



What can the Cloud bring to your  
business?

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# Introduction

Doing more with less is an imperative for every business to be successful in order to keep costs down, to remain competitive, and because it is not always possible to find enough of the right people to fill positions.

Technology holds the promise of helping you get there but most businesses never obtain it for two reasons.

- 90% of technology approaches are reactive only focused on keeping the day to day running
- IT is thought of as G&A not a functional area so it is treated like an expense and put under finance to be cost controlled

In addition if your IT group isn't doing everything it should to make your company cybersecure, you are inadvertently putting the future of your business at risk.

## Learn

What your IT should be doing to help create a secure, predictable platform for you to scale your business more easily and profitably.

- The Advantages and Disadvantages of Cloud Computing for Your Business
- 3 Reasons To Include Mobile and Cloud in Your IT Strategy
- The Biggest Threat to Cloud Security

Whether your skeptical if your current technology plan can support your business plan, feeling like IT costs too much for what they get, or just wanting to make sure you are not missing something, I wrote this eBook to help you.

*Sam Bloedow*

Sam Bloedow (Founder and CEO of Thriveon)

# About The Author



## **Sam Bloedow, CEO of Thriveon**

Trusting your business can run smoothly with technology seems impossible when your current IT provider is slow to respond and the guidance is reactive. An IT strategy needs to be effective, support growth, and help get your business where it needs to be.

At Thriveon, we believe current IT methods aren't good enough—period. Your managed IT provider should be doing more than just patching issues and managing the day-to-day. They should be proactively preventing issues altogether, before they disrupt your people, and guiding you on the changes to make your business more efficient.

Back in 2005, your struggles were our struggles. We knew we needed a different solution, and so we built one. For the last 15 years, we've deployed an IT approach that supports and guides your business's entire technology spend, including software, hardware, and services so your business can do more with less. We help align your company to best practice standards with a 500-point inspection, reducing security issues and vulnerabilities by 90%, and proactively eliminating risks before they become a problem. It's time for a solid IT strategy to support your business growth and enable you to scale your business the right way.



- CHAPTER 1 -

# 3 Layers that Define Cloud Computing

## 3 Layers that Define Cloud Computing

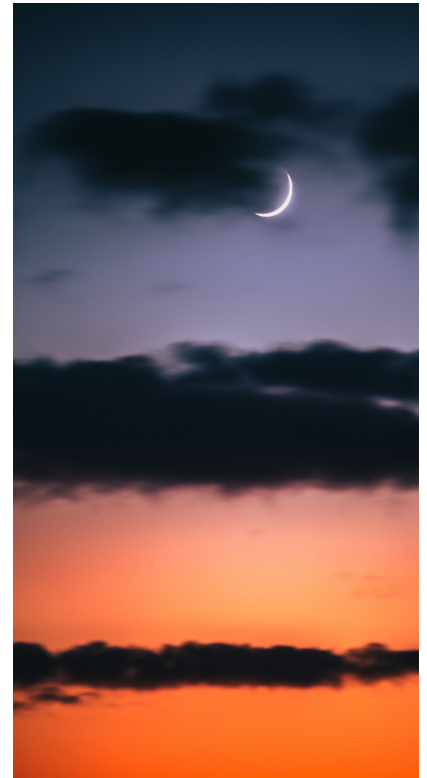
### Uncover the Capabilities of Cloud Technology

If you define cloud computing as those services that are available through a web interface, you have a very basic understanding of cloud. Digging into the three layers of cloud services, however, will uncover the capabilities of cloud technologies that could help your company discover ways to be more agile in how you respond to changing customer needs or market opportunities. The following will expand your cloud computing definition to include Software as a Service (SaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS).

#### Software as a Service (SaaS)

This is the layer of the cloud that is familiar to most people. If you go to a web page and login in order to access a tool or service, you are using SaaS. Some SaaS offerings are free, or at least free for a baseline set of services. Businesses utilize SaaS on a subscription basis for multiple functions from HR, accounting and payroll, to sales, marketing and project management. While the core functionality of the application is hosted on the provider's servers, there are some apps that require you to download software to your PC or device to extend capabilities such as synchronization with multiple devices.

