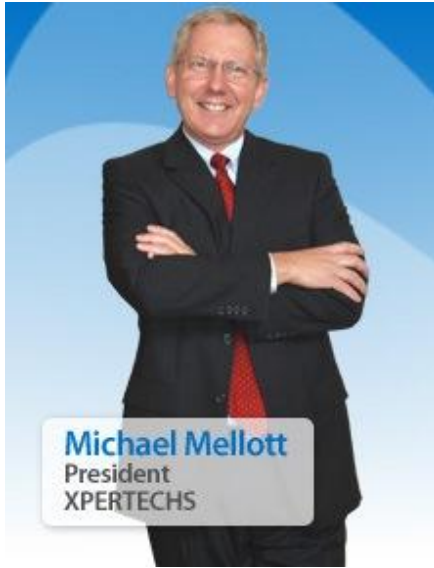


FREE REPORT:



**“5 Critical Facts Every
Business Owner Must
Know Before Moving
Their Network To The
Cloud”**

Discover What Most IT Consultants Don't
Know Or Won't Tell You About Moving
Your Company's Network To The Cloud

By: Michael L. Mellott

A Letter From The Author: Why Did We Create This Report And Who Should Read It



From The Desk of: Michael Mellott
President, XPERTECHS

Dear Colleague,

Undoubtedly you've heard all the commotion around cloud computing and how it's the "next big thing." **Yet, despite all the hype, no one really seems to understand what cloud computing is or how it can help your business.**

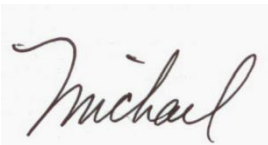
That's why we wanted to set the record straight and provide business owners and executives a simple, easy to read report that would explain what cloud computing is, how it can (possibly) help their business and if so, what you need to know in order to make good decisions about choosing which vendor you choose.

Why "possibly?" Because cloud computing is NOT a good fit for every company; and if you don't get all the facts or fully understand the pros and cons, you can end up making some VERY poor and expensive decisions that you'll deeply regret later.

That said, for some clients, cloud can actually lower their IT costs significantly, greatly improve the ability for remote workers to connect and work, simplify their entire IT infrastructure and genuinely solve a number of technology problems that they've been trying to work around for years.

So which are you? By the end of this report you'll know, or at least have a much better understanding. Of course, we are always available as a resource for a second opinion or quick question, so please feel free to contact my office direct if we can clarify any points made in this report or answer any questions you have.

Dedicated to serving you,



About XPERTECHS

Since 1988, XPERTECHS has been a leading technology provider to small and medium sized business in the Baltimore and Washington metro areas. In 2006, we introduced our new XperCARE Proactive Managed IT Services program. XperCARE revolutionized computer support for business owners by combining immediate remote support capabilities and helpdesk assistance with prompt and professional on-site service all for a fixed monthly fee.

XperCARE from XPERTECHS means you can rely on us to:

- **Work around your explicit budget and business requirements** – you'll never pay for unwanted or unnecessary technology
- **Deliver vigilant computer support and monitoring for your computers** – getting rid of any network or security problems before they upset your business or your bottom-line
- **Ensure Microsoft Small Business Specialist Certification** – in recognition of our ability to deliver industry-proven solutions and services
- **Maintain Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Status** – designates our expertise with Microsoft technologies
- **Deliver skilled technology experts** – experienced engineers who view themselves as an extension of your business
- **Provide 24 X 7 help and support** – help is only a phone call away
- **Commit to excellence in customer support and service** – so you can rely on our team for all your technology issues.
- **Guarantee absolute 100% satisfaction** – You can trust our IT management services for a successful outcome with no hassles whatsoever.

XPERTECHS's services are focused on providing the business tools that small businesses need to compete, providing affordable technology designs based on business requirements. Our technology solutions cut costs and put your company in a position to prosper.

5 Critical Facts You Must Know Before Moving To The Cloud

In this report I'm going to talk about **5 very important facts you need to know before you consider cloud computing for your company**. This includes:

1. What cloud computing is
2. The pros AND cons of this new technology
3. The various types of cloud computing options you have (there is more than just one)
4. Answers to important, frequently asked questions you need to know the answer to
5. What questions you need to ask your IT pro before letting them "sell" you on moving all or part of your network and applications to the cloud

I've also included some actual case studies from other businesses that have moved to cloud computing, along with a sample cost comparison chart so you can see the impact this new technology can have on your IT budget.

