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Cloud computing concept related to pooling and sharing resources

Let's say you're an executive at a large corporation. Your particular responsibilities include making sure that all of your employees have the right hardware and software they need to do their jobs. Buying computers for everyone isn't enough -- you also have to purchase software or software licenses to give employees the tools they require. Whenever you have a new hire, you have to buy more software or make sure your current software license allows another user. It's so stressful that you find it difficult to go to sleep on your huge pile of money every night.Soon, there may be an alternative for executives like you. Instead of installing a suite of software for each computer, you'd only have to load one application. That application would allow workers to log into a Web-based service which hosts all the programs the user would need for his or her job. Remote machines owned by another company would run everything from e-mail to word processing to complex data analysis programs. It's called cloud computing, and it could change the entire computer industry.In a cloud computing system, there's a significant workload shift. Local computers no longer have to do all the heavy lifting when it comes to running applications. The network of computers that make up the cloud handles them instead. Hardware and software demands on the user's side decrease. The only thing the user's computer needs to be able to run is the cloud computing system's interface software, which can be as simple as a Web browser, and the cloud's network takes care of the rest.There's a good chance you've already used some form of cloud computing. If you have an e-mail account with a Web-based e-mail service like Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail or Gmail, then you've had some experience with cloud computing. Instead of running an e-mail program on your computer, you log in to a Web e-mail account remotely. The software and storage for your account doesn't exist on your computer -- it's on the service's computer cloud.What makes up a cloud computing system? Find out in the next section. We offer ad hoc reporting solution.Cloud computing is the term that describes the latest business technology that is being adopted all over the world at a rapid pace. Businesses are quickly moving away from traditional practices and investing in cloud computing and cloud-based applications. Businesses are drawn to the scalability and flexibility options that cloud computing provides. In this article, we discuss the reasons for this change in business work operation practice, and the options available for businesses to make the correct choice in terms of cloud computing to complement their business needs.What is cloud computing?Cloud computing is a technology where businesses purchase cloud-based applications through which their work processes and operations are automated and performed at a remote location. Usually, cloud computing is provided through cloud service providers and businesses purchase cloud-based products to ease their work and adopt a pay-as-you-use procedure. The business processes are set up and configured through cloud-based applications that work on cloud computing technology. This leads to businesses automating their work and performing tasks like customer management, product inventory and data reporting, and analytics remotely through a cloud-based application. This relives the businesses the burden of additional IT costs required to host powerful servers and other hardware equipment required to run applications and store business data and provides them with an opportunity to expand their business and work remotely by using a cloud-based application.Importance of cloud computing in ITCloud computing has taken the load off business environments and provides a chance for the IT industry to offer business processes and services as an application. This application is run on the cloud, and all backend and server activities are taken care of by the service providers, giving the IT industry an opportunity to experiment and produce new products to gain business clients. The IT market is now filled with a range of cloud-based applications serving customers in different areas and niches in the industry. Cloud computing applications like database management software, CRM software, project management software, data analytics and reporting software, and business intelligence software are only some areas where cloud computing has paved the way for online business management tools. Cloud computing is playing an important role in the multimedia industry as well. Cloud-based software applications like Zoom, GoToMeeting, and Webex are proving a range of audio and video services and software for collaboration among team members of a business to provide them opportunities to work from remote places and come together online to perform their tasks efficiently.Importance of cloud computing in businessCloud computing is turning into a backbone for modern business infrastructure with the demand for a data-driven business approach many businesses are moving their data and business processes online to gain added benefits. Cloud computing helps businesses to set up a remote database, use management software to aggregate and organize data, and then use specialized cloud-based applications for data analytics and reporting to create meaningful data insights for business analysts. "With the cloud, individuals and small businesses can snap their fingers and instantly set up enterprise-class services."