

What is Cloud Computing and how can it help my business?

I have always hated the term “small-business”. According to the SBA, they are businesses with less than 100 employees. These businesses have the same computing needs as the much larger companies. The problem is that the cost to acquire and maintain the same type of computing environment is very costly. That being said, there are some alternatives such as Microsoft Windows Small Business Server. [A **network server** is a computer designed to process requests and deliver data to other (client) computers over a local network or the Internet.] For those businesses that do not want to have a server on their premises, or do not want to spend the money on software, electricity, maintenance costs, etc., for a server, there is a good alternative called Cloud Computing.

The term Cloud Computing refers to using a server or group of servers hosted at an offsite location. There are a many different functions that you can have hosted, and many of you probably already participate in a version of cloud computing - Web hosting. You may have an outside Web host that holds your Website, such as Network Solutions or GoDaddy.

So if you host your Website, why not host your other services on the Web? You can have an Exchange server (Email), SharePoint server (Intranet), even a File server all hosted on the Internet. Why would you want to do that? First, it reduces your up-front costs by removing the need to pay for hardware, software licensing, ongoing maintenance, and electricity. These costs are buried in the reoccurring monthly fee. Secondly, the hosting company takes care of the backups and they make sure your servers are up nearly 100% of the time, which can be very expensive to do at your location. The other advantage is that you will have secure access to your services anywhere you have a reliable and reasonably fast Internet connection.

The downside is that your company’s data is not at your location. That could be a problem if security or compliance is an issue. Also, if your Internet is down, your business is down. A redundant Internet connection (such as FIOS and Cable) and a router with automatic failover are usually recommended since the chance of both Internet connections being down at once is unlikely. Other shortcomings are that if at some point you decide to bring your hosted service on site, you would have to get the data back from the hosting company. This could take days depending on the amount of data hosted. In addition, you might then be responsible for new licensing fees and other costs.

Keep in mind that Cloud Computing is not for everyone but it may be a good fit for your business.

“Tech Talk” is a GOTCC column authored by member John Kalli, CEO of Trinity Worldwide Technologies, and will cover important simplified technical topics that we believe can help our members/readers by providing the knowledge that can save time, money and potential disaster. Trinity is a Microsoft Certified Partner, Microsoft Small Business Specialist and has vast experience in all realms of computer networking, security, installation and more. If you have a suggestion for a topic or would like to submit a question for possible inclusion in a future column, please contact John at JKalli@trinityww.com. To inquire about their services and to see if you qualify for a no cost, no obligation assessment of your business’ technology, you can reach/visit them at 732-780-8615 or www.trinityww.com.