At the end of this report there is an invitation for you to request a **FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment** to determine if cloud computing is right for your particular business. I encourage you to take advantage of this before making any decisions since we've designed it to take a hard look at the functionality and costs for you as a business and provide you with the specific information you need (not hype) to make a good decision about this new technology.

What Is Cloud Computing?

Wikipedia defined cloud computing as, "The use and access of multiple server-based computational resources via a digital network (WAN, Internet - World Wide Web, etc.)."

But what the heck does *that* mean?

The easiest way to not only understand what cloud computing is but also gain insight into why it's gaining in popularity, is to compare it to the evolution of public utilities. For example, let's look at the evolution of electricity.

Back in the industrial age, factories had to produce their own power in order to run machines that produced the hard goods they manufactured. Be it textiles or railroad spikes, using machines gave these companies enormous competitive advantages by producing more goods with fewer workers and in less time. For many years, the production of power was every bit as important to their company's success as the skill of their workers and quality of their products.

Unfortunately, this put factories into TWO businesses: the business of producing their goods and the business of producing power. Then the concept of delivering power (electricity) as a utility was introduced by Thomas Edison when he developed a commercial-grade replacement for gas lighting and heating using centrally generated and distributed electricity. From there, as they say, the rest was history.

The concept of electric current being generated in central power plants and delivered to factories as a utility caught on fast. This meant manufacturers no longer had to be in the business of producing their own power. **In fact, in a very short period of time, it became a competitive necessity for factories to take advantage of the lower cost option being offered by public utilities.** Almost overnight, thousands of steam engines and electric generators were rendered obsolete and left to rust next to the factories they used to power.

What made this possible was a series of inventions and scientific breakthroughs – but what drove the demand was pure economics. Utility companies were able to leverage economies of scale that single manufacturing plants simply couldn't match in output or in price. In fact, the price of power dropped so significantly that it quickly became affordable for not only factories but every single household in the country.

Today, we are in a similar transformation following a similar course. The only difference is that instead of cheap and plentiful electricity, advancements in technology and Internet connectivity are driving down the costs of computing power. With cloud computing, businesses can pay for "computing power" like a utility without having the exorbitant costs of installing, hosting and supporting it.

In fact, you are probably already experiencing the benefits of cloud computing in some way but hadn't realized it. Below are a number of clouds computing applications, also called SaaS or "software as a service," you might be using:

- Gmail, Hotmail or other free e-mail accounts
- Facebook
- NetSuite, Salesforce
- Constant Contact, Exact Target, Aweber or other e-mail broadcasting services
- Zoomerang, SurveyMonkey and other survey tools
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- All things Google (search, AdWords, maps, etc.)

If you think about it, almost every single application you use today can be (or already is) being put "in the cloud" where you can access it and pay for it via your browser for a monthly fee or utility pricing. You don't purchase and install software but instead access it via an Internet browser.

What About Office 365 And Google Apps?

Office 365 and Google Apps are perfect examples of the cloud computing trend; for an inexpensive monthly fee, you can get full access and use of Office applications that used to cost a few hundred dollars to purchase. And, since these apps are being powered by the cloud provider, you don't need an expensive desktop with lots of power to use them – just a simple Internet connection will do on a laptop, desktop or tablet.

Of course, these aren't great options for all businesses. Google Apps doesn't (currently) integrate with many line-of-business applications, which presents a deal breaker for using this service. For example, if you like using Microsoft's Excel or Word to pull reports or create documents from your line of business application, you might not be able to do that with Google Apps.

Microsoft's Office 365 is too early in production to risk moving your critical company operations to at this point – not to mention a number of other limitations that would make it a poor choice for a business, including the fact that you get zero help desk support. If something goes wrong, there isn't a customer service help desk you can call for support or assistance. But again, it's a perfect example of where we are going with cloud computing.

Pros and Cons Of Moving To The Cloud

As you read this section, keep in mind there is no "perfect" solution. All options – be it an in-house network or a cloud solution – has both upsides and downsides. And which option has to be determined on a case-by-case scenario before you can come to a complete conclusion on which option will work for you. (Warning: Do not let a cloud expert tell you there is only "one way" of doing something.) Most companies end up with a **hybrid solution** where some of their applications are in the cloud and some are still hosted and maintained from an in-house server. We'll discuss more of this in a later section; however, here are the general pros and cons of cloud computing:

Pros of Cloud Computing:

- **Lowered IT costs.** This is probably the single most compelling reason why companies choose to move their network (all or in part) to the cloud. Not only do you save money on software licenses, but hardware (servers and workstations) as well as in IT support and upgrades. **In fact, we save our clients an average of 20% to 30% when we move some or part of their network functionality to the cloud.** So if you hate constantly writing big, fat checks for IT upgrades, you'll really want to look into cloud computing. Included in this report are examples of how we've done this for other clients and what the savings have been.

