



GO-TO GUIDE

White Paper

Pros and Cons of Cloud Migration

INTRODUCTION

Businesses of all sizes and across all industries are moving to the cloud, and the trend shows no sign of slowing.

While statistics vary, it's generally agreed that more than 90% of organizations in the U.S. now use cloud technologies in some form or fashion. It's a big shift from the traditional way businesses used technology resources, but there are many good reasons to migrate to the cloud.

In this paper we explore the most popular reasons for why businesses move to the cloud, including some of the challenges that businesses face when migrating to cloud applications.





CLOUD COMPUTING 101

Fundamentally, [cloud computing](#) is a new way of accessing technology and applications. In the old model, applications ran on individual computers. With cloud computing, applications and data reside on a central server that is accessible over the Internet, e.g. from any device with an Internet connection and a browser.

Delivery of these cloud computing services - servers, storage, databases, networking, software, analytics and more - is often provided by public cloud service providers such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google.

Of course, there are thousands of other smaller cloud providers offering a huge array of services.

Many businesses take advantage of third party [expertise from an IT consultant](#) to figure out which cloud apps will serve them best, as well as to assist with migration and on-going management.

WILL MIGRATING TO THE CLOUD REDUCE COSTS?

Forrester conducted a [study](#) a few years ago analyzing the total economic impact for small and medium sized businesses moving their office applications to the cloud, using Microsoft Office 365.

The study found that over a three-year period, the productivity of each worker increased by \$76,000 and savings on hardware and software cost reached \$40,000. This is because in the cloud ecosystem, businesses no longer license the software, but instead pay a monthly usage fee which is typically based on the number of users – you never pay for more than you need.

This subscription model is referred to as SaaS (Software as a Service) because the software is delivered “as a service”, as opposed to being sourced, installed, owned and maintained by the business on premise.

Not only do you benefit from buying only what you need, but you also eliminate the capital expense of buying hardware and software, setting up and running servers, and hiring IT experts to manage them. That’s often where the true savings kick in.





DOES THE CLOUD REALLY INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY?

One of the major benefits of the cloud is mobility; increasing workplace flexibility and thus productivity.

The introduction of the laptop, tablet and smartphone combined with high performing mobile networks has literally changed how we work.

Cloud services gives employees the flexibility to work from any location and any device, accessing documents, data, email, calendar and more. This also means that employers can attract and hire talent that might not be in their geographic area, potentially hiring

employees in lower wage areas, or conversely hiring hard to find talent that won't relocate for the position.

This trend to remote and often mobile working has driven a massive increase in "BYOD" ([Bring Your Own Device](#)) in the workplace.

In the U.S., 87% of companies now rely on employees using their personal smartphones to access mobile business apps and services, making it even easier to spend more time answering that last email or making that last minute correction.

However, although this trend is beneficial to both employees and employers, it's also brought new security challenges. It's no longer enough just to protect the perimeter of your business (e.g. firewalls, endpoints, etc.) when you have employees outside of your network accessing company information, from mobile devices and laptops.

