INTRO TO CLOUD COMPUTING

"5 Critical Facts Every Business Owner Must Know Before Moving Their Network To The Cloud"

Discover What Most IT Consultants Don't Know Or Won't Tell You About Moving Your Company's Network To The Cloud

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FREE REPORT:

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Discover What Most IT Consultants Don't Know Or Won't Tell You About Moving Your Company's Network To The Cloud

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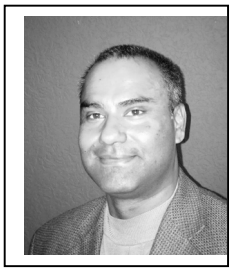
A Letter From The Author:

Why We Created This Report And Who Should Read It



From The Desk of: Nadeem Azhar
Owner, PC.Solutions.Net

Dear Colleague,

When you decided to look into transitioning your computer network and operations to the cloud, you were probably met with conflicting advice, confusion and no real answers to your questions and concerns over security, cost and whether or not it's appropriate for your organization.

That's why we wrote this report. **We wanted to give CEOs a simple, straightforward guide that not only answers your questions in plain English, but also provides vital experience-based information that most IT companies don't know (or may not tell you) that could turn your migration into a big, cash-draining nightmare.**

My name is Nadeem Azhar My organization has worked with over 70 small/medium sized business in Texas and taken them from struggling to maintain their information technology infrastructure to making it their competitive advantage in a variety of industries from insurance to entertainment to professional services.

The simple fact is, cloud computing is NOT a good fit for every company, and if you don't get all the facts or fully understand the pros and cons, you can end up making some VERY poor and expensive decisions that you'll deeply regret later. The information in this report will arm you with the critical facts you need to avoid expensive, time-consuming mistakes.

Of course, we are always available as a resource for a second opinion or quick question, so please feel free to contact my office direct if we can clarify any points made in this report or answer any questions you have.

Dedicated to serving you,

Nadeem Azhar

About The Author

Nadeem Azhar started professionally in information technology in 1989 at a computer reseller in Pakistan. He came to the US in 1993 and started PC.Solutions.Net in 1997 after working at a few other companies like Compaq and Rockwell Automation. He says, "I worked at a few large corporations but my heart has been in the SMB space, where you work closely with the client and what you do has a bigger impact company wide. It's like a second family, a baby that you have to nurture, give it direction and help grow."

PC.Solutions.Net started out with just one client, The Baker Street Group and quickly grew to over 50 clients in the Houston area, almost all in the small to medium size space.

Mr. Azhar has extensive experience working with small to medium size business most his professional career. He understands that to satisfy SMBs, an organization has to provide service in a responsive manner and back it up with support. One can get away with next business day response in enterprise, where there are passive failover systems in place, but this is not an option when it comes to SMBs where a lot of time budget does not allow having active/passive failover systems and infrastructure.

PC.Solutions.Net is partnered with major vendors like VMWare, Microsoft and Intel and has the honor of being a member of the Microsoft SMB Club Champions because of our keen focus on SMB.

Vendor partnerships don't only give us deep technical expertise but also allow us to be up to date new technologies. Our focus and expertise has allowed companies like Select Insurance Markets, Texas Richmond Corporation and Bubbles Enterprises thrive and grow while using IT as a critical business advantage instead of it being just a cost center.

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5 Critical Facts You Must Know Before Moving To The Cloud

In this report I'm going to talk about **5 very important facts you need to know before you consider cloud computing for your company**. These include:

1. The pros AND cons you need to consider before moving to the cloud.
2. Migration GOTCHAS (and how to avoid them).
3. The various types of cloud computing options you have (there are more than just one).
4. Answers to important, frequently asked questions you need to know the answers to.
5. What questions you need to ask your IT pro before letting them "sell" you on moving all or part of your network and applications to the cloud.

I've also included some actual case studies from other businesses that have moved to cloud computing, along with a sample cost-comparison chart so you can see the impact this new technology can have on your IT budget.

At the end of this report there is an invitation for you to request a **Free Cloud Readiness Assessment** to determine if cloud computing is right for your particular business. I encourage you to take advantage of this before making any decisions since we've designed it to take a hard look at the functionality and costs for you as a business and provide you with the specific information you need (not hype) to make a good decision about this new technology.

What Is Cloud Computing?

Wikipedia defines cloud computing as "the use and access of multiple server-based computational resources via a digital network (WAN, Internet connection using the World Wide Web, etc.)."

But what the heck does *that* mean?

The easiest way to not only understand what cloud computing is but also gain insight into why it's gaining in popularity is to compare it to the evolution of public utilities. For example, let's look at the evolution of electricity.

