

Cloud Computing: Is it right for your business?



Business management software and information technology (IT) support are available through “the cloud.” Many companies are choosing this option over traditional on-premise solutions and infrastructure.

Data is a business’s most valuable asset. It’s reasonable to be concerned about how the cloud will affect your operations and business processes. Is it expensive? Will your data be safe? Is the cloud right for your business?

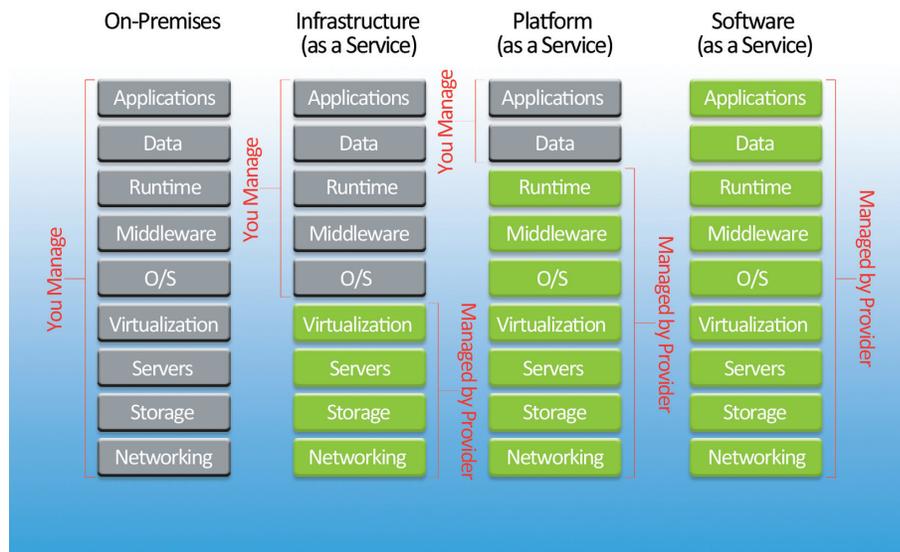
What is the cloud?

The Cloud or cloud computing refers to an application that is hosted on servers in a data center or server farm. When going to the cloud your data is hosted on a secure offsite server in a data center. Cloud computing eliminates the need to maintain your own data center. Critical business data, server operating applications, network, and communications assets are kept in a secure and environmentally controlled facility.

The deployment of cloud computing services varies depending on the business model. The primary service models are:

- **Software as a Service (SaaS)** — Businesses access and use an application or service that is hosted.
- **Platform as a Service (PaaS)** — Access to the platforms is purchased, but businesses deploy their own software and applications. The cloud provider manages the operating systems and network access.
- **Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)** — Cloud infrastructure is maintained and managed by the cloud provider, while the business controls and manages the operating systems, applications, storage, and network

Cloud Service Models



Regardless of the model chosen, cloud computing provides continuous operation, and provides expert support, security, and flexibility.

The cloud makes business systems and hardware more financially accessible

The use of cloud solutions creates a reduction in total cost of ownership (TCO). Fees associated with licensing, implementation, customization, maintenance and upgrades are minimized. Capital expenditure is reduced as the business moves more toward an operational expense model. There are no infrastructure investments such as servers, hardware, and networking equipment required with cloud computing. Less IT personnel is required so businesses don't need to staff an IT department to make sure they get what they need, and monthly costs are more predictable.

The cloud streamlines processes, making your business more efficient

Using any Internet connection, your business and data can be accessed in real time from any place. This provides the ability to assess the true state of your business at any moment, which improves business planning and the decision making process, and makes it easier to respond to customers' needs. Productivity of mobile workers is increased due to the accessibility of the business system and data. Cloud computing enables the use of mobile technology. Using web-enabled devices such as smartphones, laptops and notebooks, employees can access files. Many companies are implementing "bring your own device (BYOD)" policies. Efficiency is increased because there is less time spent installing, learning, and maintaining the software. This allows you to spend more time growing your business instead of managing a server and software.

One of the biggest benefits of cloud-based solutions is that the limitations of dated technology and software are removed. With a cloud-based solution, there is no hardware or software to update, so your business is always using the latest technology. If you have an IT staff, they can be freed up from daily server maintenance and auditing for software compliance to perform more useful, growth-oriented tasks. The solution provider will also take care of software upgrades. According to Gartner, 75% of IT budgets are tied up in routine maintenance, technical support and labor costs to sustain the business. The cloud frees IT executives' time to think and act strategically. IT leaders provide the insights needed to select the right technology resources for the business, whether they are from the corporate data center or from an outside service provider. This is money that can be allocated to support and transform the business and provide a competitive advantage.

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The cloud improves positive cash flow

Moving business to the cloud can help improve cash flow. Lower up-front costs makes cash available for other areas of the business. Since you are paying only for the amount of service you need, monthly costs are easier to control. With a cloud-based solution there are no associated hardware expenses, thus no costs of depreciation. Additionally, energy consumption will drop since there is no server and surrounding equipment to maintain at your site. If an average server uses 200 watts of power it saves 1.75 megawatt hours (mwh) per server per year, total energy conservation can be significant.

The cloud makes you green

Your business will become green by lowering the company's energy consumption, but you can become even greener. Since a cloud solution can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week from an Internet connection, you can allow workers the option of working from home. This reduces their travel and the carbon emissions they create commuting. It has the added benefit of increasing employee satisfaction and reducing hours of missed work.

