



Move to the Cloud

Introduction

Not that long ago, no one knew what the cloud was or why they'd use it. That's not true any more. Nowadays, nearly everyone uses it for personal reasons, such as storing music and family photos.

And yet it's surprising how many businesses haven't moved to it. In fact, some statistics indicate merely 19% of businesses have already moved.



History of the cloud

Seems like it's been around a while. References to "cloud computing" go back to 1996, when the earliest known mention of it appeared in an internal computer company document. However, it wasn't until usage of smartphones and tablets started to really take off in 2007 that popularity of the cloud began to soar. People wanted to work and play on their mobile devices at any time and from anywhere, and the cloud provided that freedom.

What is the cloud and unified communications?

The cloud delivers software applications and other computer resources as a service over the Internet or other network.

Unified communications (UC) consolidates phone, email, fax, chat, video and collaboration, enabling communication on any device regardless of platform. For example, if you receive a voicemail, it's deposited in your email inbox where you can listen to the message, review the availability status of the party who left it and respond to them however you want -- using chat, phone or email.



19% of businesses have moved to the cloud as of July 2016.



Ready? Benefits and reasons to move

Before the cloud, your main option was to put your software, data, hardware, operating systems, and other computing components physically “on-premise” within the walls of your business. Today, any or all of these IT pieces can be moved to the cloud.

Moving to the cloud really comes down to your individual business needs. Does it make sense to invest in a new server, or pay for a cloud service provider to host your software and data on their equipment? Do you have remote staff or people on the road that need web access to applications and information 24/7? Are you looking for a way to back up and protect your data in case of a disaster? The cloud could be your answer.



Main cloud benefits

Faster software implementation. Cloud-based software, also called Software as a Service or SaaS, can be set up in a few hours, even minutes. Your team can start using new software much quicker than traditional on-premise implementations that often take weeks.

Lower, more predictable costs. For the most part, the cloud is based on sharing computing resources with others—much like the electric grid allows us to efficiently share power. As a result, your costs for those shared services is lower. And because you subscribe to cloud computing services, you know exactly what your costs will be each month, or annually.

The ability to compete. In the past, smaller businesses were at a disadvantage when it came to technology. They just couldn't pay for the computing resources larger companies enjoyed. The cloud helps level the playing field by making the latest computing capabilities more affordable and accessible to smaller companies.

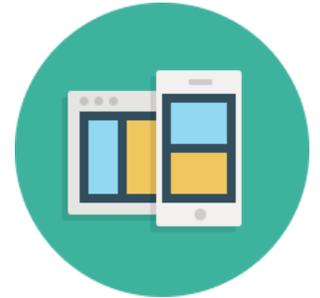
Simpler IT administration. Software updates, system upgrades, backups and other IT duties are all done automatically when you use a cloud service provider. So your focus is on the business, not the nuts and bolts of IT.

Increased collaboration. You could say the cloud has become the launching pad for greater interaction between members of working teams. Now, anywhere you have an internet connection, you can access and distribute job-relevant information, share ideas, and meet to discuss solutions.



Decisions to make

The cloud offers many different options and, just like any other IT implementation, requires some decision making, planning, and cost analysis to give you the results you want.



Determine what you should move

Some aspects of your business may make sense to move to the cloud, others may not. For instance, you may feel more comfortable keeping sensitive information or mission critical applications on-premise where you have more direct control. On the other hand, if you are looking for collaboration technology—such as project management or conferencing software—a cloud-based SaaS solution might be your best option.

Public, private, or hybrid – you pick

Cloud service providers offer three basic flavors of the cloud, depending on what you need:

- A **public cloud** provides services over the Internet and is usually your less expensive option. Most SaaS applications run on a public cloud.
- A **private cloud** is a network dedicated solely to your company. While more costly, it may be your best choice for software and data that require a high level of security.
- A **hybrid cloud** combines both public and private cloud services. This is a popular choice for many businesses because it allows you to keep very sensitive information more secure while also taking advantage of public cloud efficiencies where it makes sense.