Back in the industrial age, factories had to produce their own power in order to run machines that produced the hard goods they manufactured. Be it textiles or railroad spikes, using machines gave these companies enormous competitive advantages by producing more goods with fewer workers and in less time. For many years, the production of power was every bit as important to their company's success as the skill of their workers and quality of their products.

Unfortunately, this put factories into TWO businesses: the business of producing their goods and the business of producing power. Then the concept of delivering power (electricity) as a utility was introduced by Thomas Edison when he developed a commercial-grade replacement for gas lighting and heating using centrally generated and distributed electricity. From there, as they say, the rest was history.

The concept of electric current being generated in central power plants and delivered to factories as a utility caught on fast. This meant manufacturers no longer had to be in the business of producing their own power with enormous and expensive water wheels. **In fact, in a very short period of time, it became a competitive necessity for factories to take advantage of the lower-cost option being offered by public utilities.** Almost overnight, thousands of steam engines and electric generators were rendered obsolete and left to rust next to the factories they used to power.

What made this possible was a series of inventions and scientific breakthroughs – but what drove the demand was pure economics. Utility companies were able to leverage economies of scale that single manufacturing plants simply couldn't match in output or in price. In fact, the price of power dropped so significantly that it quickly became affordable for not only factories but every single household in the country.

Today, we are in a similar transformation following a similar course. The only difference is that instead of cheap and plentiful electricity, advancements in technology and Internet connectivity are driving down the costs of computing power. With cloud computing, businesses can pay for "computing power" like a utility without having the exorbitant costs of installing, hosting and supporting it on premise.

In fact, you are probably already experiencing the benefits of cloud computing in some way but hadn't realized it. Below are a number of cloud computing applications, also called SaaS or "software as a service," you might be using:

- Gmail, Hotmail or other free e-mail accounts
- Facebook
- NetSuite, Salesforce
- Constant Contact, Exact Target, AWeber or other e-mail broadcasting services
- Zoomerang, SurveyMonkey and other survey tools
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- All things Google (search, AdWords, maps, etc.)

If you think about it, almost every single application you use today can be (or already is) being put "in the cloud" where you can access it and pay for it via your browser

for a monthly fee or utility pricing. You don't purchase and install software but instead access it via an Internet browser.

What About Office 365 And Google Apps?

Office 365 and Google Apps are perfect examples of the cloud computing trend; for an inexpensive monthly fee, you can get full access and use of Office applications that used to cost a few hundred dollars to purchase. And, since these apps are being powered by the cloud provider, you don't need an expensive desktop with lots of power to use them – just a simple Internet connection will do on a laptop, desktop or tablet.

With either of these cloud apps, companies can get out of the business of maintaining their own email and group-ware servers, managing security for these servers and upgrading them as hardware and server software changes to accommodate new devices.

These services not only replace your in house email/Exchange servers but also provide enhancements like file repository for user files and a convenient way of sharing files with other users inside or outside the organization. The best part is, since these are enterprise grade services, they come with their own failover systems and yet allow you, the customer, to be in full control of permissions and configuration at a price affordable by SMBs.

Pros And Cons Of Moving To The Cloud

As you read this section, keep in mind there is no "perfect" solution. All options – be it an in-house, on-premise server or a cloud solution – have upsides and downsides that need to be evaluated on a case-by-case scenario. (Warning: Do NOT let a cloud expert tell you there is only "one way" of doing something!)

Keep in mind the best option for you may be a **hybrid solution** where some of your applications and functionality are in the cloud and some are still hosted and maintained from an in-house server. We'll discuss more of this in a later section; however, here are the general pros and cons of cloud computing:

Pros Of Cloud Computing:

- **Lowered IT costs.** This is probably the single most compelling reason why companies choose to move their network (all or in part) to the cloud. Not only do

you save money on software licenses, but on hardware (servers and workstations) as well as on IT support and upgrades. In fact, we save our clients an average of 15%-30% when we move some or part of their network functionality to the cloud. So if you hate constantly writing cash-flow-draining checks for IT upgrades, you'll really want to look into cloud computing. Included in this report are examples of how we've done this for other clients and what the savings have been.

- **Ability to access your desktop and/or applications from anywhere and any device.** If you travel a lot, have remote workers or prefer to use an iPad while traveling and a laptop at your house, cloud computing will give you the ability to work from any of these devices. This feature alone has enabled companies to grow in new ways that they thought were un-attainable only a few years ago or were not even imagined. Since infrastructure is in the cloud, even if a natural disaster causes the main office to go down, other branches can keep operating without any impact. With workstation in the cloud option, users can access their desktops from handhelds and tablets from the field from down the street to half way around the globe while keeping company intellectual property safe.

