

"COMPUTERS IN THE AIR" - WHAT IS CLOUD COMPUTING?

It's supposed to be the next big thing in computing. It's supposed to revolutionize the way we work at home and at the office. It's supposed to slice bread, iron your clothes and make breakfast for you. Yes, its "*cloud computing*". OK, maybe it won't do household chores but with the way people speak about it, you'd think it would.

"Basically, the idea is the use of the Internet (the cloud, so to speak) as a central area for use of computer technology"

Life On A Cloud.



Well then what exactly is cloud computing? I'm sure you've heard the phrase often enough the last couple of years and may be wondering what the hoopla is all about. What exactly is this life on a cloud? This is actually a point that the proponents can't seem to agree on. So is it renting more computing power for your business? Is it coordinating a potluck with a bunch of your friends over the Internet using Google Apps? Is it small and inexpensive enough for the average Joe at home, but scalable enough and powerful enough for a Fortune 500 company? Yes, it's all this and so much more.

While some of the concepts and ideas behind cloud computing have actually been around for awhile, the term cloud computing seems to be the term that has really captured imaginations and gained traction recently. **Basically, the idea is the use of the Internet (the cloud, so to speak) as a central area for use of computer technology.** Whether it be what is called Software as a Service (SaaS, apps on the web), Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS, previously known as Hardware as a Service – this is where IT geeks can buy more virtual computer power and online storage) or Platform as a Service (PaaS, where developers

go and play, think Google Apps Engine) cloud computing encompasses this and more. While the IT geek and the coding geek may be interested in the IaaS and the PaaS side of things, for the real world application of cloud computing most users (that reads: “the rest of us”) will be interested in the SaaS side of things.



Apps Drizzled Down On a Cloudy Day

Software as a Service is one of the most exciting features of cloud computing. Software as a Service is basically applications (think programs) “served” through the Internet via your web browser. These programs never (or rarely) actually reside on the computer that they are run from – they all stay on the providers' server. Because of this, you are able to access these applications anywhere you have a PC and an Internet



connection. These applications for the most part also offer online storage, so you can save your work online as well. This may seem to describe such services such as webmail, which have been around a long time, and yes, are very useful, but it also describes some of the newest crops of very sophisticated, robust programs available on the Internet today. While some may be for rent (that is, you pay either a subscription fee or a use fee), many others are absolutely free for use of basic services.

Some of the more popular cloud computing SaaS applications are Google Apps (which offers popular office suite utilities (Google Docs) as well as e-mail (Gmail) and calendars (Google Calendar). The Google Docs is particularly popular for its no-cost basic service, its collaboration features, its strong compatibility and terrific flexibility. Also online is Microsoft’s cloud computing office suites, Microsoft Office Live. Like Google Apps, they offer a free basic service called Office Live Workspace that offers a place to store and share documents online, however this service does need Microsoft Office installed on the PC for a document to be edited (which does make the free service that much more robust). Apple is also starting to jump into the fray

with iWork, which while in beta is offered as a free online extension of its popular iWork suite (they plan to make it a subscription service on its full release). Not to be overlooked are the excellent online suites offered by Open Office and Zoho as well.

Some other examples of SaaS offerings online are: photo editing; video editing; tax preparation; many games, and much, much more! There's even talk of a streaming video game console content delivered right to your PC via the internet with quality on par with the Sony PlayStation 3.

Really, with the SaaS aspect of cloud computing, the horizon seems limitless as to what can be done.

Sunshine of a Cloudy Day

Whatever the future brings to the Internet, whether the popular Software as a Service discussed in this Tech Tip today, the IT geeks Infrastructure as a Service, or the coding geeks Platform as a Service, you can be sure that cloud computing will be a major part of it.



So, what are your thoughts on Cloud Computing?

Source: <http://www.geeks.com/techtips/2009/what-is-cloud-computing.htm>