Security is no longer a concern. Lack of resources and lack of expertise was cited as the number one cloud challenge.



Technology stack

Say what? When you enter the world of business cloud computing you'll likely run into these four types of cloud service models.

There are three layers for your cloud computing stack. The fourth, DRaaS, is for failovers. Here's a brief summary of the acronyms -- IaaS, PaaS, SaaS and DRaaS.

IaaS	Infrastructure as a service is virtualized computing resources over the Internet. It's the hardware and software that powers the stack.
PaaS	Platform as a service. It's the tool and services, ensuring coding and implementation is quick, consistent and easy.
SaaS	Software as a service. This is the highest level of the stack and intended for users; it's for applications.
DRaaS	Disaster recovery as a service. Third-party failovers in case there's a natural disaster or other emergency like a cyberattack.

Here's a simple guide:

- Are you looking for a way to outsource your servers, hardware and networking components? Then Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) is the way to go.
- Do you need a way to backup your data and applications offsite as part of a disaster recovery plan? IaaS or Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) are two options to consider.
- Do you have a need to develop your own applications? Platform as a Service (PaaS) can help you out.
- Are you interested in a web-based software solution that you don't have to install, troubleshoot problems, or download upgrades or enhancements? Software as a Service (SaaS) is the way to go.





Questions to ask

Once you know what you need and have created a list of potential cloud service providers, it's important to thoroughly review each company and their service level agreement. Vet them like you would any key business partner. Critical questions to ask include:

1. How much control do you have over your data and what happens to it if you leave their service?
2. Is your data automatically backed up and where is it physically located?
3. How do they separate and safeguard your information from other clients' data?
4. What is their uptime (availability) metric?
5. What security measures are in place to protect your company information?
6. Are there third-party audits conducted regularly to confirm security and service reliability?
7. What happens if a data breach occurs? How will you be protected?
8. How much time will it take to restore their service in the event of a disaster or unexpected disruption?
9. How do they monitor activity on your account?

What to look for

The cloud is making it easier than ever to set up and use audio and video conferencing to host events and collaborate with coworkers and business partners. Look for a SaaS web conferencing solution that:

- Is known for its reliability, so the system works when you need it.
- Offers the ability to go mobile, enabling you to start and participate in online meetings on the go.
- Has open APIs and existing integration with popular business applications such as sales and marketing automation software as well as social networks.
- If like most companies your resources lack expertise, you may need assistance. Companies that answer their phone, have robust online resources and proactive customer communications help.

Sources:

- [Cloud Computing](#), History, Origin of the Term, Wikipedia.org
- [Smartphone](#), When Apple introduced the iPhone, Wikipedia
- [Ten Critical Questions to Ask Your Cloud Provider](#), IT Business Edge



Why ReadyTalk?

We provide a full range of cloud solutions, from cloud communications to software as a service. And it even helps with disaster recovery. And more than that



Reliability. We're known for reliability -- 99% uptime.

Mobility. We have mobile solutions for all of our products, including hosted voice where you can improve your mobility so you can work whenever, wherever on any platform.

Open APIs. Have open APIs and other integration to enable you to maximize the value of your current solutions. Our systems integrate with various marketing automation systems and customer relationship management software (CRM).

Customer service. We have some of the best net promoter scores in the industry, with friendly employees who love to help your business. We send regular customer newsletters and have a wealth of resources available.

Range of cloud solutions. We have a variety of solutions available to improve your productivity and your business. Webinars, webcasts, conferencing and hosted voice are all available with bundling to make it easier and more affordable for your business.

We excel in making you productive.

About ReadyTalk

Unleash your business potential. ReadyTalk makes communication and productivity easier. With conferencing, webinar and webcast options, you can improve engagement with potential customers, customers, partners and employees. Together, our products power ideas and connect people to help your company succeed.

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