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Get Your Head in the Cloud

Have you looked at the Cloud yet? No, we are not talking about the sky or weather, but rather about the recent trend in offsite technology hosting platforms that more and more businesses are exploring. This month's issue will explore the pros and the cons to outsourcing your IT to the Cloud. Also, we'll provide a quick peek at some of the top new technologies emerging that will impact business in 2012 and beyond...

Cloud platforms - are they a solid IT solution for your business?

Cloud platforms are a foundation for running applications and storing data. These platforms can help your business get more of what it wants from IT, including faster rollout of new capabilities, better support for business innovation, and more intelligent IT spending. But just as important, cloud platforms bring risks—business risks, not just technology risks—that only business leaders are qualified to judge. Here are a few key points to help you weigh the pros and cons of the Cloud.

Business benefits of Cloud Platforms:

1. Faster Deployment of New Business Capabilities

Deploying new IT-based capabilities takes time. Building applications on cloud platforms drastically minimizes any delay. Unlike the data centres in most organizations, cloud platforms let their customers submit an application, then begin running it immediately. There's no need to wait, which means that the business benefits this application brings can start right away.

2. Low-Risk Business Innovation

Innovation is the lifeblood of business success. By making innovation less expensive—and thus less risky—cloud platforms let you do more of it. Cloud platforms can provide a low-cost and low-commitment way to see if your business idea has value. They are priced on a pay-as-you-go basis, so you're charged only for what your application uses. Given their pay-as-you-go pricing, cloud platforms don't require a commitment. If the experiment doesn't pan out, you can shut down your application and stop paying. If it's a big success, expanding the application is straightforward.

3. More Intelligent IT Spending

Because you're charged only for the resources you use, cloud platforms don't require up-front investments in servers and software. Computing becomes an operating expense rather than a capital expense, which can help your organization spend IT dollars more wisely.

4. Outsourcing to an External Provider

Outsourcing means partnering with another company. What if that company—your cloud platform provider—doesn't live up to your expectations? What if they're not reliable? Or what if they decide to exit the cloud platform business? For these reasons, you want to choose a reliable partner that you know well. You also want to make sure you're happy with the terms of your provider's service level agreement (SLA) and its enforceability.

5. Storing Data outside your Organization

For most business leaders, the biggest concern in using a cloud platform is about their data: What if proprietary information or trade secrets get leaked? Before putting data on a cloud platform, it's important to make sure you understand the regulations that affect you and how they limit what you can do with your data. In many cases, though, people's fear about data security is more nebulous, grounded largely in a general fear of the unknown.



IPS Rules of Work:

- **Know yourself:** knowing yourself well will allow you to highlight your strengths and overcome your weaknesses.

- **Be 100% committed:** If you want to get far in your career or with your business, you should commit fully to all the tasks that your job entails.

- **Anticipate threats:** each threat that becomes a reality is an opportunity to grow and change.

- **Look for opportunities:** learn to see opportunities as balls, if they get thrown your way you have a only a split second to catch them.

- **Know your role:** know how your role fits into the team and how your decisions are affecting other departments.

- **Study the promotion system:** through observation, determine what criteria is used to promote employees within your organization. This will help you advance quickly.

6. Vendor Lock-in

Cloud platform technology varies quite a bit across different vendors. An application created for one platform might be difficult to migrate to a platform provided by another vendor. While every platform has some degree of lock in, be sure to look for a partner that offers the ability to move your application into your own data center without completely re-writing it. Avoiding lock-in entirely probably isn't possible, but making an effort to minimize it up front makes sense.

In closing, be aware that Cloud technology has gone mainstream, and any business leader who's interested in getting the most from their IT investment needs to be current in this area. Who knows? Using a cloud platform just might make the difference between success and failure for your next big idea.

Top 5 Emerging Technology Trends Impacting Business

1. Quantified Self & M-Health

Personal biometrics and digital enabled behaviour analysis will increasingly let consumers discreetly track and manage their lives more effectively. Get ready to actively track and analyze behavioural-lifestyle data. As self tracking digital products, augmented apparel and online data tools enable advanced user analytics for individuals, personal metrics will become the next big thing.

2. Gestural Interfaces & Augmented Reality

New natural interfaces based on movement will allow more intuitive control of tech, increasing access to information and digital content. Augmented reality may have become an attention getter in the marketing world in 2011, but new computer interfaces and augmented screens will reach a tipping point in 2012 as touch screen and mobile sensing and accelerometer innovations go mainstream.

3. SoLoMo Content+ Data Exchange

Mobile "geoawareness" technology, will create dramatic paradigm shifts to how we shop, socialize and how we are marketed to. SoLoMo = SOCIAL, LOCAL, MOBILE. Location-based marketing will create new types of value exchanges between marketers and consumers. Behavioural data tracking will evolve to real time value creation between marketers, content creators, consumers and social networks.

4. Social Television

Integration of Social Media and the Cult of Influence into the TV experience will transform it from a media consumption device to a content curating experience. Watch for the proliferation of the 4K resolution standard (4000 pixel columns), high-contrast OLED TV screens, 3D tech and ultra-thin bezels. The TV will enable us to become connected to others, curators of content right on our couches, and online participants, instead of TV watching zombies.

5. D.I.Y. & Digital Objectification

The "appification of everything", open source tech and accessible manufacturing will merge the tangible product and digital, online worlds. Digital and interactive technologies have been bound in the past to browsers, websites and technology devices. This is changing as open source hardware, software and manufacturing technologies go mainstream, and what we deem "product" will change. And it will be more accessible to all.

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