Moving to the Cloud
An Interactive Guide to When, Where & How to Leverage Cloud for Your Business
You can hardly turn a corner without hearing about the cloud. But hearing the “buzz” about the latest technology doesn’t necessarily make it right for you. A lot of business owners and executives don’t have time to do all the research to understand whether cloud is right for them or not.

**But how do you cut through the babble about what’s new and what’s cool to find what you need?**

This eBook is an interactive guide to help you do exactly that. Packed with tools like quizzes, a checklist and thought-provoking questions, this eBook puts you on the path from wondering if cloud is right for you to understanding exactly how it fits into your business goals and which tools are worth your investment.

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You’ve heard of all the great benefits of cloud – but are they right for you?

Take this quiz to find out:

1. Does your team need to collaborate on a regular basis? (Yes No Not Sure)
2. Do you have multi-factor authentication to secure systems? (Yes No Not Sure)
3. Is your data backed up off-site in a secure facility? (Yes No Not Sure)
4. Do you have access to scalable storage to help with retention requirements? (Yes No Not Sure)
5. Do you have encryption for files or email? (Yes No Not Sure)
6. Do you have the finances to replace equipment every 3-5 years? (Yes No Not Sure)
7. Do you prefer to use OpEx over CapEx? (Yes No Not Sure)
8. Is your important data backed-up and protected from failing equipment? (Yes No Not Sure)
9. Do you have the most up-to-date versions of software? (Yes No Not Sure)
10. Can employees work remotely without compromising security? (Yes No Not Sure)

Your score:

Mostly Yes: Are you sure you’re not using cloud already? While cloud isn’t for everyone, it is possible that if you have many of these options that you’re spending a lot of capital to have these benefits. You could find cost savings in the cloud. Read on!

Mostly No: There are many benefits to the cloud; if you answered no to these questions and thought to yourself that these benefits would be great for your business, then it’s time to plan your move to the cloud. Read on!

Cloud isn’t all or nothing. There are several ways to tackle the cloud without going all in.
Regardless of the type of cloud solutions you might consider, there are several big benefits to be gained by moving to the cloud:

1. **Powerful security.** From secure data storage to multi-factor user authentication, every cloud application offers more security than on-premise solutions and they are easier to implement and lock down as needed.

2. **Improved collaboration.** Documents, software applications and data all can be stored and accessed in the cloud, making it easier for teams to work together from anywhere and even know who is present.

3. **Freedom to try new tech.** When you try applications in the cloud you can purchase software on a month-to-month or annual subscription, giving you more freedom to try new tech without having to commit to it. If you like it, you can scale it up. If you don’t, you can scrap it – all without big investments.

4. **More cash flow.** Not only does cloud reduce the financial burden, but it offers the ability to roll as much or as little of your IT into operational expenses as you want instead of draining capital on predictable technology expenses.

5. **Enhanced compliance.** If you’re required to keeps years of files, you’ll need to continually increase your storage space. If you think long term, cloud can save you a lot of space and hardware headaches. Cloud offers more compliant security options for secure transmission of important data as well.

6. **Increased agility.** Without hardware to fuss with, and with monthly cost structures, the cloud makes it easier for your business to scale up and down depending on your company’s needs. Times of growth, increased data storage, seasonal cut-backs – no longer have as big of an impact.

7. **Reliable backups and recovery.** Cloud providers offer you secure, redundant backups off-site, so your business doesn’t get wiped out by the latest phishing email or errant equipment. Plus, recovery from the cloud is much easier than recovery from a server that goes kaput.

8. **Ongoing updates.** With a subscription model, software is kept up to date offering you immediate access to new features and immediate patches without having to run updates manually. That way, when the cloud evolves, so does your company.
Of course you have your concerns – any new venture needs careful consideration.

Write down your top reasons for moving to the cloud (or, not moving more into the cloud):
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Why are you thinking of moving to the cloud now?
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See how your concerns compare to these 5 common ones we hear:

**Lack of control.** Do you really have control on premise? Data centers are better equipped to deal with mishaps and secure your data.

**Cost.** The immediate cost doesn’t tell the whole picture. Cloud can create savings for your business like the ability to decrease equipment replacement costs.

**Performance anxiety.** This all depends on type of file, size and your connection. If you’re currently accessing the same files remotely, then you have an idea what to expect by moving them to the cloud.

**Fear of change.** This is common, but you don’t know what you don’t know. So learn more about the cloud and dip your toe in the water.

**Time and cost of training IT resources.** There is some training involved with cloud, but the training is much less than if you were training them to deploy common on-site infrastructure.
Choose Your Own Cloud Adventure: How to Get Started

Remember the benefits you identified that best aligned with your current objectives? List those here.

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Keep these in mind as you wade through the different cloud options. Whether you want to dip your toe in or go straight for the deep dive, there is a solution at each depth of cloud that can help you meet your objectives.

DIPPING YOUR TOE IN THE CLOUD

You can take the cloud in bite-sized chunks. These 8 Microsoft cloud applications are easy to implement and still see a fruitful return. Highlight or circle the ones you want to know more about.

1. **Email.** This is a first pick for most businesses as it offers ease of access to your email from anywhere.

