

The “Cloud “ what is it? Can it help my business?

Cloud computing is a general term for anything that involves delivering hosted services over the Internet. Whoever invented the term was a marketing genius since it's nothing more than what large business has been doing for years. With internet speeds now at an acceptable rate small business can take advantage of cloud computing and reduce costs.

So what can the cloud do for you? The hosting company runs your server or web portal and its core business is keeping things running smooth. You have access from anywhere with an internet connection. No longer do you need a complicated VPN with the client on your PC to access your computing environment. This prevents expensive maintenance headaches. EMR systems, legal databases, and CRM database solutions are commonly available on the web. QuickBooks is also but is rather limited.

There are some drawbacks to using most cloud based solutions. You will have to migrate to a new environment. That's an expensive learning curve! There is also the question of what happens if the Web based company goes out of business? What if they prove to be not of your liking? And...who controls your data? You, the NSA, the WEB based company?

For most small businesses a private cloud is a good alternative. That's a blend of both your current in-house solution and the cloud. With a private cloud you actually have a remote server running the software you already know and are familiar with.

That system exists as a virtual machine and is backed up on a regular basis. Simply double click on an icon (easily copied to another PC) and login with your username and password. It can be a HIPAA compliant and has 256 bit encryption to ensure a secure connection. This allows you to use computing as a service. Use your time and money to concentrate on *your business*, not technology.

This is not to say a typical client/server approach is obsolete, it's not, but a cloud solution is worth looking at whether you chose private or web based.