- Roy Stephan, Founder and CEO, PierceMatrixEvery area of business is influenced by cloud computing as a backup as a service (BAAS) software help businesses move their data remotely and backup and update data regularly through secure and reliable means. Software as a service (SAAS) lets businesses personalize and operate their business tasks online through a SAAS service like managing projects through Project management software or performing data analytics and reporting through embedded cloud-based applications. Businesses can collaborate effectively and perform their tasks efficiently through different cloud-based applications like Monday.com, Zoho Analytics, dotnet report builder, Izenda, and many more.Cloud computing advantages and disadvantagesThe growing popularity of cloud computing and cloud-based applications make us wonder if there are any drawbacks or flaws in the system. In this section, we will look closely at the advantages and disadvantages of cloud computing that businesses should look out for before making their decision to switch their business to cloud computing.AdvantagesSome advantages of cloud computing outweigh the disadvantages in terms of the benefits that are offered by moving data and business processes to a remote location. This scenario is ideal for business scalability and flexibility of work and can provide an opportunity for businesses to expand their business without a substantial increase in the operational and IT cost. Another benefit is the chance for collaboration and able to access the work environment and shared resources from any device and anywhere with internet access. Work files can be updated and shared by multiple workers simultaneously and everyone has access to the latest updated files. Ease of operation and ease of access are some added benefits of cloud-based applications in a work environment."Cloud computing is empowering; companies leveraging cloud will be able to innovate cheaper and faster."- Jamal Mazhar, Founder and CEO, KaavoDisadvantagesOne con to consider while making a decision to move data and business to cloud computing is compromise on data security. When data is constantly accessed from remote locations over the cloud there is always a risk of data hacking and the online vulnerabilities of the Internet apply to the business data as well. There may be problems in accessing data and business applications if fast internet is not available or internet service crashes then the whole system would become inaccessible. These are some scenarios that users must evaluate carefully before opting for cloud computing.Cloud computing securityWhenever a major business operation change is performed like moving business data to the cloud the most important concern is data security. Businesses would never compromise their data security for any change however lucrative it may sound. They need to be completely assured of their data security before they change their business operating model to move to cloud computing. Following are the different options available for cloud computing if a business is contemplating a move to cloud computing. business analysts must analyze the pros and cons before choosing the model best suited to their needs.Public clouds Public clouds are open to the public, as the name suggests. It is the classic computing model where a large pool of shared resource environments is available for storage of data from all business vendors that purchase the storage. There is no limitation of data storage and can be allotted as per the requirement of the client. Usually, this type of cloud resource is suitable for customers with less sensitive data. The data storage and backup follow the regular data security protocols for their cloud-based service.Private cloudsPrivate clouds are usually an attractive choice for personalized businesses handling sensitive data and they require a greater level of security for their data. They can implement their business environment remotely using Private clouds where they will have some features of public cloud in addition to added security features like control of remote locations. This allows them to be aware of and control which piece of data is stored at what location and they are able to monitor and control access to their data even though it is being managed remotely.Hybrid CloudsA middle-level cloud option is also available where a company might want to store some of its data through a public cloud and some sensitive information like customer data or other confidential information through a private cloud. These types of combination clouds are called Hybrid clouds. They can be completely personalized to satisfy the data needs of customer business and be implemented according to their business environment. ConclusionCloud computing is here to stay and has secured a firm position in the market because of the benefits it brings with it for the growth of a business. The zest of the matter is that before taking the leap, the data team must evaluate the business needs of their company and choose the model best suitable for them to make a smarter shift to cloud computing. This would make it easier for them to migrate the data and deal with any hassles that may come in the way.Image by Gerd Altmann from PixabayJoin Hacker Noon Create your free account to unlock your custom reading experience. The world's top hotel companies have collectively invested tens of millions of dollars to implement their own customized reservation systems—considered the heart of their operations. Each hotelier views the capabilities of these systems as providing them with some competitive advantage over how they calculate rates and room availability. But the transaction-processing side is considerably more mundane than the algorithms that put individual guests in rooms. While the hoteliers aren't quite at the point of viewing hotel reservations as a commodity service, the potential cost savings that could be gleaned from the creation of a shared, industrywide system is enough of an enticement to have brought the CIOs from these companies together to explore the possibilities. During the past six months, board members for Hotel Technology Next Generation (HTNG)—a global trade association of hoteliers and technology companies that includes Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Marriott International, Hyatt and InterContinental Hotels Group—have been actively discussing possible areas for shared services among participants, including shared property management systems, reservation systems and networks. "It's a preliminary discussion right now," says Tom Conophy, CIO for global IT at InterContinental Hotels Group in Atlanta. "But there is a desire to explore where you can share infrastructure or applications, like financial apps, that are less competitive from a guest point of view." "It's a great example of an untapped opportunity in the hospitality industry," adds Todd Thompson, CIO at Starwood. He believes that a shared hotel reservation system will eventually evolve, likely with one or more tech vendors making their systems scalable enough for use across many major hotel companies by offering them as a shared service. To read more on this topic, see: Legal Considerations for Shared Services, The Price Is Always Right and Public Cloud: New Cloud Marketplace for Hosted Server Capacity. Interest among CIOs in sharing software applications, IT infrastructure and services such as server and storage capacity isn't limited to the