

# Cloud Security: Is the Cloud Ready for Your Confidential Data?

## What is Cloud Computing?

You can't look at any technical section of a newspaper or website these days without reading about "cloud computing." The term seems to be popping up everywhere. So, what exactly is cloud computing? A simplistic definition is computing on the Internet. It allows users the ability to access everything on the Internet, from software to their stored data, without having to store anything on their actual computer. The user only needs a computer with a web browser in order to access the cloud.

## What is So Great About Cloud Computing?

Cloud computing has the potential to allow small businesses or businesses on a budget the ability to have high quality computing at a lower cost. Business owners no longer need to invest in expensive IT equipment or pay an entire IT staff that would normally be required in order to keep a computer system running. Storing data on the cloud would help reduce IT costs while still allowing businesses to grow.

## What Security Problems Does Cloud Computing Needs to Address?

Cloud computing is such a new technology that many of the kinks have not even been completely realized much less worked out to a satisfactory level. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is looking into what potential security and privacy concerns cloud computing could have for consumers. Some of these concerns are:

- If you store your valuable business documents on the cloud and the cloud goes down, will it be coming back up with all of your important documents in tact.
- It is also important to know that the company with whom you are storing your important information is financially stable and will not suddenly disappear taking all of your valuable information with it.
- Where is your company located and where will your data physically be stored? If your data is stored in another country, is that country required to comply with the same security standards that you would expect from your home country.
- Who is in charge of storing and managing your data? It is important to know that the people managing your data have the proper security clearance and credentials, and that they are handling it securely and not using it improperly for their own financial gain.
- How secure is the login? Would hackers be able to easily gain access to your data?
- Is your data encrypted so that others cannot easily view it?
- Is the cloud storage company willing to undergo a certification process and willing to comply with certain security standards?

At this point, it is unknown how providers plan to resolve these issues, but whatever the solutions they will be critical to the future of cloud computing. Cloud computing has so much to offer businesses from flexibility to growth potential to tremendous cost savings. If the confidential data stored in the cloud isn't secure, the only thing cloud computing will be able to offer businesses is a giant headache.

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