The benefits of SaaS include easy entry and startup. Most apps allow you to add or subtract users as needed so that you are only paying for what you use. The provider takes care of all software upgrades, support and uptime. Many SaaS applications can be integrated with one another to customize their use. For example, your marketing application could integrate with your prospect database, or your procurement application can integrate with your ERP software.



## Platform as a Service (PaaS)

If you aren't a software programmer or web developer you might not think that you will ever have a use for PaaS, but this layer of the cloud is the one that can really address your unique requirements.

In a cloud computing definition, PaaS simply means that this is the place where software is developed. You might use this if you need to customize your industry-specific business application, building and testing it in the cloud before deploying to the company. You could also test out a software update in a PaaS environment when there are concerns about how the update will affect your processes, a situation that could occur if you have many customizations. If your company is considering taking your business applications to the cloud, you could use PaaS to build, test and launch.

## Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)

The physical components of your infrastructure – hardware, software, storage and network workings – are housed remotely and accessed via the internet when you utilize IaaS. The provider handles tasks like system maintenance, software updates, backup and security. IaaS is good for companies that need to scale up or down quickly, or that experience sudden changes in capacity. Subscriptions and pay-as-you-go arrangements eliminate capital expenses of deploying hardware. A part of PaaS is actually the infrastructure that goes with the platform, so there is some overlap with these two layers of the cloud.

## When is Cloud the right choice?

[The reason to go to the cloud rests with your company's unique goals and situation.](#) The choice to go to the cloud should be part of a business discussion, not just a technology discussion. Most companies need help to strategically align technology with their business goals.

Thriveon offers ongoing IT strategy and consulting with outsourced IT services. [Download our ebook to see what good IT support looks like.](#)



- CHAPTER 2 -

# The Advantages and Disadvantages of Cloud Computing for Your Business



# The Advantages and Disadvantages of Cloud Computing for Your Business

Businesses of all sizes have embraced cloud computing as a way to manage their data. Working on the cloud offers some big advantages, but it is not the best option for every business. So, how do you decide if the cloud is right for you?

"Cloud computing" means storing your information online, instead of on your computer or your business' local network. For example, when you access your email from your computer, using a program like Microsoft Outlook or Apple Mail, you're using a "local" client — something installed on your computer. When you access your email through a web browser, like Gmail or iCloud, you're using the cloud.



## Advantages of Cloud Computing

Moving your data to the cloud has some big advantages. According to a [recent article in Forbes](#), by 2045, 6 billion people will live in urban areas where cloud computing is the norm. And it's [easy to see why](#):

- **It's convenient.** If your business uses any specialized software, you usually need to buy a separate license for every computer you're going to install it on. You'll also need someone to install it on each computer, which costs valuable time. If you run out of storage space on your network, you'll need to upgrade that, too. Cloud service providers can offer all this for a fixed monthly or annual cost, that can scale you grow.
- **It's accessible.** Left your computer at the office but still need to access your work? No problem- you can connect to the cloud from any device as long as you have internet access.
- **It's on someone else.** With the application or files no longer on the servers in the back room, it's in someone else's hands to be responsible for.

## Disadvantages of Cloud Computing

These benefits can be appealing but the cloud also presents some challenges, especially for businesses:

- **It's internet-reliant.** Even though most cloud providers have a highly reliable environment, they can't control the last mile from your internet provider to your location. Your business may be operation ready but hiccups with the internet will bring you to a grinding halt.
- **It can cost more.** Even small per-user fees add up fast when you look at them over a 60 month period. What's the 5 year cloud investment verse on-premise? We see some cloud costs 2-3 times the on-premise comparison.
- **It can be less reliable.** Just because your applications or files are offsite, that doesn't mean it provides more reliability for your business. In a cloud solution, there are more pieces to the puzzle that all need to be working reliably, which means more points for failure and downtime.

Did you know with [the right IT partner](#), the advantages of cloud aren't exclusive to the cloud? Your business can realize these advantages on premises too.

