

Cloud Computing a Huge Business Opportunity

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Abstract

The government of India's decision to make use of cloud network for implementation of different programmes heralds a big business opportunity for the industry.

Firms, big and small, should focus on leveraging on the forthcoming opportunity. Several government officials increasingly moving around with tablet personal computers and so much government activity will take place on cloud networks. The government's plans to use IT infrastructure for public programmes are the areas of opportunity. The companies should focus on their strong holds and cater to what market is looking for.

There are n numbers of opportunities where investors are likely to invest, opined that information technology, especially e-commerce and healthcare.

The present Indian market throws a lot of opportunities in agriculture and food processing industry. Today, one dollar of agricultural product gives rise to another dollar of processing opportunity in India.

Keywords *IT-Information technology, software, cloud computing, government policy, e-commerce, healthcare, CIO – Chief Information Officer*

Introduction - Cloud for business

A recent survey by Newtek Business Services, The Small Business Authority found that only 29% of independent business owners know or have ever heard about cloud computing. In addition, just 26% of them could even begin to describe what it is.

When it comes to understanding the basic premise of cloud computing, the concept is really quite simple. In fact, most of us are already cloud computing more or less every day without even knowing it. For example, are you running an anti-virus program on your computer at home? And is the provider occasionally updating that software for you from somewhere else? Yes? Well, welcome to the “cloud.” Is your Internet service provider protecting you from spam, again from some other remote location unknown to you? Yes? Once again, it's a “cloud” thing.

Although some would argue that the so-called “cloud” is really just a silly and unnecessary buzzword. Silly or not, it's quickly becoming the accepted vernacular when it comes to describing Internet-based computing services of any kind.

In a nutshell, cloud computing describes the movement of the technological infrastructure, software-based operations and/or data storage needs of your business from your own desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile phone or company-based server to the web and the care of a cloud service provider. The cloud service provider, of which there are too many to count, is then responsible for all the information technology assets you've entrusted to them, as well as their associated maintenance.

In return for any number of specific kinds of services in this regard, you pay a monthly fee. In some cases, certain cloud computing services and applications can actually be obtained free-of-charge. So depending on the exact needs of your business, it's quite possible that cloud computing in some shape or form could save your business a whole lot of money.

Choosing to turn over your computing needs to the “cloud” as opposed to managing them in-house is a bit like renting instead of buying. Each option comes with its own set of benefits and potential drawbacks, the magnitude of which will wholly depend on your individual business’ needs, goals and available resources.

Business Opportunities within cloud computing

Cloud computing is a model for enabling convenient, on-demand access to a shared pool of computing resources (networks, servers, storage, applications, and services) that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction.

Cloud computing is a new way for organizations, developers, and entrepreneurs to interact with information technology using the internet and other computer networks, which are metaphorically called “the cloud”. This trend has major associated benefits, because by using cloud-based schemes, the end user can employ a much more robust technology and at a lower cost than by accessing resources through previous schemes.

This represents an advantage for companies because they will be able to focus on their real interests, which are the search for customers and having better products, and they will not worry about having a server down, updating software versions, etc. We are convinced that in the short term, organizations, institutions and entrepreneurs are going to realize that the most efficient, economical and updated way of technological interaction is the exploration of possibilities offered by cloud schemes.

"With cloud-based schemes, the technology available to the end user is much more robust and has a lower costs."

Microsoft is addressing three major activities of incorporation of the ecosystem to the cloud. First, they are working very hard with developers, businesses, entrepreneurs and organizations that develop such applications, so that they all understand the operational advantages.

The second block of activities that they have is for consumers of services in the cloud. For example, Hotmail and Messenger are applications that live in the cloud and Microsoft is a pioneer in serving millions of users in this way, but the trend is that increasingly more applications go to the cloud. At this point, for example, we are enabling Dynamics services, and SharePoint will be up there too.

The third component that people offer for users is to support them in services they already know. People can help them design their services completely in the cloud, which implies a process of understanding and also support them in the use of hybrids. This last arrangement will be more useful to businesses, because they may be a bit wary about their data and may prefer to store them within the companies, yet the greater part of the execution can be in the cloud.

How to Use Cloud Computing to Create New Business Opportunities?

By now, most of the world has defined cloud computing to match their own use of new services and solutions. Every impacted stakeholder in the organization has their own definition of the “cloud” although they may not know what it means in general to IT industry stakeholders.

To the developer, coding for the cloud means building new, but not entirely unusual, interfaces for accessing and managing data; maybe learning a new protocol or programming language. CIO’s view the cloud as another vendor relationship to be managed with increasing concerns of how someone else is managing their data, making it secure and wondering how they can share that data with other critical applications. Customer-facing leaders see the cloud as a solution for rapidly automating critical business processes without the overhead imposed by CIO’s and corporate standards. Throughout all these views, one thing is common. Stakeholders, regardless of their office location, expect the cloud to be available all the time.

1) Business Opportunities

Business leaders, especially in today's economy, must move quickly to drive revenue and profits up or bring costs down. It's a good thing for them that many of you reading this are rolling out cloud solutions with those goals in mind.

Large, traditional IT organizations have spent the past decade or longer integrating large business systems and data to deliver to their business partners a holistic view of the customer. While this has been successful for many clients one has worked with, the counterweight to that achievement is a process-heavy IT organization unable to rapidly add new features. Data models must be modified and coordinated with all users and deployed during scheduled, infrequent releases. This limits a business partner's ability to react quickly to changing business conditions or rapidly deploy new features to market.

