

Blog for MPA Networks

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Transitioning to the Cloud? “Know Before You Go”

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The Cloud is here to stay—and growing before our eyes. Even the customer segment that the marketing world terms *late adopters*—the last people to “get on the boat” of tech trends—are finally taking a hard look at migrating at least some of their IT to Cloud-based apps.



One big reason is that their existing data center infrastructure has reached the end of the line. In the depths of the Great Recession, belt-tightening and bean-counting left many companies reluctant to spend the capital to replace their on-premise server equipment, squeezing out a few more years beyond their recommended service life. When it's finally time to usher obsolete servers into retirement, **IT managers are weighing the pros and cons of deploying Cloud services** over purchasing new hardware outright.

Is the Cloud right for you? Maybe.

The hardware/Cloud argument isn't all that different from deciding whether to purchase or lease a new automobile. Both options have tangible advantages—which, depending on the salesperson's objective, they'll play up. Hardware vendors will insist that direct ownership translates into a higher ROI over the long haul, while Cloud service providers will stress a speedier turnkey deployment with lower pay-as-you-go (or pay-as-you-need) pricing, eliminating a need for hefty upfront financing. Depending on who's trying to sell what, it's easy to play with the numbers—and leave the customer's head spinning!

Before you turn to the Cloud simply because “Cloud looks cheaper,” don’t forget to read the fine print.

As [we talked about](#) in our Desktop-as-a-Service (DaaS) series last August, the flexibility of the Cloud can be tempered by vendors’ hidden charges, such as software license fees, shifting between “service tiers,” locking customers into a minimum number of desktops, or other unfavorable contract terms. Service that looked competitively priced at the beginning can look less attractive as costs creep upward.

A Top-Down Approach

Instead of basing these decisions on the bottom line, look at them from the *top down*. Which IT functions would be better served via the Cloud? Many companies begin with transitioning their email system from onsite servers to Cloud-based email, because the vendor becomes contractually responsible for keeping the system up and running 24/7 (when email goes down, so does your whole company!). They’ll also assume the required day-to-day maintenance of upgrades, add-ons, and security patches, as we know email is the primary gateway for hackers and malware.

We anticipate a future where most small businesses will rely on the convenience of the Cloud, simply networking each desktop into a single modular connection to an outside provider. Our point today is that transitioning to the Cloud involves a *strategy* for determining the logistics—what, where, how, and why. If you’d like some advice on crafting a successful Cloud strategy for your company, [contact us](#).