hospitality industry. For instance, discussions are underway in both the real estate and insurance industries, where interest among larger companies to host critical applications for smaller organizations is "red hot," says Rob Scott, managing partner at Scott & Scott, a Dallas-based law firm that specializes in software licensing. In May, 25 of the nation's top research universities convened at Indiana University to explore the potential for sharing a range of IT services, infrastructure and software applications, including mirrored sites for disaster recovery, high-performance computers used for research, large-scale storage systems. Web hosting and help desk operations, says Jerrold Grochow, vice president of information services and technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The idea of IT services shared among industry rivals isn't new, but attempts to establish them have a spotty track record. Previous initiatives, such as an effort in the early 1990s to form a shared travel reservation network called Confirm was started but never materialized, though it was backed by Sabre Holdings, American Airlines and a few other travel industry players. Others have prevailed, including SITA, a provider of air transport communications and IT systems that was owned and operated by members of the air transportation industry. But the odds of success are improving, and with them is a renewed desire among CIOs to engage in shared IT endeavors. For starters, CIOs are under tremendous pressure to reduce costs, but many have exhausted the tried and true techniques for doing so, such as offshore outsourcing, data center consolidation and server and storage virtualization. Meanwhile, the technological world has been transformed by the global expansion of broadband networks, open source and the emergence of cloud computing, which make any discussion about sharing systems considerably more practical. Together, these developments may induce companies to find solutions to typical obstacles concerning management and control of shared environments. "With the advent of cloud computing, I think that's going to open up the doors to this type of collaboration," says Conophy. Why Share Now? Renewed interest in sharing IT services across companies has been percolating since the economy began to tank last year—and corporate executives began considering nontraditional ways of cutting IT costs. "Consider a large investment bank that invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional server capacity during the last bull market to support additional business," says Howard Rubin, a Gartner fellow and professor emeritus of computer science at Hunter College of the City University of New York. What can that bank do with its excess capacity? Open access to it, says Rubin, through what he calls a "technology commons"—an arrangement to share infrastructure services the way New England farmers used to share grazing lands. By leasing or renting that capacity to other industry firms, an investment bank could generate additional revenues, lower its fixed IT costs and channel more investment into money-making IT and business projects, says Rubin. Shared IT services have already taken root in academia and among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—nonprofits that run aid programs). In 2001, NGOs led by Save the Children, along with Cisco, formed NetHope, a nonprofit IT consortium of 26 international organizations whose members now include ChildFund International, Relief International and World Vision. NGOs have extremely lean IT budgets, so they were thrust together by a common need, says Ed Granger-Happ, U.S. and U.K. CIO with Save the Children. NetHope's slogan, in fact, is, "Collaborate or perish." NetHope provides its members with technology such as shared satellite services in geographies where connectivity is scarce, including parts of Africa and Asia. Sharing satellites and ground stations is cheaper than having your own equipment, says Khuloud Odeh, former CIO at CHF International, a development and humanitarian aid organization. As a nonprofit, NetHope operates on grants from companies such as Microsoft and Accenture as well as annual membership fees from its participants. Members pay between \$8,000 and \$20,000 annually, depending on their size. NetHope recently conducted an ROI study for its members and determined that the typical participant achieved a return of more than 475 percent on their membership fees, says Granger-Happ. ERP, Community Style Some academic institutions have looked to shared software development to provide applications that drive down IT and operating costs. In early July, Colorado State University and San Joaquin Delta College each implemented an ERP-style financial system that they codveloped with other members of the Kual Foundation, a group of 31 colleges and universities that also includes the University of Arizona, Indiana University and Cornell University. Collectively, the group has invested \$9 million toward software development for the project, says Brad Wheeler, vice president for information technology and CIO at Indiana University. The "soup to nuts" system includes general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable and other financial modules. The Kual Foundation ran the ERP project as a community initiative, and next month, Wheeler says, it will be made available under an open-source license. For its part, Indiana University contributed five software developers from Wheeler's 700-person staff to help with the ERP project from its launch in the summer of 2005. While the project demanded a lot of time and attention from Wheeler and other founders—including defining the modules that would be developed and setting time lines—he says it was worth the effort to build a system that better fit higher education business processes. Wheeler observes that some large universities have invested more than \$100 million to purchase and install third-party ERP systems in recent years. Besides saving each of the participants millions in software licensing and implementation costs, each of the participating college IT staffs know the ins and outs of the Kual system, says Wheeler. Although each institution will host its own system, a core group will continue to share software development. The Devil in the Details Getting the benefits of shared IT services, however, requires a lot of negotiation and hand holding. These partnerships are fraught with challenges ranging from contractual issues to security and liability concerns. Interim discussions