

Problems float away in the cloud

The advantages of working in the cloud are just too great to ignore, says **Big Red Cloud**



Should your accounts be in the cloud? At first glance this might seem unimportant. What does it matter? Can't the IT guys decide the technical stuff like this? Well, yes, they can. But the question of where to host your accounting software is critical.

In addition to the cost considerations, there is a long list of operational benefits to the cloud. When you start to grasp the differences between the old-fashioned approach of buying software and installing it on your own equipment stored in your office, and the cloud approach whereby all you need is access to the internet, the advantages ought to get you pretty excited.

Let's start with something basic, like capital expenditure. The old way of using software was to do everything in-house. This required firms to splash out on servers to run software. The bills quickly added up.

The software costs money. And you've got to fork out for an IT guy to install the software. He'll need to maintain it too. Upgrades and patches must be applied. The data must be backed-up, which costs money. You'll need to make sure your anti-virus system is up to the job.

HIDDEN NASTIES

The expenditure doesn't end there, as there are hidden nasties, like the cost of ethernet cabling, electricity bills and forking out for a technician to drill holes in your walls to accommodate your bulky kit. And there is possible downtime during upgrades. But when the software maker launches ver-

sion 2.0 and new licences are needed, you'll be opening your wallet yet again.

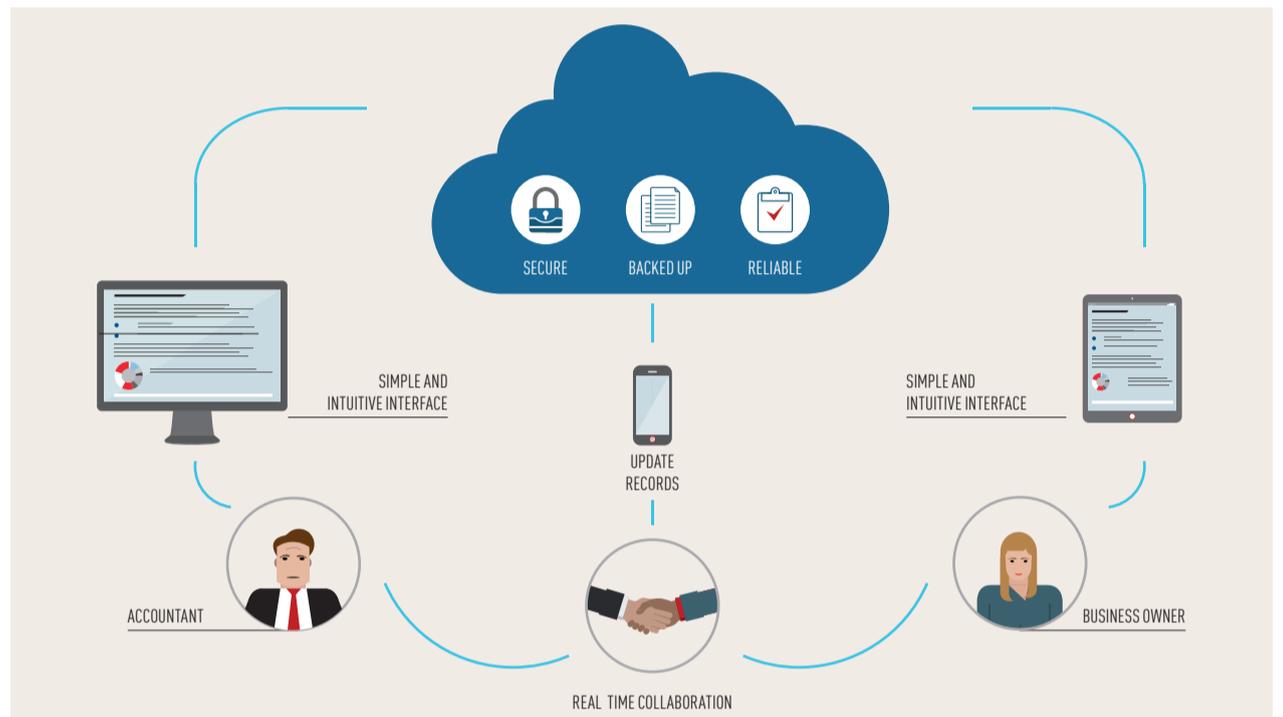
The cloud does away with all of that. A user can log-on via a web browser to have full and immediate access to the very latest version of their accounts software. It doesn't matter which computer they use. It could be via a tablet. It could be on a PC in an internet café at Narita airport, Japan.

