the cloud violate any compliance requirements? Confirm that storing your systems and data offsite in the cloud doesn't result in any compliance violations (i.e. HIPAA, PCI, etc.). What additional steps must be taken to remain compliant?

- **Confidentiality** – Will your company's information be shared with anyone else? Be sure to check with your cloud provider to ensure that a confidentiality clause is included in the agreement. Your company's information should be kept completely confidential from outside parties.

- **Policies and Procedures** – Will organizational policies and proce dures need to be modified as a result of moving to the cloud? Review any changes that may result from a move to the cloud, so rules and regulations can be tweaked appropriately (i.e. staff permissions and individual access rights).

Get There: Key Considerations Worksheet

Questions to ask yourself if you're thinking of moving to the cloud

1. What are my final objectives/Why do I want to move to the cloud (i.e. going paperless, improved quality, time savings)?

2. What are my barriers, obstacles and limitations?

3. Will I have to train my staff / are they ready?

4. How will I get information from my paper documents?

5. Is there any inforomation that I may lose when moving to the cloud?

6. What tools do I not have now that I might need when moving to the cloud?

7. What tools and/or processes do I have today that I'm not willing to give up?

8. How will the cloud solution integrate with my existing systems?

IT Solutions to Solve Your Business Problems

For over 40 years, DP Solutions has helped organizations like yours bring their business to higher levels by taking IT worries off their shoulders. With managed IT, cloud, and professional services all backed by our state-of-the-art data centers, we give our clients high availability and the peace of mind that goes with it.

DP Solutions offers a high tech, high touch experience. We are a different type of IT company—one that not only delivers superior technology solutions to its clients, but also brings personal care, passion, and attention, because WE CARE DEEPLY about our clients' experience!

Our mission is quite simply to provide secure, efficient, reliable, and innovative IT service that delivers outstanding client satisfaction—and gets results. We're your single point of contact for all of your technology needs.

Through our adherence to industry best practices, we're committed to the long-term success of every customer we serve, no matter their size. Today, with over 1,000 satisfied clients locally and nationwide, DP Solutions is the premier IT technology solutions provider in the mid-Atlantic, serving as the IT company of choice throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and beyond.

DP Solutions. Problem solved.

FREE

FREE CLOUD
BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Take DP Solutions' online Cloud Benefit Assessment to determine the key areas where a move to the cloud might benefit your business.

Get a Free Assessment

Resources

1. BizActions: Five Reasons to Move to the Cloud, June 11, 2013, https://www.bizactions.com/modules/popup_fullniche.cfm?spid=2814&aid=69

2. De-Mystifying the Cloud, Jefferson Eckles on behalf of DP Solutions, February 5, 2013, http://www.dpsolutions.com/de-mystifying-the-cloud/

3. Why Moving to the Cloud isn't as Scary (or as complicated) As You Think, Tom Scheffer on behalf of DP Solutions, January 21, 2013, http://www.dpsolutions.com/why-moving-to-the-cloud-isnt-as-scary-or-as-complicated-as-you-think/

4. 5 Considerations When Moving to the Cloud, Tom Scheffer on behalf of DP Solutions, July 23, 2012, http://www.dpsolutions.com/5-considerations-when-moving-to-the-cloud/