- **Disaster recovery and backup are automated.** The server in your office is extremely vulnerable to a number of threats, including viruses, human error, hardware failure, software corruption and, of course, physical damage due to a fire, flood or other natural disaster. If your server were in the cloud and (God forbid) your office was reduced to a pile of rubble, you could purchase a new laptop and be back up and running within the same day. This would NOT be the case if you had a traditional network and were using tape drives, CDs, USB drives or other physical storage devices to back up your system.

  Plus, like a public utility, cloud platforms are far more robust and secure than your average business network because they can utilize economies of scale to invest heavily into security, redundancy and failover systems, making them far less likely to go down.

  With data in the cloud, you could, for example, enable versioning to where even if a user made a mistake and entered incorrect data in a file, they can restore the file to a previous version by themselves instead of having to call the IT admin. TeamSites and OneDrive for Business also have a recycle bin, which may not be available on your network shares on the in-house server.

  Cloud infrastructures are geographically diverse, meaning even if a specific geographic region is hit by a natural disaster, this doesn't affect all your users as resources are distributed over different regions around the globe. The infrastructure runs on a farm of servers instead of just one or two servers meaning

it's more resilient to outages of individual servers and is more scalable.

- **It's faster, cheaper and easier to set up new employees.** If you have a seasonal workforce or a lot of turnover, cloud computing will not only lower your costs of setting up new accounts, but it will make it infinitely faster. For a local insurance company we provide workstations in the cloud. This allows the company to hire temporary staff as needed and give them workstations in the cloud instead of having to invest in desktops and licenses every time they bring in temporary personnel. With phone system in the cloud as well, essentially the entire office environment can be provisioned and de-provisioned at a moments notice without having to invest in hardware and software licenses whether they are being used or not. The pay as you go model saves the company upwards of $50,000 annually and at the same time makes them more nimble. Since business runs in peaks and valleys, now the IT infrastructure can grow and shrink as needed without having to invest in infrastructure for the peak and letting it sit idle during slow times.

- **You use it without having to "own" it.** More specifically, you don't own the *responsibility* of having to install, update and maintain the infrastructure. Think of it as similar to living in a condo where someone else takes care of the building maintenance, repairing the roof and mowing the lawn, but you still have the only key to your section of the building and use of all the facilities. This is particularly attractive for companies that are new or expanding, but don't want the heavy outlay of cash for purchasing and supporting an expensive computer network. This allows small companies to have access to super computer type compute capacity that was previously unachievable due to the cost and respond to peak usage during holidays for a retail organization. Cloud computing makes it possible to setup criteria where additional server nodes come online during busy holiday season and they go offline as the demand slows down. Without such "elasticity" of the cloud, lot of companies like Netflix, Youtube and Picasa etc. would simply not exist.

- **It's a "greener" technology that will save on power and your electric bill.** For some smaller companies, the power savings will be too small to measure. However, for larger companies with multiple servers that are cooling a hot server room and keep their servers running 24/7/365, the savings are considerable. Not only is it greener to locate servers in a datacenter than a regular building but the controlled environment in a datacenter extends the life of equipment which means less equipment ends up as waste. Cloud providers even repurpose and recycle their hardware to minimize waste and maximize value.

Cons Of Cloud Computing:

- **The Internet going down.** While you can mitigate this risk by using a commercial-grade Internet connection and maintaining a second backup connection, there is a chance you'll lose Internet connectivity. The affects of internet outage is minimized by things such as local caching where the local app keeps a local copy of data in the cloud so even during outages a user can keep working as if nothing happened. By default, Office365 enables cache mode in Outlook when set up and even the web based versions of Office365 and Google Docs have offline option.

- **Data security.** Many people don't feel comfortable having their data in some off-site location. This is a valid concern, and before you choose any cloud provider, you need to find out more information about where they are storing your data, how it's encrypted, who has access and how you can get it back. You'll find more information on this under "What To Look For When Hiring A Cloud Integrator" later on in this document. Security is better at a cloud provider as such providers cater to lot of different industries and some of them are bound of have stricter regulatory policies in place.

  One should always look at security certifications and get the documentation in place if you are in a regulated industry.

- **Certain line-of-business applications won't work in the cloud.** You could have some old application that requires an older version of Windows or even DOS. If this is the case, it should be a priority to migrate such apps to newer platforms for security's sake if nothing else. Some companies in the energy trading and insurance industries usually have very old apps as it costs a lot of money to get apps certified so the vendors stay on old apps as long as they can. This has not been an issue in recent years, a few years ago this was a problem.