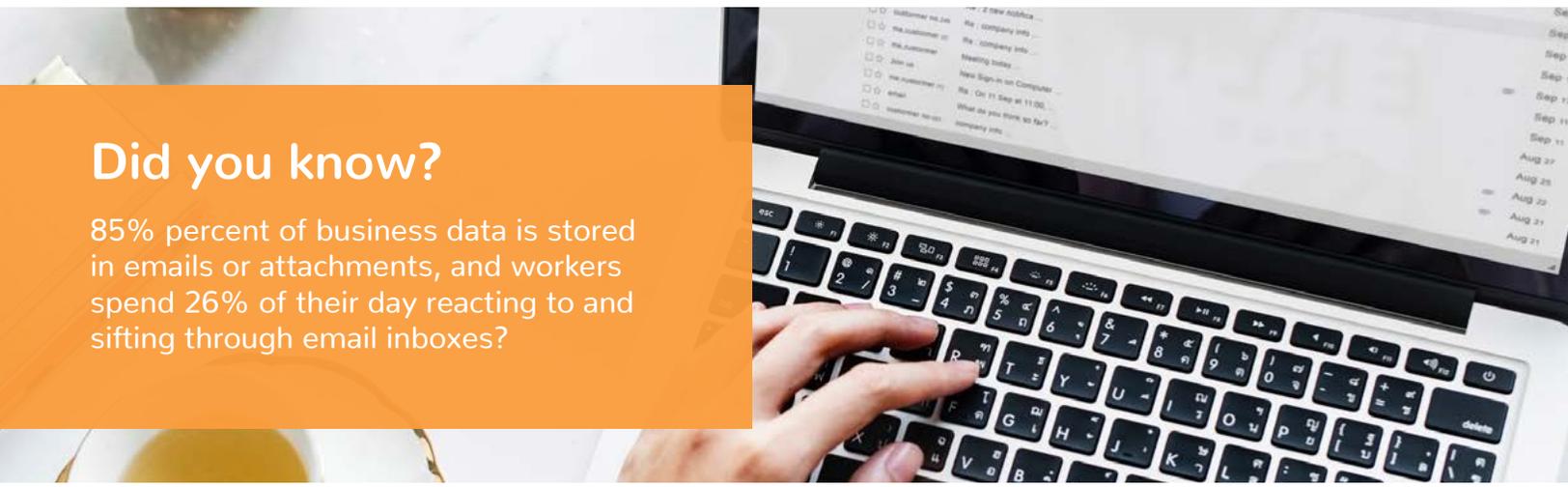
Every business should take the time to [investigate new security methods and policies](#) when it comes to mobile and remote working, an often overlooked area when it comes to cyber security.

WHAT ARE THE COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION BENEFITS?

Cloud applications make it much [easier to collaborate](#) with colleagues and partners. As an example, before the cloud, documents were distributed across individual devices, computers, and servers, leading to multiple versions of the same document existing on multiple team member's computers. Various versions had to be emailed to each team member individually to get their input.

Now, a single version of a document is saved in the cloud and can be shared among team members in real-time. Collaborators can work on the same version of a document simultaneously instead of providing input one at a time. No need to guess which version is the most recent or waste time merging multiple versions into a single draft.

Cloud services can also make communications much more efficient, and email is a great example.



Did you know?

85% percent of business data is stored in emails or attachments, and workers spend 26% of their day reacting to and sifting through email inboxes?

The impulse and expectation that each email needs to be answered immediately can cause workers to become a slave to their inbox. By implementing team-based workspaces in the cloud, team members can chat and engage with each other in a single digital environment anywhere, anytime.

Virtual meetings and video chats can also be conducted in these same cloud-based workspaces and fully documented for reference at a later date.

This ability to collaborate quickly, easily and more efficiently with cloud-based collaboration tools has dramatically increased productivity, especially for smaller businesses who now have access to the new “pay as you go” cloud model.

There are many cloud-based productivity tools that can meet the needs of just about every organization, but be sure to do your research upfront and remember to take advantage of the free trial periods that most SaaS vendors offer.

WHAT ABOUT APPLICATION INTEGRATION?

By shifting assets to the cloud, the ability to connect role-based business applications together is another big benefit.

SaaS business applications that provide valuable business logic, such as CRM, accounting or inventory management software, can easily pass data back and forth with the use of API's. For example, CRM systems that track sales activities can be integrated with email apps to capture correspondence and messages automatically. A real life example of this would be that leading cloud accounting software Sage 50 and CRM SaaS company Salesforce.com,

both have integrations with Microsoft Office 365.

Most SMBs do not have the luxury of building custom applications around their business processes, but the simplicity of integrating cloud apps makes creating new business processes easier.

Again, SaaS apps typically have trial periods so workers can experiment with new applications to see how they fit into their business processes or support new ones.

DOES THE CLOUD INCREASE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION?

While there are a number of tangible benefits of moving to the cloud, one of the less obvious is employee satisfaction. Employees have more flexibility in where they are able to work and managers are better able to measure employee or contractors' productivity, as well as track progress on tasks.

