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## **Cloud Computing - What is Cloud Computing?**

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The term Cloud Computing refers to a style or method of providing computer services and software applications via the internet, or "The Cloud". The internet is generally depicted in network diagrams as a cloud to keep it's representation simple, as in reality it's a highly complex arrangement of networks and infrastructure.



All the software and hardware needed to supply these services and applications is provided by the supplier at their data centres, at locations all over the world, reducing the need for you and your business to run expensive servers and software at your own offices and premises.



These data centres and services are managed and supported by teams of specialists so that often all you have to do is get to an internet connected computer with a web browser and you're away. It will often remove the need to have any computer expertise at your business at all, leaving all the hard work and technical stuff to someone else.

Experts behind the scenes will be maintaining software, servers, operating systems, hardware, doing backups and keeping everything running and up to date, all the jobs you would have to do yourself, or pay someone to do if you ran the same services within your own business.

As Cloud Computing services are made available across the internet, they can generally be accessed from virtually anywhere in the world and to millions of people at once, from individuals to large corporations which often helps to bring down the price of running such services for everyone.

### **Many run easy monthly payments**

Instead of having to pay large one off fees for software and equipment to run it on and then large maintenance and support fees to keep everything running at your premises, they often come as a relatively small monthly or annual fee, making them very cost effective by comparison.



A large range of services are now provided in this way and more and more are created every day, mostly thanks to the introduction of high speed broadband being made available easily and cheaply to most of us, even now on telephones.



## Examples of Cloud Computing

Examples of such services are email, address books, calendaring and online word processors, such as those from Yahoo and Google. Others include online data storage and backup facilities, online accounts systems, online photo sharing, databases and CRM systems, online collaboration tools such as BaseCamp, and social networking such as



Twitter and Facebook, as well as full telephone switchboards as an online service, the list goes on. In fact, on the subject of lists, there are thousands of online list managers too!

## Let someone else do it!

Having someone else deal with your database storage, files and information is hard to resist and providing you choose the right solution then the benefits can be huge. Many of us will already know the benefits of using online email systems.

Below is a general summary of pros and cons of using "Cloud", online or web based services.

## Some Pros and Cons

### Pros:

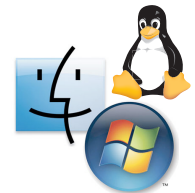
Easily accessible, often just using a web browser, even whilst on the bus from a mobile phone, in the street or in cafes and pubs via public wi-fi, or in dedicated internet cafes or libraries.



Generally there is no software to install, just use an up to date web browser. No software to update, as any updates are done at the providers end, you just log in and go.

Solutions are generally very scalable, starting small and able to expand to service thousands, or even millions of users at once.

Suppliers can now offer services online that work more easily with all different platforms, so customers using Macs, Windows and Linux can be provided for more easily.



Updates to software can be made available to everyone at once, without any customers having to update their own software. Update the server software once and everyone will get it next time they use it.

Often cheaper than traditional software applications as thousands of users paying subscriptions can really lower the cost.

It's now easy to share your data, files and photos with people all over the world and collaborative working with people around the globe is now easier than ever before.



Many online applications can now be setup instantly so can be ready to go whenever you need them, from email services to telephone numbers and systems.

### Cons:



Security is much harder to control with systems that are accessible to the whole world. Systems are no longer locked in a room in your office, but under potential attack from outsiders 24 hours a day.

Many online applications do not allow you the facility to download and backup your own data, so if the suppliers data centre loses data you could lose all yours too. Be careful to choose systems that allow you to make your own data backups too if the data is important.

Whilst being able to make one software which is then available to everyone at once is generally a good thing, if the update is a bad one it can provide thousands of people with problems all at once too.

If thousands, or even millions of users all use the service at once unexpectedly it can cause systems to slow down or stop, something which would not happen just running software on your own PC on your desk.

Systems outage sometimes occurs for system upgrades and will not be under your control and may cause a service to be down when you need it most.



if the company providing your services goes bust, then your service and your data could simply disappear.

### Summary

These are just some of the pros and cons of using Cloud Computing services. Generally if using a good quality service the benefits can far outweigh the downsides. The key is to try the service and give it a good workout before you commit all your business and personal data to it.

It is already possible to run a small PC with no hard disk that boots directly from the internet and provides your desktop and files as an internet service, so who knows what the future holds?

More and more services are becoming available "in the cloud" so look forward to a whole range of new and handy services to hit your screens soon, they are expanding fast!

Whilst on the subject of "Cloud Computing", our latest **Live Support Chat** service is an ideal demonstration. If you need to contact us for any reason, just go to our website at:

<http://www.homeitsupport.biz>

Click on the Live Support Chat button. This entire system is hosted "in the cloud".



Feel free to ask us about adding such a service to your website, cheaper than you might think and easy to do.

**Thanks for reading, see you next issue!**