- **Compliance Issues.** There are a number of laws and regulations, such as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, Sarbanes-Oxley and HIPAA, that require companies to control and protect their data and certify that they have knowledge and control over who can access the data, who sees it and how and where it is stored. In a public cloud environment, this can be a problem if not configured properly. Many cloud providers won't tell you specifically where your data is stored. When selecting a cloud provider, make sure they meet your industry standards and sign the agreements you need to have in place.

  Most cloud providers have SAS 70 certifications, which require them to be able to describe exactly what is happening in their environment, how and where the data

comes in, what the provider does with it and what controls are in place over the access to and processing of the data; but as the business owner, it's YOUR neck on the line if the data is compromised, so it's important that you ask for some type of validation that they are meeting the various compliance regulations on an ongoing basis.
For example, you may have to have HIPAA BAA signed for Office365 if you decide to host your email with Microsoft. This is usually not an issue and your IT service provider should be able to get the agreements in place along with making sure the configuration is in compliance. Think of it this way, the cloud provider gives you a tool, how you use that tool is still up to your or your IT service provider.

- ## Migration Gotchas! What You Need To Know About Transitioning To A Cloud-Based Network

When done right, a migration to a cloud solution should be like any other migration. There's planning that needs to be done, prerequisites that have to be determined and the inevitable "quirks" that need to be ironed out once you make the move.

Every company has its own unique environment, so it's practically impossible to try and plan for every potential pitfall; however, here are some BIG things you want to ask your IT consultant about BEFORE making the leap.

Downtime. Some organizations cannot afford ANY downtime, while others can do without their network for a day or two. Make sure you communicate YOUR specific needs regarding downtime and make sure your IT provider has a solid plan to prevent extended downtime.

Painfully Slow Performance. Ask your IT consultant if there's any way you can run your network in a test environment before making the full migration. Imagine how frustrated you would be if you migrate your network and discover everything is running so slow you can barely work! Again, every environment is slightly different, so it's best to test before you transition.

3rd-Party Applications. If your organization, as an example, has plug-ins to Exchange for faxing, voice mail or integration into another application, make sure you test to see if it will still work in the new environment.

Know Your Data. You need to know where all your data is to be able to migrate it!

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Cloud Versus A Traditional Network: A Comparison Of Costs

As mentioned earlier, each client has a unique set of circumstances and needs that will factor into the cost savings and benefits. But in order to give you an idea of what you can save when moving your network to the cloud, we've put together a sample business scenario we commonly find, and the savings obtained with cloud computing.

Please note we've shown this over a three-year period since that is the normal span of time when all workstations and servers need to be replaced and software upgraded; and to account for the fact that you don't have to purchase new hardware as often (which is a huge cost savings when moving to the cloud), we need to show this over a three-year period to show the true and full cost savings.

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Cloud Versus A Traditional Network

Werlein&Harris, PC

This is a professional services firm that has 30 employees all using Microsoft Office. Other applications being used include QuickBooks, Microsoft Exchange and specialty accounting application.

Item	Traditional Network Cost Over 3 Years	Cloud Network Cost Over 3 Years
Hardware		
Server 1	$10,000	$10,000
Server 2	$10,000	$0
Server 3	$10,000	$0
Workstations (30)	$25,000	$25,000
Other Devices	$1,000	$1,000
Hosting Cost	$0	$12,960
Software		
Microsoft Operating System	$15,000	$5,000
Microsoft Office Licenses	$12,000	$0
Exchange Server	$5,000	$0
Exchange User Licenses	$2,310	$0
SQL Server	$8,000	$0
SQL User	$1,500	$0
SharePoint	$6,500	$0
Antivirus	$3,900	$900
Spam Filtering	$4,320	$0
Other Costs		
Internet Connection	$10,800	$10,800
Firewall	$600	$600
Backup (on-site and off-site)	$15,000	$8,000
Storage	$15,000	$1,200
Labor		
Outsourced IT Support for Maintenance	$54,000	$18,000
Internal IT Support Costs	$5,000	$800
Total Costs	$214,930	$94,260
Savings:	$120,670	

As you can see, the cost savings are often compelling enough for business owners to overlook the risks of cloud computing; and if carefully planned, those risks of downtime and security are greatly minimized. These cost savings are just to migrate Exchange and Sharepoint to cloud based infrastructure, the savings are even bigger when other apps are migrated as well. In fact, our average client saves between $190,000 to $250,000 when they move to our cloud and experience LESS downtime, problems and system crashes than they did with their in-house network.

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Different Types Of Cloud Solutions Explained:

Pure Cloud: This is where all your applications and data are put on the other side of the firewall (in the cloud) and accessed through various devices (laptops, desktops, iPads, phones) via the Internet.