Take a close look at your business needs before moving to the cloud (and don't be afraid to [ask for help](#) with that). A true IT partner can help you make the right informed decision for your business- whether that is cloud or on-premise.

- CHAPTER 3 -

# Choosing Cloud Services is an IT Strategy Decision

# Going to the Cloud is a Business Decision

There are many factors involved with making decisions about how your business will utilize cloud computing services. These include features of the application, security of the platform, reliability of the provider and user experience to name a few. Before you get into the details of comparing cloud providers side by side, there are four steps you should take to help you make a well-informed decision that will assure that your choice fits in with your IT and business strategy.

## 1. Inventory Your Current Applications

Listing all of the current software applications your employees use will start to give you the lay of the land in your IT environment. Along with the application, include information about the number of licenses you own, who actually uses the software, and any important dates relating to expirations or updates. There are software tools that can help you compile this sort of information but a spreadsheet will work, too. If you partner with an IT managed services provider, they might be able to provide you with a report that gives you most of the information you need for your inventory.

Surveys sent out to employees can gather more information when you ask if they utilize desktop or [web-based \(SaaS\) services](#) not already listed; if they know that they have software that they don't use; and if there are capabilities that software could provide that they wish they had but don't right now. Doing an analysis of this data will help you learn:

- If you have purchased applications or licenses that your employees seldom or never use
- If you have duplicated or underutilized capabilities
- If customers require specific apps or use of their web portals to do business
- Where your employees are already using cloud services
- If there are opportunities for technology to improve how you meet customer needs
- If you have end-of-life or major updates in the near future that will require significant investment



## 2. Review Your Business Plan

The decision to utilize cloud services should be a business decision so get out your business plan and focus your thoughts on your vision for the future. Whether your business plan is very detailed or concise, its purpose is to help you make decisions about where to invest your resources.

Cloud technologies can enable your success if they are part of an IT strategy that is aligned with your business goals. Situations where flexibility and agility are needed are potential opportunities to go to the cloud. Some examples of business objectives that can be enabled with cloud technologies include:

- Opening of additional locations
- Launch of a new product
- Gain flexibility to handle peaks and valleys of activity
- Improve productivity and efficiency of mobile workers
- Increase efficiency in time of accelerated growth
- End-of-life scenario with line of business application

## 3. Review the Status of Your Infrastructure

You should consider how any new software or hardware will impact your network before you decide to move forward. This includes cloud services. While part of the benefit of the cloud is to take the burden of storage and computing space off your internal network, there are other factors involved that will affect performance.

What is [IT strategy and how can you use it in your business?](#) [Read IT Strategy Quick Start Guide on our website.](#)

Increased use of cloud computing means that employees will need access to the internet and there will be an increased amount of data flowing through your network. Will your internal infrastructure and bandwidth be sufficient to handle the traffic without compromising access?

Implementing a great new cloud app won't meet your goals for efficiency if performance is sluggish and frustrating to the user. Your managed IT service provider can help you review the specifications of the cloud service to see if it is compatible with your current infrastructure, or if modifications need to be made before implementation.

## 4. Revisit your Security Requirements

Cloud computing providers invest heavily in security and can have better perimeter defenses than your business can afford for your internal network but that doesn't necessarily mean that your data is safe.

Human behavior is an unpredictable vulnerability for any business and is best addressed with regular training. Policies and procedures for passwords and access to information that you have internally should apply to cloud services. Review the regulations to which you comply (HIPAA, PCI, ITAR, etc.) to see how they address the use of cloud services.

## Advantages of Cloud Should Make Your Business Better

The advantages of cloud computing can empower your employees to better meet the needs of your customers and bring more value to your business. Your decision making process should include steps that assure that you are well informed about all the factors that contribute to success. If you don't feel like you need to ask - [what is IT strategy](#) - then maybe that's where you should start your homework.

Thriveon's managed IT services includes [business level technology guidance](#) by a dedicated vCIO to help companies make good decisions about IT activity and investment, while providing a whole IT department for a fixed monthly fee. To explore how you can get better IT results let's get a discussion going.