- **Ability to access your desktop and/or applications from anywhere and any device.** If you travel a lot, have remote workers or prefer to use an iPad while traveling and a laptop at your house, cloud computing will give you the ability to work from any of these devices.
- **Disaster recovery and backup are automated.** The server in your office is extremely vulnerable to a number of threats including viruses, human error, hardware failure, software corruption and, of course, physical damage due to a fire, flood or other natural disaster. If your server were in the cloud and (God forbid) your office was reduced to a pile of rubble, you could purchase a new laptop and be back up and running within the same day. This would NOT be the case if you had a traditional network and were using tape drives, CDs, USB drives or other physical storage devices to back up your system.

Plus, like a public utility, cloud platforms are far more robust and secure than your average business network because they can utilize economies of scale to invest heavily into security, redundancy and failover systems making them far less likely to go down.

- **It's faster, cheaper and easier to set up new employees.** If you have a seasonal workforce or a lot of turnover, cloud computing will not only lower your costs of setting up new accounts, but it will make it infinitely faster. For Example, we currently provide IT support for a local accounting firm that brings on an average of 6 extra CPAs in January through May to help process tax returns. If they had a traditional network setup, they would have to purchase expensive PCs and software licenses for these temporary workers and then pay to maintain and upgrade them throughout the year. Using cloud computing, these workers use their home PCs and log into the network securely. The CPA firm ONLY pays for those workers licenses during the time when they are using the, just like a utility. When May comes around, they no longer pay for those licenses and support. Using this model saves them approximately \$6,870 a year in hardware, software and IT services.

Another client uses cloud services to provide access to remote project managers in the construction industry. New project managers are setup quickly and given full access to the programs they need to manage their projects. Cloud based Microsoft SharePoint is used to collaborate on projects change orders, costs, and schedules. As projects are completed the user simply moves to a new construction site and still has access to all the vital applications and data to perform their job effectively. Our client constantly tells us how they now better able to meet deadlines and keep their customers informed as to changing costs. On one project our client tells us they were able to save over \$26,000 by finishing a job two weeks early.

- **You use it without having to “own” it.** More specifically, you don’t own the *responsibility* of having to install, update and maintain the infrastructure. Think of it similar to living in a condo where someone else takes care of the building maintenance, repairing the roof and mowing the lawn, but you still have the only key to your section of the building and use of all the facilities. This is particularly attractive for companies who are new or expanding, but don’t want the heavy outlay of cash for purchasing and supporting an expensive computer network.
- **It’s a “greener” technology that will save on power and your electric bill.** For some smaller companies, the power savings will be too small to measure. However, for larger companies with multiple servers who are cooling a hot server room and keep their servers running 24/7/365, the savings are considerable.

Cons of Cloud Computing:

- **The Internet going down.** While you can mitigate this risk by using a commercial grade Internet connection and maintaining a second backup connection, there is a chance that you’ll lose Internet connectivity, making it impossible to work.
- **Data security.** Many people don’t feel comfortable having their data in some offsite location. This is a valid concern and before you choose any cloud provider, you need to find out more information about where they are storing your data, how it’s encrypted, who has access and how you can get it back. You’ll find more information on this under the “What To Look For When Hiring a Cloud Integrator” later on in this document.
- **Certain line-of-business applications won’t work in the cloud.** For example, some home grown applications may not work in the cloud. Other applications require interfaces with local programs that cannot be moved to the cloud. For example, can the application interact with locally-installed applications like Microsoft Excel? Can you configure the application to display certain windows across multiple monitors? Does the software application run native over the Internet or does it require a delivery mechanism like Citrix? This could result in additional costs, and/or limitations for the end user.
- **Compliance Issues.** There are a number of laws and regulations such as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, Sarbanes-Oxley and HIPAA that require companies to control and protect their data and certify that they have knowledge and control over who can access the data, who can see it and how and where it is stored. In a public cloud environment, this can be a problem. Many cloud providers won’t tell you specifically where your data is stored.