Hybrid Cloud: Although "pure" cloud computing has valid applications, for many it's not the right fit. And in some cases it is NOT the smartest move, due to compliance issues, security restrictions, speed and performance. A hybrid cloud enables you to put certain pieces of existing IT infrastructure (say, storage and e-mail) in the cloud, and the remainder of the IT infrastructure stays on-premises. This gives you the ability to enjoy the cost savings and benefits of cloud computing where it makes the most sense without risking your entire environment. In a hybrid cloud environment a company can also normally use in house servers but as compute power demand increases (like around Christmas time) additional servers can be spun up in the cloud to handle the increased transactions so customers get the proper experience without any slow downs.

Single Point Solutions: Another option would be to simply put certain applications, like SharePoint or Microsoft Exchange, in the cloud while keeping everything else on-site. Since e-mail is usually a critical application that everyone needs and wants access to on the road and on various devices (iPad, smartphone, etc.), often this is a great way to get advanced features of Microsoft Exchange without the cost of installing and supporting your own in-house Exchange server.

Public Cloud Vs. Private Cloud: A public cloud is a service that anyone can tap into with a network connection and a credit card. They are shared infrastructures that allow you to pay-as-you-go and are managed through a self-service web portal. Private clouds are essentially self-built infrastructures that mimic public cloud services, but can be on-premises. Private clouds are often the choice of companies who want the benefits of cloud computing, but don't want their data held in a public environment. Private cloud can still be hosted at a datacenter, it doesn't have to be at your site as long as it's yours only.

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FAQs About Security, Where Your Data Is Held And Internet Connectivity

Question: How long will it take to transition my on-premises server to the cloud, and what's the process?

Answer: It depends on the type of cloud infrastructure and migration strategy you choose. To migrate email only it can be done within a few days with almost no downtime for users. For migrating file systems it depends on which migration path fits your needs. It also depends on how many users are in your organization. A combination of above dictates the transition time, for example, we've had a 20 user company take 3 days to migrate while another 150 user company migrated in one day.

Question: What if my Internet connection goes down? How will we be able to work?

Answer: While this is a valid concern, we overcome it in the following way for our clients in the cloud. If it's email only that is being transitioned to the cloud, then it's a non issue as Outlook runs in cache mode to where it keeps a copy of the content locally on the hard drive. If you have files in the cloud as well, we can set up local sync to where just like Outlook keeps a local cached copy of data we can keep a local cached copy of the files in the cloud.

Some customers decide to go with a backup internet connection as well, if their primary internet provider gives them a lot of bandwidth for lower cost compared to a backup provider that isn't as fast as primary but more reliable. The failover and failback between internet providers is transparent to the users.

Question: What happens if the Internet slows to the point where it's difficult to work productively?

Answer: We resolve this by keeping a synchronized copy of your data on your on-site server as well as in the cloud. Here's how this works: Microsoft offers a feature with Windows called "DFS," which stands for Distributed File Systems. This technology synchronizes documents between cloud servers and local servers in your office. So instead of getting rid of your old server, we can keep it on-site and maintain an up-to-date synched copy of your files, folders and documents on it. If the Internet goes down or slows to a grind, you simply open a generic folder on your PC and the system will automatically know

to pull the documents from the fastest location (be it the cloud server or the local one). Once a file is modified, it syncs it in seconds so you don't have to worry about having multiple versions of the same document. Using this process, you get the benefits of cloud with a backup solution to keep you up and running during slow periods or complete Internet outages.

Question: What about security? Isn't there a big risk of someone accessing my data if it's in the cloud?

Answer: In many cases, cloud computing is a MORE secure way of accessing and storing data. Just because your server is on-site doesn't make it more secure; in fact, most small to medium businesses can't justify the cost of securing their network the way a cloud provider can. And most security breaches occur due to human error – one of your employees downloads a file that contains a virus, they don't use secure passwords or they simply e-mail confidential information out to people who shouldn't see it. Other security breaches occur in on-site networks because the company didn't properly maintain their own in-house network with security updates, software patches and up-to-date antivirus software. That's a FAR more common way networks get compromised versus a cloud provider getting hacked. In a cloud environment you can even implement Data Loss Prevention policies and Rights Management Services where the system can actively block sensitive information from being "leaked" either intentionally or accidentally.

Question: What if YOU go out of business? How do I get my data back?

Answer: We give every client network documentation that clearly outlines where their data is and how they could get it back in the event of an emergency. This includes emergency contact numbers, detailed information on how to access your data and infrastructure without needing our assistance (although our plan is to always be there to support you.)

