



THE CLOUD: A DREAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS

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WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF THE CLOUD AS PART OF THE BUSINESS MODEL FOR A SMALL FIRM?

Every business relies on some amount of IT infrastructure to support its operations and serve customers. No matter what service or product you provide, you have some portion of your business operations dependent on an IT infrastructure. The problem small firms face is that their small scale makes it cost prohibitive to build and maintain a really robust, secure, and sufficiently monitored infrastructure and network. This makes it hard to compete with large firm's whose economies of scale can justify significant IT investment. The arrival of the cloud, however, makes it possible for smaller firms to compete because it provides a vehicle whereby small firms can share the outsized investment and maintenance costs of a complete infrastructure with other users. This

e-guide will discuss areas where the use of cloud technology can cut your costs while increasing the robustness of your IT.

1. **Hardware costs** - Servers and storage hardware can be expensive. Redundant hardware for business continuity purposes can double these costs. Unless you are willing to see your business sidelined for extensive periods, you need to have replacement hardware ready to drop in if a failure occurs. Unfortunately, small firms often don't have the funds available to provide a totally redundant IT infrastructure. However, the cloud offers an entirely different model for creating a reliable and redundant infrastructure without having to do it all in-house. By moving storage and operational computing to the cloud, small

firms can eliminate many of these capex costs.

2. **Scalability** - If you are tied to your own hardware, you generally have to increase capacity in a tiered fashion. Meeting peak demands means capex spending for capacity that may go unused the majority of the time. By moving to the cloud, you can ramp up and back off usage as demand requires. No more investment in partially used capacity.
3. **Support** - No small firm can afford the 24/7 in-house IT support that is ideal for a fully monitored and secure infrastructure. With cloud utilization, you are outsourcing the support staff to your cloud service provider. As with hardware, you enjoy economies of scale by sharing the support costs with other users.

4. **Reliability** - Because you benefit from the highly secured and supported environment the cloud services provide, you protect your clients from the downtime that would likely occur if your own infrastructure were to become disabled for any reason. UPS protection, mirrored storage, and highly sophisticated data security protocols mean that your business is safer from disaster and external threats than if you were to maintain it all on-site.

There are other advantages to cloud storage, and data security is a big one. As a small businesses, the cloud can enable you to take advantage of the power of technology to support your business without the high costs associated with buildout and maintenance. Some studies are suggesting almost half of small firms are now taking advantage of the cloud to lower costs. Talk to a managed service provider to learn more about the practicality of migrating some or all of your IT needs to the cloud.

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