Most cloud providers have SAS 70 certifications which require them to be able to describe exactly what is happening in their environment, how and where the data comes in, what the provider does with it, and what controls are in place over the access to and processing of the data; but as the business owner, it's YOUR neck on the line if the data is compromised so it's important that you ask for some type of validation that they are meeting the various compliance regulations on an ongoing basis.

Cloud Verses A Traditional Network: A Comparison Of Costs

As we said earlier, each client has a slightly unique set of circumstances and needs that will factor into the cost savings and benefits. But in order to give you an idea of what you can save when moving your network to the cloud, we've put together a sample business scenario we commonly find, and the savings obtained with cloud computing.

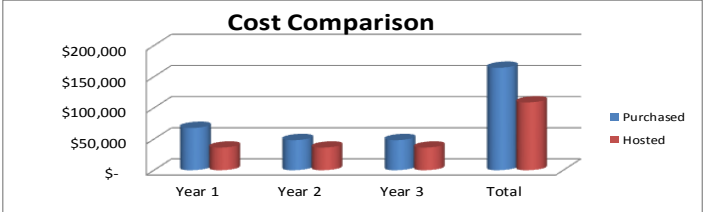
Please note we've shown this over a 3 year period since that is the normal span of time when all workstations and servers need to be replaced and software upgraded; and to account for the fact that you don't have to purchase new hardware as often (which is a huge cost savings when moving to the cloud) we need to show this over a 3 year period to show the true and full cost savings:

Cost Analysis Summary for SBS On Site vs ITOS Cloud				
Number Users		25		
Hosted Solution	Monthly	In House Solution	Capex	Month
ITOS	\$ 2,200	Hardware	\$ 5,500	
Connectivity	\$ 425	Operating System	\$ 5,000	
Misc	\$ 250	Backup	\$ -	\$ 395
		Anti-Virus	\$ -	\$ 25
		Spam	\$ -	\$ 25
		Install Setup	\$ 8,500	
		Maint on Licensing		\$ 25
		MSP Server		\$ 395
		MSP Workstations		\$ 2,250
		Firewall	\$ 500	\$ -
Purchase 5 Desktops 1000 * 5 /36	\$ 145	25 Desktops @ \$1100 Leased		\$ 905
Monthly Total	\$ 3,020	Totals	\$ 19,500	\$ 4,020

In-House				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Capex	\$ 19,500			
Opex	\$ 48,240	\$ 48,240	\$ 48,240	
Total	\$ 67,740	\$ 48,240	\$ 48,240	\$ 164,220

Hosted				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Opex	\$ 36,240	\$ 36,240	\$ 36,240	\$ 108,720
Savings	\$ 31,500	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 55,500
% Savings	47%	25%	25%	34%

Additional Issues
No Remote Access with On Site



Category	Purchased	Hosted
Year 1	\$ 7,625	\$ 4,625
Year 2	\$ 5,625	\$ 4,625
Year 3	\$ 5,625	\$ 4,625
Total	\$ 18,875	\$ 13,875

XperCLOUD Cost Analysis						
Variables:						
Number of Users	31					
Number of Servers	3					
Number of Desktops	31					
Life Expectancy of hardware	36					
		Opex	In House			
		Capex	Monthly	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Labor						
Internal						
IT Staffing (grow at 5%)						
Tech 1		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Burden at 30%			\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total IT Labor			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
External/MSP/Consulting						
MSP @ \$85 Desktop		\$2,635	\$31,620	\$31,620	\$31,620	
MSP @ \$395 Server		\$1,185	\$14,220	\$14,220	\$14,220	
Server						
Server - 1	\$4,500					
Server - 2	\$4,500					
Server - 3	\$4,500					
Server - Dev2	\$0					
Server - Dev4	\$0					
Server - MSDNAA	\$0					
Server - Stage2	\$0					
Server - Web2	\$0					
Server - Web4	\$0					
Server - Web5	\$0					
Server - Web6	\$0					
Licensing						
Windows OS	\$1,950					
Windows CAL's	\$860					
Terminal Server License	\$0					
Microsoft Office (30)	\$10,540					
Exchange Server (1)	\$625					
Exchange User Licenses (30)	\$1,860					
SQL Server (2)	\$795					
SQL User (30)	\$1,550					
Web Server Licenses	\$0					
Anti-Virus	\$550					
Spam (\$1 month per user)	\$31	\$31	\$372	\$372	\$372	
Software Assurance						
Microsoft - (25% a year)			\$4,158	\$4,158	\$4,158	
AV			\$138	\$138	\$138	
Other						
Connectivity						
T-1		\$550	\$6,600	\$6,600	\$6,600	
Backup						
		\$500	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	
Data Center						
Overall Data Center		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Factors to consider						
Additional IT Consulting		\$500	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	
Server Upgrades				\$2,500	\$2,500	
Capex Load Factor			\$10,754	\$10,754	\$10,754	
Total Cost Years 1 - 3		\$32,261	\$5,401	\$79,861	\$82,361	\$82,361
						\$244,584