among the top research universities touched on some of the potential difficulties they would face, including how service-level agreements would be structured and how the group would resolve differences when participants are split on adding new technological capabilities, says MIT's Grochow. "There would have to be a significant amount of attention paid to this," he adds, referring to the myriad legal questions inherent in a shared services arrangement. Issues such as where competitive data or a set of applications resides physically takes time to resolve, notes CHF International's Odeh, as does developing a level of trust between participants. Entrusting IT operations to an outsourcing provider with an established track record "is one thing," says Steven John, CIO at H B Fuller, a specialty chemical manufacturer. "We have to try to figure out ways to do this without making it overly burdensome for staff at the respective schools," Kossuth notes. Then there's the popular conviction that you can't (or shouldn't) trust anyone who isn't on your payroll. Among executives in the utilities sector, there's an embedded belief "that they need to control their own destiny," says Michael J. Carlson, former vice president and CIO at Xcel Energy, who recently left to lead smart grid operations for GridPoint. Any attempt to share IT resources among utilities would also likely be heavily scrutinized by state regulators, thus adding costs and effort that may make shared services not worth pursuing, Carlson adds. CIOs who consider hosting IT services for one or more organizations would face the uphill battle of gaining buy-in from others in senior management, particularly if the service "isn't core to the rest of your organization's business and if it would take cycles away from the normal job of a CIO," says Beach Clark, CIO at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. Clark notes that an industry consortium is building software for keeping animal records. "It's years behind schedule, so there's some skepticism" among his senior executive peers. "I think we will follow the lead of some of our peers in the industry on adopting [it]." Ways to Make Shared Services Work Page 2 Assuming that you can get past the philosophical objections, the remaining obstacles and risks can be addressed through legal agreements and well-designed governance processes. A board-type structure where each of the major participants has some level of representation is important for such purposes, says Scott. He says it's acceptable to have one of the members serve as the president or CEO of the entity "since realistically, most of these consortia are going to be tantamount to closely held businesses with a small number of stakeholders involved." Plus, because shared services organizations are typically formed to help member companies reduce costs, "you're not looking to add labor costs" by hiring executives to run the business, Scott adds. The rules should include policies for vendor selection and vendor management, as well. "You run into this problem where one of the members may have a close or strong relationship with a particular vendor, and it's really the strength of the combined group that helps you to gain bargaining power in the marketplace," says Scott. As such, it's important to establish clearly defined processes for vendor selection and management, even down to such details as the dollar value of gifts that participants can receive from vendors. But tread carefully: Some ill-fated consortia were weighed down by too much planning and bureaucratic decision making, observes Indiana University's Wheeler. He says he's seen groups with big charters go heavy on governance and achieve far less. Wheeler points to a previous, unsuccessful attempt by a closed group of university investors and a vendor to develop a financial system in 2003. That was "before open-source development models had made such progress [in creating] enterprise-scale application software," he says. The hoteliers hope to avoid such mistakes. With respect to sharing a hotel reservation system, participants are discussing how much flexibility they would have to modify the functionality to suit the individual company's needs, says Conophy. "What you need is freedom in a framework," he adds, meaning that any agreement to share software would include provisions entitling participants to customize portions the application. It might be similar to the open-source model of the universities' Kual Foundation, without the reciprocal sharing of modifications. Also, the service being delivered has to be as good, if not better, than what IT organizations are currently providing in-house, says Gary Curtis, global managing director for Accenture Technology Consulting (he is not involved with NetHope). Curtis has worked with multinational companies to restructure IT operations, including incorporating shared services within some of them. He notes that whether a shared services provider is an independent company that's established by member firms or a member hosting an IT service, it "has to pass the same test" as an outsourcer, such as an audit to demonstrate it has the proper controls and governance in place for operating the service. Finally, to address privacy and security concerns, it's important for shared services participants to be clear up-front about the types of data that need to be kept private and the information that can be shared freely among members, says Granger-Happ. Confidentiality arrangements should be written tightly to prevent one or more participants from taking proprietary information or processes away from any of the other members, advises Scott. The attorney goes further, cautioning that participants install strong accounting and internal controls to prevent any members from filching funds. That's actually happened: Scott points to a group of insurance competitors who formed an organization to provide shared technology services only to discover missing money about eight months ago. In the end, CIOs have to decide which, if any, IT activities could be shared or operated by another business in order to drive down operating costs and free up precious resources for more ground-breaking endeavors. "Do we want 100 people working on developing and maintaining a hotel reservation system?" asks Starwood's Thompson. "Or do we want 100 people focused on building innovative solutions for our company?" Thomas Hoffman is a freelance writer based in New York. Copyright © 2009 IDG Communications, Inc.

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