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Understanding Cloud Options: SaaS vs. IaaS

Scott McDonald

Wikipedia defines Cloud Computing as "the use of computing resources (hardware and software) that are delivered as a service over a network (typically the Internet)." These days the term is thrown around constantly, and while many people have a basic idea of what the cloud is, they may not fully understand the different types of cloud services that are available, and most importantly, the different benefits they can provide.

There are two main types of cloud services that can make sense for small businesses,

which we will discuss here: "Software/Storage as a Service" (SaaS/STaaS) and "Infrastructure/Desktop as a Service" (IaaS/DaaS). The primary difference between these two approaches to working in the cloud lies in the scope of what they are used for. Saas/STaaS tends to focus on meeting specific needs and replacing only certain elements of the local work environment. IaaS/DaaS, on the other hand, is intended to completely replace the local working environment by offering desk-

tops and servers that exist in the cloud. There are advantages to both of these approaches, which we will discuss.

SaaS and STaaS typically are cloud services that are implemented to replace some program and/or data storage that was previously hosted locally. Some examples include using a web-based database program to manage inventory & sales, or to manage customer information (like Salesforce.com); using an Internet-based office productivity suite (like Google Docs or Microsoft's Office 365); and using a hosted Exchange server for email (like Apptix or 123Together). In all of these examples, both software and storage are being provided as a single service. The primary advantage of using SaaS/STaaS services is that businesses can access and collaborate on certain programs & data, from anywhere, at a fairly low cost. This may be an attractive option for businesses that have only one or two primary programs in use, and that do not mind having a cloud environment that is not fully integrated into the rest of their work environment. Businesses that rely on SaaS will still need to make significant ongoing capital investments in their local IT infrastructure (computers, servers, etc.) because these are usually still needed. Additionally, database and file sharing performance may suffer in some cases because all data must travel between the local computers

and the cloud-based servers that are used.

IaaS and Daas are cloud services that are typically implemented to replace the entire working environment for users. Cloud providers (such as CloudConnect) offer hosted desktops and servers, which enable businesses to move their entire infrastructure into the cloud. With a cloud-based desktop, users can log in to their desktop from anywhere, including from mobile devices, and access their full desktop with all shortcuts, programs, & files. The user's desktop looks and functions the same way whether they're working in the office, at home, or on the road. Database and file sharing performance is usually excellent because the hosted desktops and servers are located together on the cloud provider's system. Since the desktops and servers are all hosted in the cloud, businesses using IaaS/DaaS no longer need to purchase new desktop PCs or servers. The primary disadvantage of IaaS/DaaS is the cost, as it is much higher than SaaS/STaaS; however, much of this cost can be offset over time by increasing users' productivity and eliminating the need for purchasing new computers.

If you have questions about the cloud, or about how cloud services could benefit your business, contact us anytime at 866-9MH-TECH or email us at support@mhconsults.com.

How to Find Out What Is Using Your Drive Space

Every time you download a file, save a file or install a program on your computer, you are using space on the hard drive. If your hard drive is getting full, you may want to see how much space various files and installed programs use on the hard drive. You can do this by viewing the size of installed programs from the Control Panel. You can also use a program, such as TreeSize, to see the amount of space used for all of the files and folders on your system.

Instructions

Add and Remove Programs List

1. Click on the "Start" menu and then go to the "Control Panel."

2. Double click the "Add or Remove Programs" icon.

3. Wait for the Currently Installed Programs list to load.

4. Scroll down through the list to see the amount of space each installed program takes up on the hard drive. It will be marked "size."

TreeSize

1. Download and install the TreeSize program to your system. Save the file to your desktop and then double click the downloaded file to install the program.

2. Double click the TreeSize icon on the desktop to open the program.

3. Wait while the program analyzes your hard drive and displays the amount of space used by files and folders.

4. Click on the plus sign next to each folder to see the contents of the folder.

Tips & Warnings

- You can free space on your hard drive by deleting files or removing programs that you no longer need.

- There is very little you can do to modify or change the amount of hard drive space used by the Windows operating system.

- The size listed under "Add or Remove Programs" may not always be correct.

- If you are unsure of a file or folder ask a professional IT consultant before removing it.

- Provided by eHow.com

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Recycling your old Equipment

Rob Demers

Most businesses cycle their computers every 3-5 years; however that is not always possible for all of the computers in the office. Purchases are often staggered for budgeting purposes. In many cases that means that old computers and technology often gather and before you know it, half a closet is filled with old equipment.

The question of what should be done with your old computer can be troublesome. Computers and old CRT monitors can contain hazardous materials and you cannot dispose of them in your regular trash. Still, you do have a few options. You can either recycle or donate the hardware for reuse. There are many non-profit organizations that will take old computers and either re-purpose them or recycle the physical pieces, and the proceeds often benefit charities. One such organization is RecycleComputers4Cancer. Their proceeds go to funding cancer research and providing technology for cancer patients. The donations are tax deductible and they may even pick up the equipment (this depends on the condition of the equipment). They also take many other items that you may have around the office collecting dust, such as server and network racks, PDAs, phones, mobile devices, printers, and many more.

There are also other ways to recoup some value out of older hardware. There are many online resources for sites which will buy the old equipment and often refurbish it and then sell them online. These sites are much stricter about the age and condition of the computer however, as they are looking for some return on their investment.

If those are not an option for your business, most local communities often have an electronics store that sells computers or you can contact your local municipality. Most of these organizations will take the equipment for a nominal fee.

Before donating the computer you should leave the system intact and have a technician clean all of the personal information from the hard drive. Drive wiping software can easily do this but can take a few hours to finish. This way you can have the peace of mind knowing that any private data is securely wiped from the drive.

If you need help finding a recycling center to recycle your hardware or a qualified computer company that refurbishes the hardware as a tax deductible donation please ask an M&H technician by calling us at 866-9MH-TECH or email us at support@mhconsults.com.