Your data is never at our site, the data is at the cloud provider site like Microsoft or Google and we give access instructions to different contacts at your office for billing purposes, administrative tasks, etc.

In fact, you should never hire ANY IT professional who won't give you access to that information after all it is YOUR information.

Since we have offices in different cities and countries, the chances are low that a natural disaster will knock out all our sites and datacenters. Our investment in IT Infrastructure

allows us to be able to manage customer networks remotely from anywhere as long as we have internet access.

Question: Do I have to purchase new hardware (servers, workstations) to move to the cloud?

Answer: No! That's one of the selling points of cloud computing. It allows you to use older workstations, laptops and servers because the computing power is in the cloud. Not only does that allow you to keep and use hardware longer, but it allows you to buy cheaper workstations and laptops because you don't need the expensive computing power required in the past. Recently we migrated customer in the insurance business to cloud workstations in addition to servers. Now their users only need low cost terminals as all the computing is done in the cloud and users can access their workstations from anywhere with any device. The customer was able to remove all server equipment from their local office and now they have an extra office!

What To Look For When Hiring An IT Consultant To Move Your Network To The Cloud

Unfortunately, the IT consulting industry (along with many others) has its own share of incompetent or unethical people who will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the ability to determine whether or not they know what they are doing. Sometimes this is out of greed for your money; more often it's simply because they don't have the skills and competency to do the job right but won't tell you that up front because they want to make the sale.

From misleading information, unqualified technicians and poor management, to terrible customer service, we've seen it all, and we know they exist in abundance because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, etc., are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still highly unregulated and there are few laws in existence to protect the consumer – **which is why it's so important for you to really research the company or person you are considering, to make sure they have the experience to set up, migrate and support your network to the cloud.**

Anyone who can hang out a shingle can promote themselves as a "cloud expert." Even if they are honestly *trying* to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in

your network's speed and performance or in lost or corrupt data files. To that end, here are five questions you should ask your IT person before letting them migrate your network to the cloud:

1. Have they migrated a similar size company to the cloud before in a similar industry? Get references and talk to the business decision makers at the reference. What type of cloud systems have they worked with? If they've only worked with one system, they are bound to make the one shoe fit all.
2. How long have they been in business? A company that has been in business for over 10 years is probably going to be around for another 10 but a company that's been in business for a month may not be around next month.
3. What type of response times do they offer?
4. Do they have the infrastructure in place to support other companies? What type of management platform are they using? Do their users have the ability to work remotely at any time day/night?
5. Do they have expertise working with different technologies? For example, you don't want your voicemail to email functionality break after migrating email to the cloud.

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Critical Questions To Ask Your IT Company Or Computer Consultant BEFORE Letting Them Move Your Network To The Cloud (Or Touch Your Network!)

Question: How many clients have you provided cloud services for to date and can you provide references?

Answer: You don't want someone practicing on your network. At a minimum, make sure they have managed similar size projects before and have migrated companies in a similar industry. Call the references and chat with the decision makers. It's a good idea to talk to C Level Executives as they are the ones who will truly understand the business impact of infrastructure change.

Question: How quickly do they guarantee to have a technician working on an outage or other problem?

Answer: Anyone you pay to support your network should give you a written SLA (service level agreement) that outlines exactly how IT issues get resolved and in what time frame. I would also request that they reveal what their average resolution time has been with current clients over the last three to six months.

They should also respond to support calls during your business hours and provide you with an emergency after-hours number you may call if a problem arises, including on weekends.

If you cannot access your network because the Internet is down or due to some other problem, you can't be waiting around for hours for someone to call you back OR (more importantly) start working on resolving the issue. Make sure you get this in writing; often cheaper or less experienced consultants won't have this or will try and convince you it's not important or that they can't do this. Don't buy that excuse! They are in the business of providing IT support, so they should have some guarantees or standards around this they share with you.

Question: What's your plan for transitioning our network to the cloud to minimize problems and downtime?

Answer: We run a simultaneous cloud environment during the transition and don't "turn off" the old network until everyone is 100% confident that everything has been transitioned and is working effortlessly. You don't want someone to switch overnight without setting up a test environment first.

It's a good idea to have the old environment left alone for a few weeks post migration, even if everything goes smoothly, there may be some users who claim they are missing data. If that

happens and you left the old environment intact, you can simply connect to the old system to see if that's a valid claim.

Question: Do you provide a no-risk trial of our network in the cloud to test the proof of concept BEFORE we commit to a long-term contract?