2. **Office 365.** Access Office anywhere, with a subscription-based model. It also allows you to maintain the most updated version of office without replacing software.

3. **Skype for Business.** With this cloud-based Microsoft communications service, you can video chat, screen share and instant message with staff anywhere. It even offers enhanced teams and chat options for optimal productivity.

4. **Azure Site Recovery.** Disaster recovery is critical and if you don’t have it, this is an easy tool to implement that replicates your mission critical servers and quickly spins up a copy when it’s needed with no impact to end users.

5. **Antivirus.** Move your antivirus off-site and free up valuable resources while simplifying your environment.

6. **Spam filtering.** Keep spam off your networks and stop wasting bandwidth with it. Filter spam out with cloud solutions that keep your networks safer.

7. **Infrastructure monitoring.** You can monitor the health of on-premise infrastructure like printers and servers through the cloud, freeing up data and storage on-site.
Choose Your Own Cloud Adventure: How to Get Started

WADING IN

So you’re up for something a little more adventurous than a simple change to email. These 5 solutions are still easy to implement but require a little bit of planning ahead of time. Perhaps you have a little more budget and you’re looking for some of the powerful tools of the cloud.

1. SharePoint & One Drive. These two Microsoft cloud applications make it easier to store documents and create document-driven workflows so you can seamlessly manage work from anywhere. There is some user training and pre-planning involved, but it is not technically difficult and is implemented with relative ease.

2. Developer testing. You can move your developer testing to the Azure Infrastructure as a Service platform with minimal disruption. This allows you to accurately run tests in a cloud environment without taking up additional bandwidth.

3. Azure Database as a Service. Running databases in the cloud saves storage room and makes your databases more accessible and secure. It also means you can build databases without having to purchase expensive software. Instead, you pay monthly.

4. Microsoft Datacenter. Keep your data in a secure datacenter, allowing to downsize your onsite infrastructure while scaling the amount of storage you need. Datacenter is a compliant and secure solution.

5. Mobile Management. Manage enterprise mobility with enhanced identity security and flexible options for keeping your mobile workforce secure. While the adoption is easy, there is some analysis and user training required for a smooth rollout.

Cloud isn’t about the coolest features. It’s about what you’re trying to accomplish as a business and the best way to do that.
1. **Phone systems.** Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) allows you to move your communications systems into the cloud which offloads a lot of hassle from any in-house IT resources and allows you access all the benefits of cloud – but for your phone systems. Rolling phones into the cloud is not a straightforward installation, but the disruption is minimal and it packs a great return on investment for most companies.

2. **Azure Infrastructure as a Service.** Moving your whole infrastructure to the cloud, or even some of it is serious business but is often worth the rewards. It means you can take advantage of storing both applications and data in the cloud and gain access to all of the benefits cloud offers.

3. **Backups.** Automatically replicating your data offsite in the cloud is important for continuity and ensuring that you don't lose data the next time an employee clicks the wrong link. It is important and can change your business completely simply by protecting your data.

Which cloud options would make the biggest impact on your company goals? Write them below:

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The exact solutions a cloud provider offers depends on your needs.

**CLOUD PROVIDER CHECKLIST**

At a minimum, your cloud provider should deliver the following:

- **Service level agreements.** This spells out the basics so you know how quickly issues will be resolved.
- **Security assurance.** Make sure your data is safe and protected
- **Compliance.** If you have regulations that govern you, your cloud provider needs to meet those standards as well.
- **Data backup.** How do they ensure your data is there when you need it?
- **Disaster recovery.** When disaster strikes, your IT systems need to bounce back quickly.
- **Management tools.** You need a portal where you can manage your services and report issues without having to pick up the phone.
- **Integration.** Your provider should offer the ability to easily integrate with your existing applications without difficulty.
- **Seamless use.** Cloud should be easy for both the administrators and the users.
- **Stability and longevity.** How confident are you that your provider will be around tomorrow? And if they’re not, what happens to your data?
- **Mobility.** The cloud was meant to be accessible and portable.
- **Innovation.** Your provider’s ability to take advantage of new technology and rapidly innovate directly impacts your ability to stay competitive.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

As a former provider of private cloud solutions, and now as a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Applied Tech has first-hand knowledge of the difference between private and public cloud. Our recommendation? **Public cloud is the way to go.**
Developing Your Plan of Action

STEPS:

1. **Review your cloud priorities.** These are your reasons for wanting to move to the cloud and the benefits that your company most needs.

2. **Know your projects.** Prioritize the cloud projects that best meet your needs.

3. **Contact your IT provider or a cloud provider.** Use the provider checklist to ensure that your provider will be able to deliver what you need. If not, contact additional providers.

As a Microsoft Gold Partner, Applied Tech has the resources and expertise to facilitate every step of your cloud journey. Whether you’re moving all in or dipping your toe in the waters, we can help you identify the best of what the cloud has to offer.

About Applied Tech

Since 1999, Applied Tech has worked with small-to medium-sized businesses throughout Central and South Wisconsin to help them get the most from their technology. Acting as both a strategic advisor and outsourced IT staff, we offer a comprehensive managed IT solutions that helps businesses take advantage of both cloud and on-site solutions to meet their evolving business needs.

Contact us for an assessment at **608.729.1300** or visit us online at **www.appliedtech.us**