

# ProfitBrite

Your Work From Home Information Portal

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MAR 9

## What's Cloud Computing and What Does it Have to Do With Me?

Remember those SAT questions: a bat is to a ball as a shoe is to a \_\_\_\_? Well, as much as we hated them, let me use this to explain what cloud computing (or Software as a Service/SAAS) is and how it can change the way you work. Here goes:

Cloud computing is to your office computer as a cell phone is to a land line.

We (okay most of us) remember what it was like to work before cell phones. Running.. running to grab the phone on your desk, running to pick up your voice messages or running to grab a phone at the airport the minute you got off the plane. Cell phones freed us from being tethered to the office. You can work from anywhere, at anytime. And for smart phone users, you have email, calendars & contacts with you at all times. Yes, it's ubiquitous, but none of us want to go back.

Yet for all this freedom, we are still tethered to our office computers and servers. The programs we use every day, our word documents & files, accounting, contacts... the list goes on. Smart phone users allow you to access your calendar and contacts, but I bet you still have had that 'oh no' moment when you had to run back to the office (or home computer for those who work from home) to get that file, the word doc, pull up an invoice, etc. You can use a program like PC Anywhere to log in to the office from your laptop, but it's slow and limited.

Cloud computing simply means using web based programs to replace the programs you used to download to your computer. You can, safely and securely, manage an entire office, or organization, from any computer or laptop anywhere. Accounting, email, customer management, word documents, file sharing...whatever you need.

Here's a list of Q&A that address many concerns that I hear:

Q: is it safe? and is it secure?

A: Yes. The companies that manage cloud programs host your information on multiple mega server farms. Your data is encrypted (garbles your data to make it unusable to anyone but you), automatically backed up and mirrored into 2 locations around the country (e.g. in case CA has an earthquake, your data is fine and in NY). Security? yes, as safe as your credit card information when you purchase from amazon. And as safe, or safer, as the firewalls your IT guy built into your server.. and certainly safer than your laptop.

Q: Are these 'cloud' programs as good as the ones I am using?

A: Absolutely. Here are some examples:

rel=nofollow [<http://www.thinkfree.com/>]ThinkFree to replace Microsoft Word. Create and edit a word document, save it and find it from any computer, laptop or smartphone.

Skype: nothing more need to be said

Clarity Accounting or Quickbooks online. I have been using quickbooks online for 4 years, integrated it with my bank accounts, set up my tax payments and added my CPA as a limited user. I can generate an invoice, pay my sales tax, run a report and send a payment on my time.

Office Management: rel=nofollow [<http://www.infostreet.com/>]InfoStreet is simply the easiest and smartest suite of office tools I have ever seen. 'StreetSmart is web based software that helps you run your small business more efficiently. It allows you and your team to manage projects, email, potential clients, employees, calendars, and other essential business activities using only a Web browser and an Internet connection' and it does this for as little as \$10 a month per user.

Q: I spent so much money already and it took days to set it up. I don't have the time or the budget to change over.

A: Cloud computing will reduce your operating and tech support costs, eliminate the licensing fees for your programs, your IT hours needed to maintain all this and your hardware costs. Realize that the days of downloading programs, hoping that your server won't crash while you are doing it, worrying if these programs will work on your operating system whether it is Microsoft Vista, XP, 2003, 2004, 2007 or what to do with your MAC users.

Cloud computing programs work off the web: it doesn't matter what operating system you use and it will work on any PC or MAC!

And to my fellow Floridians: remember the hurricanes of 2007? How many of you were out of work until your office got its power back. With cloud computing, you will be back at work from anywhere you have power. And not only you....with tools such as Skype and Infostreet, your entire office can be collaborating from their home, Starbucks or from out of town.

For those who are reluctant to embrace the cloud, think about it the next time you answer your cell phone instead of running to grab your land line.

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[filebound](#) said...

Great writeup on cloud computing! This will help some of our customers ease into the thought of cloud computing, thanks!

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