The cloud enables flexibility and scalability

One of the key benefits of the cloud is the unlimited scalability. You can easily increase your existing resources to accommodate increased business needs or changes. Cloud computing allows your business to quickly upscale when it's ready to grow or add another location by expanding your information and business processes capabilities. The quick and easy allocation of resources in a monitored environment allows the central server to add the new workstations and "servers" to your business and then deploy them to you in just a few hours. You can support your business growth without expensive changes to your existing IT systems since there is no need to order a new server and then wait for it to be installed and programmed with your management system.

With the cloud your data is as secure as with an on-site solution. In fact, it's actually more secure in the cloud since the hosting server's firewall is more robust.

Is the cloud safe?

What seems to concern business owners the most about the cloud is the safety of their most valuable asset—their data. With the cloud your data is as secure as with an on-site solution. In fact, it's actually more secure in the cloud since the hosting server's firewall is more robust. With your data stored off site it is safe from a fire or natural disaster that might strike your business. Should your business suffer a fire or other disaster, your data will still be accessible from anywhere which

means your business will be back up and running quickly. The loss of data can have a devastating impact on a business, it could even mean the end of the company.

With cloud computing you still own your data. The server host does not own your data, and cannot even access it. It is encrypted and cannot be read by anyone, not even the provider of the hosting server.

Because of its scalability, the cloud can accommodate any size of business whether small, medium-sized, or an enterprise.

What sizes of businesses use the cloud?

Because of its scalability, the cloud can accommodate any size of business whether it's small, medium-sized, or an enterprise.

What do I look for in a solution provider?

Look for a company that has proven stability and has been in business for several years. Choose a provider who stays up-to-date with technology. Customer service is always important and, as with your data, should be available at any time. Verify that the provider's technicians specialize in the technology your company needs and uses on a daily basis.

High Touch Technologies knows the cloud. Let us help you.

At High Touch, we are a complete IT solution provider. Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, we provide technology solutions to small and medium-sized businesses in all 50 states and seven countries.

Our Dallas Data Center's facilities are state-of-the art and purpose-built to provide an environment of maximum availability, full redundancy, and uninterrupted power. Our secure SSAE-16 audited data centers ensure strict adherence to established controls, guidelines, and policies.

Most importantly, we are flexible and fully prepared to meet your needs. Whether you need only a single unit within a rack or need a full cabinet, the High Touch Dallas Data Center is prepared to meet your needs on your timeline. The Dallas Data Center is centrally located in Dallas, just minutes away from downtown Dallas, Fort Worth, and the DFW Airport.

Our facilities are specifically designed for the following types of users:

- Companies seeking a stable data center or colocation environment with reliable, scalable connectivity

- Companies needing colocation by the unit who don't have a need for a full or half cabinet, but still require the advantages of a data center
- Companies that require colocation, communications, and managed IT services under one roof
- Enterprise clients looking for an ideal disaster recovery and business continuity location
- Telecommunications companies or other businesses looking to establish a presence in the Dallas area

We are served by a Tier 1 backbone with diverse paths and diverse providers for connectivity. We understand that data and technology are the enablers of your organization's success and we're fully prepared to treat it with the utmost importance it deserves.

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, our team of technical professionals have industry experience in providing world-class customer service and offer knowledgeable and fast response times. The Dallas Data Center engineers are available on-site and are able to manage and assist with every task you may have, from installing servers, designing your network, reboots, OS re-installations and more.

We meet the IT needs of our clients by using the best tools and practices in the industry and we seek out partnerships that ensure our clients access to recognized brands and award-winning products. Our strategic alliances benefit our clients by providing collaborative technologies and support that ensure optimum return on investment for your technology dollars.

We are certified partners of numerous technology leaders including VMware, Dell, and Microsoft. In short, we are specialists and have direct access to the technology your company needs and uses on a daily basis.

The professionals at the Dallas Data Center seek out certifications from the IT product vendors we select. When your business works with us, you are assured that our technicians have demonstrated competence in the installation, operation, and integration of that product into your business's strategic technology plan.

Certification means our technicians received hours of specialized training and real world experience that promises your company world-class solutions that work for

you. You shouldn't trust just anybody to work on your IT network and systems. You need someone who is competent and specializes in the technology your company needs and uses on a daily basis.

The advantages of High Touch Technologies' cloud-based solutions:

- Using any Internet connection, your business system and data can be accessed in real time from any place
- Increase productivity of mobile workers due to the accessibility of the business system and data
- IT staff can focus on growth-oriented tasks rather than daily server maintenance and auditing for software compliance
- Free your business from the limitations of hardware and software that continually go out-of-date
- Server maintenance and data backup are performed by High Touch Technologies instead of your business
- Eliminate expenditures on hardware, software and depreciation and increase cash flow
- Cost effective solutions with subscription-based pricing

Thinking about switching to the cloud? Call High Touch.

Our mission is to provide access to the best, most up-to-date technology possible. At High Touch you get industry expertise and the stability of a company that has been in business since 1984. We are your true technology partner. Contact us today, and let us help find a solution that fits your business needs.

References:

Gartner Research. IT Key Metrics Data 2012: IT Enterprise Summary Report. 2012.