Answer: We provide all of our clients a free 15-day cloud "test drive" using your servers, applications and data so you can see, first-hand, what it will be like for you and your staff to move your servers to the cloud. While this isn't a full migration, it will give you a true feel for what cloud computing will be like BEFORE committing to a long-term contract. There is no charge for this and no obligation to buy anything. At the end of the 15 days, you'll know whether or not this is a right fit for you, or if you would prefer to keep your current on-site network. We will even set up new public domain for your users to test with.

Question: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across as arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the "heart of a teacher" and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Bill Lawrence, the CEO of Bubbles Enterprises says, "*the guys at PCSN can bring the technology down in terms to where I can understand what they are talking about.*" We believe if we understand the technology well enough then we can explain it, if we can't that means we don't understand it well enough ourselves.

Question: Where will your data be stored?

Answer: You should receive full documentation about where your data is, how it's being secured and backed up and how you could get access to it if necessary WITHOUT going through your provider. Essentially, you don't want your cloud provider to be able to hold your data (and your company) hostage.

Question: How will your data be secured and backed up?

Answer: If they tell you that your data will be stored in their own co-lo in the back of their office, what happens if THEY get destroyed by a fire, flood or other disaster? What are they doing to secure the office and access? Are they backing it up somewhere else? Make sure they are SAS 70 certified and have a failover plan in place to ensure continuous service in the event that their location goes down. If they are building on another platform, you still want to find out where your data is and how it's being backed up.

Question: What is THEIR disaster recovery plan? What happens if they go out of business?

Answer: In case of a disaster, will you have full access to administrative accounts to the infrastructure where your data is housed? If they are using one of the major cloud providers then this shouldn't be an issue as most IT companies are familiar with the big three providers but if they are using a smaller provider, you may have trouble managing your account/data if something happened to them.

Question: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, your critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom"?

Answer: Whether they are doing this via an automated tool or manually, they should keep good records in a central place. This will not only make sure there is not just one person with the keys but also they should be willing to provide you this document if you desire. They should also be sending you a network health report routinely so you can see at a glance, in an easy to read/understand visual report what the current state of affairs is.

Side Note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

Question: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Answer: Yes, and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another left off.

Question: Do they INSIST on doing periodical test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?

Answer: We perform a monthly "fire drill" and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. Upon completion, we confirm the restored data is readable and not corrupt. If there's a problem, we notify our clients immediately and start working to resolve it the same day. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when you desperately need it.

Question: Is their help desk US-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?

Answer: We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel

it's an important step in keeping your data secure. We don't use temporary personnel or contract employees.

Question: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing training – or are they learning on your dime?

Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support. Some companies require partners to be certified to be able to resell their products but we go beyond. Like Mr. Azhar, all employees at PCSN are passionate about IT (call us computer junkies, we don't mind) and we all have lab environments to work with and try different scenarios so passing tests and certifications is not an issue. We do it without having to go to classes. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent that 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through. (Guess who's hiring them?)

Question: Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line-of-business applications?

Answer: We own the problems with all line-of-business applications for our clients. That doesn't mean we can fix faulty software – but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you instead of pointing fingers and putting you in the middle.

Question: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say, "That's not our problem to fix"?

Answer: We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that's just plain old good service and something many computer guys won't do.

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Case Studies: What Our Clients Have To Say About Moving To The Cloud

"We Saved Over $250,000 On Our IT Costs…Amazing!"

"When PC.Solutions.Net recommended we move to cloud computing instead of spending a lot of money to upgrade our network, I was a bit concerned – but when I saw how much money we were going to save, I decided to go for it. I'm very happy we did. Not only did I not have to purchase new workstations, laptops and a server, but our licensing costs are down and employees are able to work remotely much easier. I wish I had done this sooner. Plus, PCSN's tech support has been great. We really haven't had any major issues, but if we do, they're right on it, getting it resolved. I'd highly recommend them to anyone looking to save money on IT while securing company data… and who doesn't want to do that?" – *Liz Kirby, Partner, Select Insurance Markets.*

"Running Exchange in-house just doesn't make sense!"

"Bubbles has been using Nadeem's company for over 5 years, actually I found him via a Microsoft referral and later found out his wife used to work for us a while back! PCSN recommended to us that we move to cloud based email and get rid of the in-house Exchange server and I'm glad we did. The overhead of maintaining an Exchange server is gone but we still have full access to the back-end systems to run our operations. I would recommend PCSN, these guys know what they are doing! Most IT techs leave a mess behind but PCSN keeps a clean environment inside and outside the network." – *Bill Lawrence, CEO, Bubbles Enterprises*

"We saved over $80,000 moving to the cloud!"