Cloud solutions are attractive to business leaders as they provide an opportunity to quickly deploy new features without following the rigor imposed by traditional IT organizations.

2) Global Opportunities

Widespread distribution of Internet technology to developing countries around the world creates even more opportunities. Competition from service providers in low-cost developing countries will inevitably increase. If you're sitting there idly dismissing the thought that less-developed countries can compete with you, remember how quickly you set up your hosting and technical infrastructure via the Internet. What prevents them from doing the same thing?

Here point is that cloud services will generate many successful business opportunities in developed countries as well as developing countries. The cost of entering the market is much less for cloud solutions than when we were in a mainframe or even client-server world. There is no requirement that small development shops around the world have to purchase expensive hardware or software. All can be had via the Internet at a fair, equivalent price. But isn't even a "fair price" out of reach for shops in low-income locales? Maybe, but have you ever heard of micro-financing?

On a parallel track, think of that small business in Ghana and the advantage they could gain over their competition by accessing low-cost solutions via the cloud. By simply using low-cost CRM solutions, they could improve customer service and satisfaction and grow their business faster than their competition. Businesses in developing countries with access to the Internet and modest means can even use the cloud as their competitive advantage.

The Pros and Cons of Cloud Computing

Cloud Computing Pros

Just a quick glance reveals some of the key reasons many business owners are opting into the "cloud" when it comes to managing their technology infrastructure, as well as their software application and data storage needs:

- Considerable cost savings—Cloud computing can save your business money. It often costs much less than you would spend on desktop software and its upgrades and/or modifications, not to mention licensing for multiple users; and it can significantly lower your in-house IT costs, both in terms of equipment and labor. It's also worth noting that there are a number of free-for-life cloud computing options out there that, if they meet your needs, couldn't get any cheaper.
- Increased mobility—With cloud computing, you can access your information anywhere there is a network connection (the Internet), which also facilitates your collaboration with your colleagues across time zones and geographic locales like never before.
- Hassle-free back-up—All your data is backed up automatically in the cloud, and service providers are usually pretty reliable when it comes to their recovery systems.

- Storage capacity—It's pretty much unlimited, so no worries about having to up your memory or increase your system's storage capabilities.
- Elastic costs—By accessing the cloud you can scale your needs up or down depending on service demand within your organization and pay accordingly. That cost can then be expensed. Of course, the delicate balance between when to rent services of this kind or invest in a long-term fixed-cost IT asset such as a server constitutes an equation only you can answer based on the specific needs and goals of your business.
- Focused simplification—Cloud computing allows you to more or less cherry pick the software applications and services that suit your individual business' needs most, which can be much more cost-effective than being stuck paying for more feature-rich, yet unnecessary software packages. When enough is all you need, cloud computing is a great option.
- Software management and integration—In the cloud, software upgrades and enhancements are no-cost, no hassle and automatic. In addition, there's oftentimes no need to pay someone to customize or integrate your applications for your specific needs; it's done for you.
- Rapid deployment—And finally, there's nothing faster than cloud computing. In fact, you can be up and running in minutes depending on what you need.

Cloud Computing Cons

Although the following list is shorter than that above, don't be fooled. The potential pitfalls to cloud computing can be serious deal-killers for many business owners and should be considered carefully before you opt in. At the same time, it's important to understand that the whole concept of cloud computing is in its relative infancy. As a result, many of these concerns may very well become less valid as time wears on.

- Access failure—While it's true that access to what is rightfully yours and resides in the cloud is supposed to be 24/7, outages and other glitches do occur. And when they do, nothing about how and when you get access to what you need is within your control. Even the best cloud computing service provider has to conduct routine maintenance or experiences a system failure now and again. And don't forget, you can't access what's in the cloud without a good, solid Internet connection, and you know what that means.
- Security and privacy—When you turn yourself and your business over to the cloud, that third-party involvement in your affairs puts your security and privacy at greater risk than would be the case if you were at the helm. That's no small consideration in all of this either. If nothing else, it's a critical reminder that the proven stability and reliability of any vendor you select to provide you with cloud computing services is of utmost importance.
- More cooks in the kitchen—The easy accessibility of all the proprietary information you store in the cloud translates into greater flexibility for and fosters collaboration among your staff, that's true. However, it also creates many more opportunities for problems to arise. Sometimes too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.
- Loss of flexibility—Upgrades and new software features are ultimately up to your select vendor. And while they have a lot to offer, choosing the cloud means you could lose some of the deeper functions that only desktop applications can provide.
- Expense over time—Although cherry picking and paying only for what you need sounds financially prudent, at what point in time would you have been better off making an investment in a fixed asset that would have saved you money over the long run? It's really important to ask yourself what you have to gain in the short-term by opting into the cloud that you may come to regret in five or ten years. Once again and as is true for so many big decisions in business, it all boils down to your specific goals, what you need to get the job done and for how long, and your business' available resources.

Conclusion

Cloud computing has the potential to be one of the most significant forces of change impacting business in the next decade. Cloud is transformative in that it is creating new business opportunities as companies harness its power to efficiently facilitate new revenue, services and businesses. It is breaking down barriers in the supply chain and creating more effective and timely interaction between clients and suppliers. It is delivering speed, agility and cost reduction to IT and other functional areas within the enterprise. Its transformative impact can readily be seen in areas such as HR, CRM and IT Infrastructure.

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