

Top Reasons to Switch to the Cloud

The Convenience and Benefits of Cloud Based Applications

Whether you call it Cloud Computing, Software as a Service or On-Demand Software, cloud-based applications are becoming more prevalent in today's business world. Software as a service (SaaS) is a software delivery model in which software and associated data are centrally hosted on the cloud. SaaS is typically accessed by users via a web browser. SaaS has become a common delivery model for most business applications, including accounting, collaboration, customer relationship management, invoicing, human resource management, and content management.

So what does this mean to you and your firm? SaaS sales in 2011 reached an estimated \$10 billion, and they're projected to reach \$21.3 billion by 2015. So why are so many businesses switching and what are the benefits?

Is making the switch right for your firm? Consider the following: Do you have to be on your office computer to work? Do you spend a significant amount on software licenses, support contracts, servers, billing and HR staff? How often do you have to buy the latest version of the software you use?

In this report, Switching to Software as a Service, by Jeremy Diviney, Co Founder of Bill4Time web-based time billing software, you'll learn:

- Why businesses switch to SaaS
- Comparisons of traditional software to SaaS
- Research conducted on current SaaS users
- Information to help you decide if making the switch is right for your firm

As the benefits of cloud based services become more evident, more small businesses are moving to the cloud. SaaS can be defined as "software deployed as a hosted service and accessed over the Internet." Software as a Service (SaaS) is an attractive model because it is globally accessible, flexible, and affordable. It also removes all the complexities of installation, deployment, maintenance and new version upgrades. By its nature, SaaS resides in the "cloud". Still, as with any technology, you want to do your research first. This paper will discuss the convenience and cost benefits of Software as a Service to help you decide if moving to the cloud is right for your firm.

SaaS is typically web-based which means that unlike traditional software, you have access to SaaS anywhere you are connected to the Internet.

Traditional Software	V.S.	SaaS (Software as a service) Software
One-time fee		Subscription fee
Use on one computer		Use on any computer via internet
NOT available on mobile devices		Available on many mobile devices
Free trial NOT available		Free trial OFTEN available
Installation REQUIRED		Installation NOT REQUIRED
SOME updates are automatic		ALL updates are automatic
LESS likely has supplemental apps		MOST likely has supplemental apps
A new version requires a new purchase		Users are always working from the latest software version
Mobile synchronization requires additional software and often costly.		Mobile synchronization may require additional software, often free

If you are currently using traditional software, you may wonder what the differences are between traditional software and SaaS. Here is a point-by-point comparison.

All web applications are not cloud applications

There is a misconception that all web-based applications are cloud-based applications. Actually, there are specific characteristics that make an application a cloud application. A few of the important characteristics of a cloud application are:

- All customers share the same server resources.
- It is platform and hardware independent.
- It often supports API access.
- It is accessible from any computer or mobile device connected to the Internet.
- Data backups are handled behind the scenes
- Server redundancy is built into the cloud infrastructure.

There are many fundamental benefits of today's SaaS solutions including:

Low risk factors – Most SaaS solution providers offer a 30 day trial of the software's full version with no credit card required. Firms then have a month to decide if the software meets the firm's requirements.

Low commitment factors – Most SaaS solution providers allow customers to cancel at any time. Customers are not forced into contracts and only pay for the months that they use the software.

Competitive cost – SaaS is typically "pay as you go" and when compared to the cost of software licenses, computer hardware, support contracts and version updates, SaaS is often the more cost effective solution.

Rapid deployment and integration – SaaS vendors can roll out their applications whenever the firm is ready. No need to wait for servers to be deployed or staff to be hired and trained to get a new app up and running.

Increased utilization – SaaS solutions are designed with the end-user in mind and are continually improving with upgrades. The user learning curve is shorter and they are typically more user-friendly and generate greater utilization rates than traditional software.

Heightened security – Despite concerns about the reliability and security of SaaS solutions, the truth is that there have been far fewer service disruptions and security breaches among SaaS vendors than in traditional, on-premise software environments.

More responsive – SaaS solution providers tend to be more responsive to customer requests for feature enhancements and bug fixes.

Increased productivity – SaaS solutions are accessible from anywhere on any device which means firms are able to use them in downtime hours. When you can work from anywhere at anytime productivity tends to increase.

Constant access to the latest software version – SaaS means no more waiting for the latest software version. Customers are always working with the latest version and can expect continual improvements along the way.

You've already been using SaaS if you use Gmail, Google Documents, Google Calendar, Hotmail or even Facebook. Reviewers and users will tell you why leading-edge SaaS products like MailChimp, Bill4Time, iContact, Xero, Zoho Books, DropBox, Highrise CRM, HubSpot, Gist and more are among the best, most popular, and affordable choices for small businesses.

Top 6 responses

-  **Accessible Anywhere**
-  **Saves Time**
-  **Increase Productivity**
-  **Reduce Costs**
-  **Increase Security**
-  **Continual upgrading**



Data collected from fifty firms that were surveyed in 2012.

Our team recently conducted research of clients currently using SaaS to find out what they really think. We surveyed 50 legal, consulting, accounting, creative, and tech firms to find out the greatest user benefits of SaaS. Firms were asked to list their top reasons for using SaaS. Here are the 6 most mentioned reasons:

Accessible Anywhere – available on all computers via the Internet and mobile devices and even via desktop apps that do not require Internet access.

Saves Time – firms can focus more on the business and less on back office work.

Increases Productivity – ability to work from anywhere at anytime and work more efficiently due to improved team collaboration.

Reduces Costs – reasonable monthly fees and cuts redundant business expenses.

Increases Security – If computer system failure occurs on a computer, users can be rest assured that they will never lose important documents since all data is continually backed-up on multiple servers.

Access to latest software releases – Continual access to upgrades and the latest software version with no downtime.

Whatever your software needs may be, the cloud's customizable and flexible solutions are the perfect option for expanding small firms, and even for firms just looking to consolidate and cut costs. Legal and small business industries can certainly take advantage of SaaS to reduce overall cost and enhance services.

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