XperCLOUD Solution	Managed				
	Monthly	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	
Cloud Solution Fees					
Install		\$2,500			
Cloud Solution Fees	\$2,040	\$24,480	\$24,480	\$24,480	
Consulting Outside	\$200	\$2,400	\$2,400	\$2,400	
Connectivity	\$550	\$6,600	\$6,600	\$6,600	
Desktop Support	\$500	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	
Total Cost Years 1 - 3		\$41,980	\$39,480	\$39,480	\$120,940



Analysis					
Internal Costs		\$79,861	\$82,361	\$82,361	\$244,584
Managed Costs		\$41,980	\$39,480	\$39,480	\$120,940
	Savings \$	\$37,881	\$42,881	\$42,881	\$123,644
	Savings %	47%	52%	52%	51%

As you can see, the cost savings are often compelling enough for business owners to overlook the risks of cloud computing; and if carefully planned, those risks of downtime and security are greatly minimized. In fact, our average client saves between \$37,000 and \$43,000 when they move to our cloud and experience LESS downtime, problems and system crashes than they did with their in-house network.

Different Types Of Cloud Solutions Explained:

Pure Cloud: This is where all your applications and data are put on the other side of the firewall (in the cloud) and accessed through various devices (laptops, desktops, iPads, phones) via the Internet. Here a user does not have control of the management of the resources. Everything is managed by the third party and it's their responsibility to apply software updates, security patches and maintenance.

Hybrid Cloud: Although "pure" cloud computing has valid applications, for many, it's downright scary. And in some cases is NOT the smartest move due to compliance issues, security restrictions or performance issues. A hybrid cloud enables you to put certain pieces of existing IT infrastructure (say, storage and e-mail) in the cloud, and the remainder of the IT infrastructure stays on premise. This gives you the ability to enjoy the costs savings and

benefits of cloud computing where it makes the most sense without risking your entire environment.

Point Solutions: Another option would be simply to put certain applications, like SharePoint or Microsoft Exchange, in the cloud while keeping everything else onsite. Since e-mail is usually a critical application that everyone needs and wants access to on the road and on various devices (iPad, smart phone, etc.) then often this is a great way to get advanced features of Microsoft Exchange without the cost of installing and supporting your own in-house Exchange server.

Public Cloud Vs. Private Cloud: A public cloud is a service that anyone can tap into with a network connection and a credit card. They are shared infrastructures that allow you to pay-as-you-go and managed through a self-service web portal. Private clouds are essentially self-built infrastructures that mimic public cloud services, but are on premise. Private clouds are often the choice of companies who want the benefits of cloud computing, but don't want their data held in a public environment.

FAQs About Security, Where Your Data Is Held And Internet Connectivity

Question: What if my Internet connection goes down for an extended period of time?

Our Answer: While this is a valid concern, we overcome it in the following way for our clients in the cloud. Our recommendation is to have multiple/redundant Internet connections from different providers. For example, if you currently have a T1 or DSL, then you might consider adding a broadband connection from Comcast or FiOS. Then you can share both connections without concern for a disruption in service.

Question: What happens if the Internet slows to the point where it's difficult to work productively?

Our Answer: We resolve this by having redundant Internet connections you significantly reduce the possibility that your Internet bandwidth will become saturated and slow work performance. If this does become a problem there are several products that you can add-on that will provide Bandwidth application shaping – basically determining which applications have priority. For example, streaming music or videos may be constrained to a small percentage of the bandwidth or blocked totally during certain "peak" times.

Question: What about security? Isn't there a big risk of someone accessing my data if it's in the cloud?