- CHAPTER 5 -

# 3 Reasons To Include Mobile and Cloud in Your IT Strategy

### 3 Reasons to Include Mobile and Cloud in your IT Strategy

Mobile and cloud computing go together. It makes sense to include them in your IT strategy so that you can assure that the way you use these technologies is adding value to your business, helping you meet your goals, and getting the best ROI from your IT activity and investments. Here are three reasons why you should include mobile and cloud computing in your IT strategy.

#### 1. They're Already There

Your employees are already using mobile devices and cloud technologies for work. According to [Pew Research](#), two thirds of the American population own smartphones. They have brought their mobile habits over to their work lives and expect to have the same kind of access and connectivity for work that they have in their personal lives.

They are logging on to the web-based applications that they use to get their jobs done during the day on their PCs and their smartphones when they can't be in the office. Employees are using file sharing services to take work home. They want to be able to have their company email on their phones.

*Including mobile and cloud in your [IT strategy](#) helps you to be intentional about how you help employees work effectively from anywhere.*

#### 2. Mobile and Cloud Crossover

The way that your company uses mobile devices and cloud technologies overlaps many other facets of your IT environment. First and foremost is the importance of providing for the security of business information. Because of the use of cloud and mobile devices, it's possible for critical data – like customer and financial data, and intellectual property – to travel outside of your company's safe perimeter. Policies for login credentials need to be taken seriously. Protocols should be in place for what happens if a device is lost or stolen.

Your network and connectivity can enable or cripple your mobile and cloud capabilities. If your bandwidth won't allow employees to consistently access the services they need to do their work, then productivity is affected. If the way that people access their work applications adds cost, then efficiencies might be offset.



Workers are going to need support whether it's for help with integrating a SaaS (Software as a Service) app that they use or just figuring out how to connect to WiFi. Standardizing equipment, apps and processes will enable better support, and bring forward opportunities for upfront training.

*Including mobile and cloud in your IT strategy helps you to coordinate all facets of your IT environment.*

### 3. Improve Your Business - Visualize the Impact

The true power of IT strategy is in the potential it carries for business transformation. When you go through the IT strategy process, you have to stretch your thinking beyond your company and your employees. Just as your employees have brought their mobile habits into their work lives, you can bet your customers' employees have, too. More and more B2B companies are looking to B2C for models of mobile and cloud first to provide improved customer experiences.

*Including mobile and cloud in your IT strategy helps you transform your business.*

**What is IT strategy and what value can it bring to your business? Get our eBook.**



- CHAPTER 6 -

# The Biggest Threat to Cloud Security

# The Biggest Threat to Cloud Security

The benefits of cloud computing to help companies quickly gain capability and scale to business needs makes good sense. Cloud services have the potential to lower costs, find efficiencies, improve access to resources, and consolidate operations. Cloud technology providers know that the success of their services is dependent upon security so they invest in systems that provide layers of protection that are not easily scaled. Unfortunately the biggest threat to cloud security isn't from the hackers that seek to penetrate the cloud exterior, it's from employees who have bad habits and are not trained in proper cybersecurity policies and procedures.

## Humans and Cloud Failures

In their report of ["Top Predictions for IT Organizations and Users for 2016 and Beyond"](#) Gartner states that "Through 2020, 95 percent of cloud security failures will be the customer's fault." That's not to say that cloud technology suppliers can ever give up their vigilance in updating their platforms to manage vulnerabilities as they emerge. Control and visibility to IT are essential for the successful utilization of the cloud but people often sidestep IT, deliberately or inadvertently, with behaviors that open up gaps in cloud security.



## Access to Accounts and Data

Social engineering – the manipulation of a person to break through normal security procedures – is on the rise. These criminals prey on people's emotions, sense of loyalty or obedience to authority to get them to do something like provide access to corporate accounts or data. Lack of attention can provide opportunity for attack.