There is no need to interrupt workers to see how they are coming along on a certain deliverable or hold constant status update meetings; managers can simply access their work in the cloud to see how much progress has been made.

Additionally, by leveraging business intelligence tools that pull data from various sources in the cloud, managers and owners can get a more complete and real-time view of everything that is happening in their business. The more synchronized, centralized and integrated data is, the faster employees can make decisions and the better the outcome.

Teams that can now engage in rich communications around real-time data can also execute much more efficiently, making it easier for everyone to stay in touch and reach both personal and company goals faster.



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF MIGRATING TO THE CLOUD?

The benefits of migrating business applications and data to the cloud are many, but making the move can be challenging.

Typically, the first step to implementing a cloud strategy is moving basic office applications. One of the most popular office applications is Microsoft Office 365, named "[the most popular enterprise cloud service](#)" by Skyhigh Networks in 2017.

Although, at first glance migration to Office 365 seems relatively straightforward, there are plenty of [little items that can trip you up](#) if you don't have the right tools and expertise.



As an example, here's a quick checklist of items to consider when migrating to Office 365:

- ① There are many version of Office 365 - the first step is to determine which subscription level is the best fit for your business.
- ② There are also many migration techniques - if you don't have the right tools, you risk losing data during the migration.
- ③ There are new security considerations to take into account.
 - + Is your firewall configured properly?
 - + Is there an appropriate anti-virus solution in place?
 - + Will the anti-spam solution embedded in Office 365 be appropriate or should an additional service be deployed?
 - + Is additional backup required for the new Office 365 accounts?
 - + Have the encryption requirement changed?

There are also specific industry compliance considerations. For example, finance companies may require email archiving, while healthcare companies will need to comply with HIPPA, and government contractors often have NIST and ITAR requirements.

These are just a few examples of the many items that need to be thought through when migrating to cloud-based office applications such as Office 365.

IS THE CLOUD SECURE?

As we've discussed, cloud computing – storing data and applications remotely rather than on your own premises – can cut IT cost dramatically and speed up operations.

But is it safe?

The truth is that your [data is likely much safer in the cloud](#) than on your own premises. Large cloud providers such as Amazon, Google and Microsoft have invested millions of dollars on security, reliability and redundancy, far surpassing what most businesses could ever afford to do.

Most of the data breaches that you've heard of in the media have been from internal, not cloud-based, databases. The likelihood of your SaaS data

getting lost, corrupted or wiped out due to an error on the cloud vendor's part is very small. In fact, it's much more likely that an employee is going to delete something that they end up needing a few weeks later, than the possibility of all of Google servers being destroyed by a tornado.

And that's the risk – not from the cloud provider, but from employees.

If an employee either accidentally or maliciously delete files or emails – or overwrites existing data - cloud applications such as Microsoft Office 365 and Google G-Suite have limited functionality when it comes to getting your data back.

If you think about it, once the data is deleted from the cloud app – it's gone, and not the fault of the provider.

Some providers do have a time limited window where it may be possible to retrieve your data, but it can be complicated and expensive. If this is a concern for your organization, there are ways you can protect your cloud data, including "SaaS backup solutions," which are sometimes referred to as cloud-to-cloud backup.

Be sure to contact a reputable IT consultant to learn more about cloud and mobile security, which should be an important part of your overall cyber security strategy.

CONCLUSION

There's no question that the future of office productivity and collaboration tools is in the cloud, with productivity gains and cost savings being the two main drivers.

While there are many benefits to cloud computing, there are also challenges, with two of the bigger ones being proper migration, maintenance and on-going security in the new, cloud-enabled world.

Choosing the right cloud provider, selecting the best cloud application, installing, integrating and managing your new cloud solution are all items that may require outside assistance, especially if you don't have in-house cloud expertise.

Before you jump to the cloud, it always pays to set up a consultation with a third party IT consultant who can audit your current environment, and help you develop a comprehensive strategy that works best for your organization.



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