Our Answer: In many cases, cloud computing is a MORE secure way of accessing and storing data. Just because your server is onsite doesn't make it more secure; in fact, most small to medium businesses can't justify the cost of securing their network the way a cloud provider can. And most security breaches occur due to human error; one of your employees downloads a file that contains a virus, they don't use secure passwords, or they simply e-mail confidential information out to people who shouldn't see it. Other security breaches occur in on-site networks because the company didn't properly maintain their own in-house network with security updates, software patches, and up-to-date anti-virus software. That's a FAR more common way networks get compromised verses a cloud provider getting hacked. Our cloud services are very secure and reside in SA 70 data centers. In addition, we monitor all servers on a 24x7 x365 schedule to keep them performing at the highest level of availability. We patch and maintain all servers on a weekly basis to ensure updated protection.

Question: What if YOU go out of business? How do I get my data back?

Our Answer: We give every client network documentation that clearly outlines where their data is and how they could get it back in the event of an emergency. This includes detailed information of emergency contact numbers, information on how to access your data and infrastructure without needing our assistance (although our plan is always to be there to support you), a copy of our insurance policy and information regarding your backups and licensing.

We also give you a copy of OUR disaster recovery plan that shows what we've put in place to make sure we stay up and running.

In fact, you should never hire ANY IT professional that won't give you that information. We also deliver a copy of your data to a remote backup device every night so you have an additional copy and back up the entire server(s) should you ever need to recovery your data.

Question: Do I have to purchase new hardware (servers, workstations) to move to the cloud?

Our Answer: No! That's one of the selling points of cloud computing. It allows you to use older workstations, laptops and servers because the computing power is in the cloud. Not only does that allow you to keep and use hardware longer, but it allows you to buy cheaper workstations and laptops because you don't need the expensive computing power required in the past.

Question: How do I know if the Cloud is right for my business?

Answer: If the Cloud concept is a possibility for your business, consider a Cloud Readiness Assessment and Cost Analysis. This Assessment should have at least three parts:

1. **Cost Analysis and Inventory:** the first step is to look at what your current network consists of in hardware, licenses, data, and applications. Next, compile an IT cost assessment to reveal what you spend in total on IT, including Internet connectivity, support and other fees.
2. **Health Check:** perform a systems audit of your entire network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware and other hidden problems that you might not know about.
3. **Cloud Readiness:** After completing the above areas, then look at how you and your employees work and share information, who needs remote access and see what applications or processes can safely move to the cloud to improve ease of use and, of course, lower costs.

Having a third party conduct this type of assessment will give you some good information on determining the ROI and whether cloud computing makes sense for your business. When complete, you will have a Cloud Action Plan that shows you what technology functions should be moved to the cloud in order for you to make a good decision about this new technology.

What To Look For When Hiring A Cloud Integrator

A "cloud integrator" is a fancy name for an IT consultant who helps you set up and integrate the various software and solutions into a cloud service specific for your business. But buyer beware! The cloud is brand new technology and you don't want just anyone setting you up on this.

Unfortunately, the computer repair and consulting industry (along with many others) has its own share of incompetent or unethical people who will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the ability to determine whether or not they know what they are doing. Sometimes this is out of greed for your money; more often it's simply because they don't have the skills and competency to do the job right but won't tell you that up front because they want to make the sale.

From misleading information, unqualified technicians and poor management, to terrible customer service, we've seen it all...and we know they exist in abundance because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, etc. are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the computer industry is still highly unregulated and there are few laws in existence to protect the consumer – **which is why it's so important for you to really research the company or person you are considering to make sure they have the experience to set up, migrate and support your network to the cloud.**

Anyone who can hang out a shingle can promote themselves as a cloud expert. Even if they are honestly *trying* to do a good job, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your network's speed and performance, or in lost or corrupt data files. To that end, here are 16 questions you should ask your IT person before letting them migrate your network to the cloud:

16 Critical Questions To Ask Your IT Company Or Computer Consultant BEFORE Letting Them Move Your Network To The Cloud (Or Touch Your Network!)

Q1: How many clients have you provided cloud services for to date and can you provide references?

Our Answer: You don't want someone practicing on your network. At a minimum, make sure they have at least 10 clients in the cloud. They should also provide at least three alternatives for cloud based services. Make sure they are not trying to pigeon hole you into their "one and only" solution that may not be a right fit for you. Many times we see companies only offering a single cloud solution and this 'one-size-fits-all' approach can be disastrous for or way over priced.

Make sure you contact at least 3 cloud references before committing to a solution. Most references will tell you the pros and cons of the service if you ask the right questions. Here are a few examples: How long they have been using the cloud? Would they move to the cloud again? What other challenges did they face that they were not prepared for? Did they actually save money?