Many people still ignore the need for unique passwords that are strong and regularly changed. When completing work on an online program, people often don't log out. When employees leave the company, they might still have access to SaaS (Software as a Service) accounts where they can take or change data. Managers might not realize that they are giving inappropriate access to files and operations when they give employees more privileges than they need to do their jobs.

## Visibility of Services and Devices

People are used to using smartphones and online software in their everyday lives and they can be impatient about waiting to get the same kind of experience at work. Sometimes employees or departments sign up for services on their own, leaving IT in the dark about the additional locations where employee accounts and corporate data can be found. The practice of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) might seem like a cost savings measure to companies but unless there is a form of security on the device, corporate information in the cloud (or the network) could be accessible to whoever has the device.

## Shared Responsibilities for Cloud Security

The responsibility for keeping company information secure rests with both the provider, and the company accessing the cloud services. In their "Shared Responsibility Model" for PaaS Amazon Web Services states that they will manage the security **OF** the cloud while security **IN** the cloud is the responsibility of the customer. Similarly, businesses should choose cloud providers on whom they can rely for secure services, while recognizing the need for their organization to establish and enforce effective security policies and procedures along with the continuous training that is needed to keep safety top of mind.

**Get advice on how to build up your human defense against cybercrime. [Download our E-Book Cybersecurity Guidelines for Security Behavior Online and in the Office.](#)**

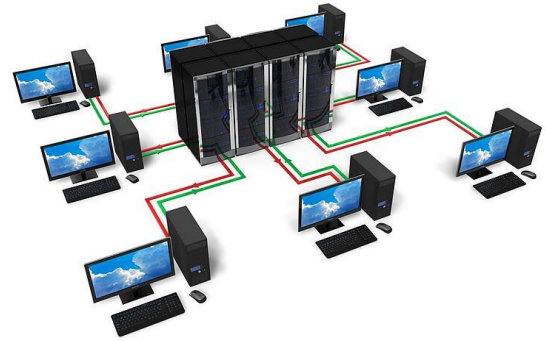


- CHAPTER 7 -

# 4 Benefits of Cloud Services

## 4 Benefits of Cloud Services

Cloud computing services are simplifying the way that many organizations are providing the technology tools and data management systems that are necessary for efficient business operations. By accessing information and applications from servers that are connected through the internet, staff can use computers or mobile devices to get to important files and software whether they are in or out of the office. Here are four benefits of utilizing cloud services as part of your IT strategy:



### 1. Improved Accessibility

The cloud lets you access important resources, including data and applications on the go without breaking confidentiality or risking a data breach, using devices like your office workstations, iPhones, iPads, Androids, and more. This can let you work more collaboratively because resources are available to everyone wherever they can connect.

### 2. Lower Costs

The cloud can eliminate capital investment in hardware, including servers and storage systems. If you plan to grow or if you have changing needs, cloud services can flexibly provide the level of utilization that you need, whether you want to scale or avoid paying overhead on excess capacity.

### 3. Consolidate Your Important Operations

For companies that have multiple locations, cloud computing can eliminate the need to duplicate services at each location. Employees can access a simple virtual environment with all the applications they need for work in one spot, for one flat-rate monthly service fee.

### 4. Enhanced Security

You can protect your important data from unauthorized access with security features that include passcodes, encryption, and user authentication.

The creation of user-friendly control panels so you control who can access what data. Physical security is important in the digital world. The locations where cloud services are housed have much stronger security features than what many businesses have in place.

## **Cloud Consulting in Minnesota**

The term cloud consulting refers to the expertise that is provided when exploring and planning for cloud services. An IT consultant can help you to review available cloud services and determine which ones will meet your needs and be compatible with your current and future systems. You will only get receive the benefits of cloud services if you choose the right solutions to fit in with your IT strategy.

## **Hosted Cloud Services as Part of IT Strategy**

The only way to determine if cloud services are right for you is to see how they fit in with the short and long term goals that are laid out in a comprehensive IT strategy. Don't know where to start with IT strategy? Read our [IT Strategy Quick Start Guide](#).



## Schedule a Consultation

Learn more about the benefit's our proactive approach would have in your business.

[Schedule a Consultation](#)