"We've been using PCSN for as long as I can remember. Moving our email to the cloud has saved us not only money but has also stabilized email issues that we used to have with hardware failures and internet outage. We used to have an in-house Exchange server that was getting to the end of its life and instead of upgrading, PCSN recommended we move to Office 365. Migration was seamless with no downtime and support from PCSN has been great. Now, we have all user machines and servers running in private cloud. We not only save money but can rest easy that everything is secure from not only external but also internal entities." – *Jason Epps, Owner, Quikserv Corp.*

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Free Assessment Shows You How To Migrate To The Cloud And Avoid Overpaying For Your Next IT Project Or Upgrade

If you're like a number of CEOs we've helped, you've already been burned, disappointed and frustrated by the questionable advice and **complete lack of service** you've gotten from other IT companies. In fact, you might be so fed up and disgusted from being "sold" that you don't trust anyone. *I don't blame you*.

That's why I'd like to offer you a **FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment** to show you there IS a better way to upgrade your computer network AND to demonstrate how a truly competent IT consultant (not just a computer "mechanic") can guide your company to greater profits and efficiencies, help you be more strategic and give you the tools and systems to fuel growth.

At no cost or obligation, I will come to your office and conduct a thorough review and inventory of your current computer network, backups and technologies to give you straightforward answers to the following:

- How using cloud technologies may be able to eliminate the cost, complexity and problems of managing your own in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security and instant disaster recovery. I say "may" because it might NOT be the best choice for you. I'll give you honest answers to your questions and detail – in plain English – the pros AND cons of moving your specific operations to the cloud.

- Are your IT systems truly safe and secured from hackers, viruses and rogue employees? (FACT: 99% of the computer networks we review are NOT, much to the surprise of the CEOs who are paying some other "so-called" expert to manage that aspect of their IT.)

- Are your backups configured properly to ensure that you could be back up and running again fast in a disaster? From our experience, most companies' backups are an epic waste of money and only deliver a false sense of security.

- If you are ALREADY using "cloud" technologies, are you adequately protecting your organization from the dozens of ways you and your organization can be harmed, sued or financially devastated due to security leaks, theft, data loss, hacks and violating ever-expanding data privacy laws?

Even if you decide not to move your network to the cloud or engage with us as a client, you'll find the information we share with you to be extremely valuable and eye-opening

when you make future decisions about IT. After all, it NEVER hurts to get a third-party "checkup" of your IT systems' security, backups and stability, as well as a competitive cost analysis.

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There Is One Small "Catch"

Because our Cloud Readiness Assessments take between five and seven hours to complete (with most of this "behind-the-scenes" diagnostics and research we conduct), I can only extend this offer to the first seven people who respond. After that, we'll have to withdraw this offer or ask that you pay our customary consulting fee of $350 for this Assessment (sorry, no exceptions).

To respond, please call our office at 281-880-0738x104. I personally want to take your call to answer any questions about this letter, my company and how we might be able to help you, CEO to CEO. You can also e-mail me direct at Nadeem@pcsn.net

Awaiting your response,

Nadeem Azhar
www.pcsn.net
Call us direct: 281-880-0738

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The Top Five Reasons Why You'll Want To Outsource Your IT Support To Us:

1. **We Respond Within 1 hour Or Less.** The average amount of time it takes for one of our clients to get on the phone with a technician who can start working on resolving your problem is 20 minutes. We know you're busy and have made a sincere commitment to making sure your computer problems get fixed FAST. And since most repairs can be done remotely using our secure management tools, you don't have to wait around for a technician to show up. Most of the time we will be able to spot and resolve problems before users are impacted.

2. **100% No-Small-Print Satisfaction Guarantee.** Quite simply, if you are not happy with our work, we'll do whatever it takes to make it right to YOUR standards without charging you for it. And if we can't make it right, the service is free.

3. **All Projects Are Completed On Time And On Budget.** When you hire us to complete a project for you, we won't nickel-and-dime you with unforeseen or unexpected charges or delays. We guarantee to deliver precisely what we promised to deliver, on time and on budget, with no excuses.

4. **Lower Costs, Waste And Complexity With Cloud Solutions.** By utilizing cloud computing and other advanced technologies, we can eliminate the cost, complexity and problems of managing your own in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security and instant disaster recovery. We've also used innovate ways to bundle different cloud solutions from different vendor to complement each other where 2+2=5.

5. **Peace Of Mind.** Because we monitor all of our clients' networks 24/7/365, you never have to worry if a server is running low on resources, ahacker has broken in or a backup has failed to perform. We watch over your entire network, taking the management and hassle of maintaining it off your hands. This frees you to focus on your customers and running your business, not on your IT systems, security and backups.