Q2: How quickly do they guarantee to have a technician working on an outage or other problem?

Our Answer: Anyone you pay to support your network should give you a written SLA (service level agreement) that outlines exactly how IT issues get resolved and in what time frame. I would also request that they reveal what their average resolution time has been with current clients over the last 3-6 months.

They should also answer their phones live from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and provide you with an emergency after-hours number they may call if a problem arises, including weekends.

If you cannot access your network because the Internet is down or due to some other problem, you can't be waiting around for hours for someone to call you back OR (more importantly) start working on resolving the issue. Make sure you get this in writing; often cheaper or less experienced consultants won't have this or will try and convince you it's not important or that they can't do this. Don't buy that excuse! They are in the business of providing IT support so they should have some guarantees or standards around this they share with you.

Q3: What's your plan for transitioning our network to the cloud to minimize problems and downtime?

Our Answer: We run a simultaneous cloud environment during the transition and don't "turn off" the old network until everyone is 100% confident that everything has been transitioned and is working effortlessly. You don't want someone to switch overnight without setting up a test environment first.

Q4: Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek speak), or do they come across arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Our Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the 'heart of a teacher' and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms. Our clients consistently rate our technicians at a 9.7 in customer service on a scale of 1 to 10 with '10' being the highest possible score. Our helpdesk solves 87% of the service calls (tickets) while on the phone with the client without having to escalate to a senior engineer. Our project engineers complete 98% of their projects on-time and within budget. In fact even our senior staff can be found answering helpdesk calls to monitor the activity and satisfaction of our clients.

Q5: Where will your data be stored?

Our Answer: You should receive full documentation about where your data is, how it's being secured and backed up and how you could get access to it if necessary WITHOUT going through your provider. Essentially, you don't want your cloud provider to be able to hold your data (and your company) hostage.

Q6: How will your data be secured and backed up?

Our Answer: If they tell you that your data will be stored in their own co-lo in the back of their office, what happens if THEY get destroyed by a fire, flood or other disaster? What are they doing to secure the office and access? Are they backing it up somewhere else? Make sure they are SAS 70 certified and have a failover plan in place to ensure continuous service in the event that their location goes down. If they are building on another platform, you still want to find out where your data is and how it's being backed up.

Q7. What is THEIR disaster recovery plan? What happens if they go out of business?

Our Answer: We feel that you should have full knowledge of where your data resides and how you can recover it not only in a disaster but if you no longer have support. We provide you with a complete disaster recovery plan that includes the steps you need to take if we are not available to assist you. We provide: key contacts, logins and passwords, migration steps, and necessary procedures to secure your data and recover it.

Q8: Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance to protect YOU?

Our Answer: Here's something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days or to lose data, who's responsible? Here's another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who's paying? In this litigious society we live in, you better make darn sure that whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers' compensation – and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story: A few years ago Geek Squad was slapped with multi-million dollar lawsuits from customers for the bad behavior of their technicians. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost clients' laptops (and subsequently all the data on them) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line: make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

Q9: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, your critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom?"

Our Answer: All clients receive this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

Side Note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

Q10: Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Our Answer: Yes; and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another left off.

Q11: Do they INSIST on doing periodical test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?

Our Answer: We perform a monthly "fire drill" and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. Upon completion, we then give our clients a report showing this test restore was conducted and that all systems are a "go." If there's a problem, we notify our clients immediately and start working to resolve it the same day. After all, the WORST time to "test" a backup is when you desperately need it.

Q12: Is their help-desk US-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?

Our Answer: We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's an important step in keeping your data secure.

Q13: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in on-going training – or are they learning on your dime?

Our Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we support. Our certifications include Microsoft, SonicWALL, HP, Dell, Intel, Cisco, Citrix, and many more Plus, our hiring process is so stringent that 99% of the technicians who apply don't make it through. (Guess who's hiring them?)

Q14: Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line of business applications?

Our Answer: We own the problems with all line of business applications for our clients. That doesn't mean we can fix faulty software – but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you instead of pointing fingers and putting you in the middle.

Q15: When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say “that’s not our problem to fix”?

Our Answer: We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that's just plain old good service and something many computer guys won't do. Pointing fingers at other vendors NEVER solves the problem.

Q16: Is their IT Services Agreement simple and fair?

