

What's all the fuss about Cloud Computing? - the fast move to SaaS

Cloud Computing describes the increasing way in which companies are using web based applications to run their business operations online so they don't have to download software or hardware to their own servers.

There is a fast move towards SaaS which stands for Software as a Service. Companies such as Salesforce.com are providing essential all-in-one packages which can be integrated seamlessly with other SaaS applications and business critical systems such as SAGE accounting.

Other big players such as Microsoft's are offering a Business Productivity Online Suite, a cloud-based service which provides email and collaboration services, including SharePoint, Live Meeting and instant messaging. Google also offers Google Mail, Google Docs and Google Talk as a powerful suite of communication tools.

The virtualisation of online immediate access to server power and technologies means that even small businesses can now operate using the same platforms which historically would only have been available to multi-national corporations with big budgets.

What are the benefits of SaaS and Cloud Computing?

- No software to install so you can be up and running quickly
- No internal infrastructure and maintenance costs
- The software is always up-to-date online
- Integrate seamlessly with other SaaS services to bring the applications you use most into one environment
- On demand pay as you go pricing
- Scalable solutions to fit small and large businesses
- Free up your internal resource to focus on sales, service and innovation

Building new applications through developer communities

Cloud computing offers developers the opportunity to build custom applications for their clients and in turn extend the range of utilities offered by the original software supplier. These applications can then be distributed if preferred so that they can be used and developed further by others.

Are there any downsides to SaaS and operating in the Cloud?

There have been some concerns raised about control of data, security and privacy. However these concerns are no different to the business risks that need to be considered for other communications systems and software.

It is up to business owners to assess the trade-offs posed between the obvious benefits of SaaS and operating in the Cloud and mitigating any risks as they would elsewhere in their business. Often business owners may find that a hosted solution offers more security than they can provide internally.

Finding the right integration partners

For some businesses the move to on demand online business services can be made relatively easily provided there is adequate in-house expertise to work with suppliers. However for many the thought of the Cloud and related technology may be too daunting.

For these business owners finding the right integration partner can be critical. Companies such as Salesforce are so keen to ensure that their customers can take advantage of the flexibility and versatility of their services that they connect potential customers with preferred partners in their industry field.

Salesforce.com Consulting Partners are trained and certified in Salesforce functionality and the Force.com platform to ensure an expert and fast implementation. Force.com provides access to a powerful enterprise application platform, eliminating the need to buy, install, configure, and manage hardware and software.

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