The cloud application provider takes charge of all hardware requirements so there are no servers to buy and no visits from the man with the drill. The cloud provider handles and pays for all the ongoing nitty-gritty, such as upgrades, anti-virus and back-up. Costs associated with these activities simply evaporate. Oh, and no electricity bill spikes either – not your problem anymore as you aren't running a datacentre.

By moving to the cloud you'll be benefiting from your partner's technical expertise. They will have a large cohort of dedicated technical staff, way in excess of what an individual firm could justify sustaining. And cloud providers have access to lavish resources, such as Microsoft Azure's platform. This is Microsoft's datacentre offering, which leases mass-scale technical infrastructure to cloud hosts.

Marc O'Dwyer, chief executive of Big Red Cloud, which bases its cloud accounting service on Azure, says: "Microsoft has thrown millions at Azure. It offers incredible resilience, back-up and cost advantages. The power of Azure is now available at the fingertips of small businesses."

THE CLOUD APPLICATION



GAME-CHANGERS

This means even the smallest firm can have the same technology at its disposal as the very largest. The cloud will change the way your firm works, for the better. There are game-changers. For example, accountants can use the cloud platform to access data in real-time.

Mr O'Dwyer explains: "If you are not in the cloud there is a time-delay. Firms need to download their data to a file and then send that to the accountant. This is not a responsive way to work. But with the cloud, the accountant can look at the financial information at any time of day and always get the very latest picture. This means the accountant can take a more active role."

"They can use our business intelligence tools to give advanced information on debtors days [how quickly cash is being collected from debtors] or to warn executives that cash collection is behind schedule and action needs to be taken. It changes the relationship



The cloud means you can forget about reams of niggling issues forever

between accountants, book-keepers and their clients. It is for this reason we offer free access to accountants and book-keepers."

The same is true for business-owners as real-time information gives more accurate insight into the business, allowing for faster and more insightful decision-making.

There are additional improvements, such as the ability to hot-desk in the office. Workers can use any machine to access accounts. Perhaps you are stuck at home with the kids or need to address an urgent issue when on holiday. Without the cloud, you are reduced to using some sort of "remote login" third-party application or must wait for someone to download and e-mail you the files you need, which may be out of date by the time you get them. With the cloud you have instant access to everything.

NO DELAY

And the old system meant invoices couldn't be processed until the accountants had done their work. With the cloud there is no delay. If necessary, there can be an ongoing conversation between multiple parties, all viewing the same accounts from multiple locations.

For fast-growing firms the cloud offers seamless – and limitless – expansion possibilities. You simply aren't going to hit a point where your IT guy shakes his head and says, "The

server is full". In the cloud, it is completely scalable and simple to add ten, a hundred or a thousand new staff to an application. With Big Red Cloud an unlimited number of users are allowed, for no extra fee.

Maybe though the biggest pay-off is mind-space. Business-owners need to focus on their core activities. They should not spend valuable time trying to bone up on how a datacentre should be run or whether their software is up to date. The cloud means you can forget about reams of niggling issues forever.

Pick the right cloud partner and you can take your business to new heights. Big Red Cloud founder Mr O'Dwyer says: "Big Red Cloud is simple to implement, works from the get-go and comes with full telephone support. We're here to help smart modern enterprises make better business decisions and set the foundation for future growth."

Clarity of mind, lower costs, maximum up-time, automated back-ups, anywhere-access, easy expansion, improved management control and greater security all come as standard in the cloud. It is pretty much impossible to achieve anything similar in-house. That is why there is so much excitement about the cloud. You'd be crazy not to take advantage.

COMPARE IN-HOUSE AND THE CLOUD

	ON-PREMISE	SaaS CLOUD MODEL
FINANCIAL	Large up-front capital infrastructure and installation costs. Extra irregular payments	No capital expenditure to get up and running. Regular and predictable payments
USERS	Extra licences needed	Potentially unlimited
BUSINESS ACCESS	Generally one licence per computer with data downloads and manually distributed files	Real-time information anywhere, anytime with internet connection
ACCOUNTANT'S ACCESS	E-mail or physical back-up data exchange with risk of being out of synch	Real-time updating of a single data set by client and accountant
SCALABILITY	Server, hardware and infrastructure required	No limits. Accommodates increasing volumes of data
UPGRADES	Manual, potential downtime and extra licence costs	Automatic, with every user on the same version
TECHNICAL SUPPORT	Often pay for separate licences	Included in subscription cost
PLATFORM	In-house reliability, storage and back-up issues	Major industry specialist delivers the required and secure computing power

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