Our Answer: We feel that the IT Services Agreement should just be an understanding as to what is covered and what is not covered under the arrangement. The Agreement should be clear, concise, enough pages to describe the services, discuss payment terms and list each covered device. It should also discuss how to easily terminate the contract. Keep it simple and easy to understand so that both parties are “partners” in the arrangement.

Case Studies: What Our Clients Have To Say About Moving To The Cloud

“We Moved to the Cloud And Haven’t Looked Back!”



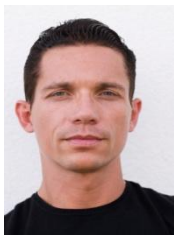
“We had a high level of confidence in **XPERTECHS** based off our experience with them in a number of IT related areas. We knew they would bring that same high reliability to the hosted offering and they would be the right fit for our company. We’re pleased with the level of service we’re receiving by way of **XPERTECHS’ XperCLOUD** including reliability and up time. ” – *Rick, CFO, International Construction Company*

“We Saved Over \$38,000 On Our IT Costs...Amazing!”



“When **XPERTECHS** recommended we move to cloud computing instead of purchasing a new server, I was a bit concerned– but when I saw how much more reliable we were going to be in a cloud environment, I decided to go for it. I’m very happy we did. Not only did I not have to purchase a new server, but our employees are able to work remotely much easier. Plus, **XPERTECHS** tech support has been great. I’d highly recommend them to anyone looking to save money on IT...and who doesn’t want to do that?” – *Ana, Controller, Government Contractor*

“Our Transition to the CLOUD Has Been Easy For Our Business and Employees!”



“**XPERTECHS** has proven to be true professionals in their handling of our migration from an internal server network to a **XperCLOUD** hosted solution. Each of the team members involved has contributed to what has been an extremely painless and positive experience. I now know why they say ‘**Xperience The Difference**’” – *Geoff, President, Landscaping Firm*

A Final Word...

I hope you have found this guide helpful in shedding some light on cloud computing. As I stated in the opening of this report, my purpose in providing this information was to help you make an informed decision and avoid getting burned by the many incompetent firms offering these services.

Below you will find information on how to request a FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment. This is, of course, provided for free with no obligations and no expectations on our part. I want to be clear that this is NOT a bait and switch offer or a trick to get you to buy something. My reputation for running an honest and trustworthy business is something I hold very dear. I would never jeopardize that in any way. So why are we offering something like this for free?

Two reasons:

1. We are simply offering this service as a risk-free "get to know us" offer to people we haven't had the pleasure of doing business with. Again, our goal is to allow you to make an informed and confident decision; offering this service is one way we can help you better evaluate our services.
2. This will allow us to determine if we even CAN help you. Obviously we can't help everyone and cloud computing might not be a good fit for your particular circumstances. Conducting this Assessment enables us to perform a small service to you and give you a risk-free way of determining whether or not we're the right company for you without risking your money.

Looking forward to your call!

Michael Mellott
President, XPRTECHS
(410) 884-0225

www.XPERTECHS.com

www.CloudITPros.com

FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a **FREE** Cloud Readiness Assessment and cost analysis. This Assessment has three parts:

1. **Cost Analysis and Inventory:** Our first step is to look at what your current network consists of in hardware, licenses, data, and applications. Next, we compile an IT cost assessment to reveal your total spend on IT, including Internet connectivity, support and other fees. Most business owners have never really look at their entire IT costs this way and often this report alone is an eye-opener. Why do we do this? Because our goal is to find ways we can significantly lower those costs while simplifying and improving your workflow.
2. **Health Check:** We will perform a 35-point audit of your entire network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware and other hidden problems that you might not know about. Often we find faulty backups, out-of-date anti-virus software, faulty firewalls and missing security patches that, if left unaddressed, could end up costing you MORE in new hardware, support, business downtime and data loss.
3. **Cloud Readiness:** After we've looked at the above areas, we then look at how you and your employees work and share information and see what applications or processes we can safely move to the cloud to improve ease of use and, of course, lower costs.

When complete, we'll give you a Cloud Action Plan that shows you how we can save you money and resolve a number of work-arounds and problems you may have been experiencing to date. Even if you decide not to hire us, having a third party conduct this type of assessment will give you some good information on saving money and the security and health of your computer network.

How To Request Your FREE Cloud Readiness Assessment:

Call Michael directly at (410) 884-0025 or Email marketing@xpertechs.com

Visit: <http://www.xpertechs.com/cloudreadiness/>
to sign up for YOUR Free Assessment!!