

The SMS guide to cloud productivity



Your Partner In The Cloud

Introduction

Welcome to your new SMS cloud services. We've been at the forefront of 'the business cloud' since 2006, with an unbeatable mix of business-focused services, 24 x 7 x 365 UK support, and a commitment to helping our customers achieve more, and gain a competitive edge.

This is our guide to the business cloud, the essential components every organisation needs, and our recommendations for additional services that will add value, whilst increasing efficiency, flexibility, and security.

What is the business cloud?

'The cloud' has become a common buzzword in business, but one often still misunderstood by non-IT people. The brief explanation is that the cloud is a general term for business services hosted on servers connected to the internet, and accessed online rather than through an internal network.

On device

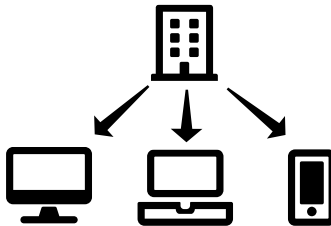
On device



All data is stored on individual devices, with no automatic syncing between them

On-premises

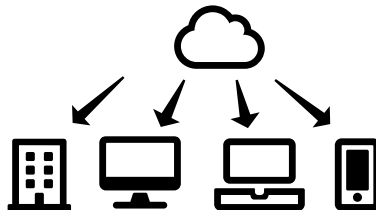
On-premises



Data is stored centrally on an organisation's own in-house server, with syncing possible between the server and individual devices (if enabled).

The cloud

The cloud



Data is stored centrally in an external data centre (owned by a cloud provider) and synced between all devices, and buildings.

What are the business benefits for moving to the cloud?



Organisations moving to the cloud categorise their competitive advantages as:

- Flexibility — Employees are able to access cloud services from any location using the devices they prefer.
- Fixed-cost — Most cloud services operate on a fixed monthly charge; making it easier to manage budgets
- Free up resources — Cloud servers are maintained by the hosting company (eg AWS or Microsoft) freeing up internal IT resources to concentrate on other things
- Global presence — Being online increases a company's visibility to the global audience
- Faster decision-making — Meetings can happen immediately and solutions found faster
- Better productivity — Employees respond favourably to the flexibility of the cloud and smoother operational procedures it encourages

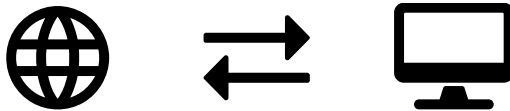
Business cloud services

The business cloud can be broken into those services which are essential for every organisation to have, and those which are recommended, but not yet seen as a core cog of business operations (though many will move into the 'essentials' list before too long).

Essential cloud services

These services are the first ones an organisation should utilise when moving to the business cloud.

Domain name management



The first step in using the cloud is to register your own domain name. This provides a unique online identity which you control. Piggybacking on a service providers domain (eg onmicrosoft, gmail, facebook) is not recommended as best practice

Web hosting



Web hosting is such a common business service now most organisations may not even consider it be part of the cloud. However, unless your website is hosted on your own server, you're paying a monthly fee for a website's files to be kept on a third-party server permanently connected to the internet — making it most companies first cloud interaction.

Business Email



Few organisations can survive without an email address. Businesses which take themselves seriously always run their email on their own domain (eg `businessname.co.uk`) leaving Gmail, Hotmail, and their ilk to those who don't value delivering a professional veneer to potential customers.

Recommended cloud services

The essential business cloud services cover the basics. These days, though, the business cloud offers so many more opportunities for organisations to improve their working practices, increase security and gain a competitive advantage over competitors.

Document storage and management



Businesses work better when colleagues work together. Using a cloud storage solution for company documents enables many advanced features which improve security, collaboration, and flexibility.

- Security — Cloud document providers hold information in secure data centres, with documents encrypted to prevent unauthorised viewing
- Collaboration — Multiple people can work together on the same documents, with revisions showing up immediately
- Flexibility — Employees can work from any location with an internet connection (office, home, café, train station, etc.)

Having the ability to view and edit documents from any location delivers a clear advantage over competitors. Imagine two companies visiting the same potential client. The client asks for a sales quote to be amended before ordering.

- Salesperson A has to go back to the office, update the quote, resend it, and wait for approval
- Salesperson B opens the document whilst sat with the customer, updates the quote, gets approval instantly, and the admin team in the office already have the latest quote ready for processing

One of the most popular cloud document storage services is Microsoft OneDrive. With a minimum 1TB of storage per user and advanced sharing options it is the simplest, safest, way of storing valuable documents in the cloud.

Data security



Much of an organisation's value is tied up with the data it holds. Customer information, employee details, sales orders, financial transactions, and many more types of records are vitally important to how businesses operate.

Maintaining the security of this data is essential, with many potential threats coming from internal and external sources

- A rogue employee accessing information
- Incoming digital threats, such as email virus, holding data to ransom
- Theft of physical computer equipment or mobile devices

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) add a further layer of complexity to organisational data security by placing additional restrictions on how data can be used, and providing enhanced individual protection on data access and deletion.

Many cloud services offer in-built protection against threats, such as the ability to wipe lost devices, restrict document access and prevent infected machines propagating across a company network.

Beyond any built-in protection, there are additional data security provisions available through specialist services like Microsoft's Enterprise Mobility + Security (EM + S) – a full suite of online services to protect data alongside search and investigation tools.

Unified communications



People like to communicate in different ways. Some prefer face-to-face, others a phone call, then there are emails, text messages, and online discussions. Unified communications brings all the different ways people discuss and collaborate together; leveraging the cloud's unique ability to integrate and different services across all a person's devices.

Telephone calls



Making a telephone call doesn't need the cloud, a good old-fashioned PSTN landline will do the job fine. Switching to VoIP calling through a cloud PBX keeps all the features of a standard call with plenty of other benefits.

How about instantly routing calls from a landline to a mobile device, all on a single number? Or storing voicemails as audio files in your email app? Add in the financial advantage of unlimited, free, internal calls between employees (wherever they are in the world) and it's easy to see the savings available.

Instant messaging



Quick questions, quick answers, fast ‘talking’ with instant messaging (IM) is often the fastest way to hold a quick conversation, or get the information you need. People use IM all the time in their personal lives (think Facebook Messenger, iMessages, WhatsApp, and plenty of others), bringing the same speedy conversation style into the workplace is a great way to help colleagues help each other.

Web conferencing



Even people who like meetings rarely enjoy the journey time involved getting to them. Web conferencing creates a virtual meeting room for attendees to arrive at from their laptop, tablet, or phone. Creating considerable savings for time, money, and energy.

Along with the expected audio and video options, online conferences benefit from features like screen sharing (for delivering presentations) and virtual whiteboards (for mind-mapping and problem-solving).

Group collaboration



One of the latest unified communications developments is group collaboration platforms. Making work discussions flow as easily as social chats, and integrating all the ways people like to communicate, in one single place means colleagues can work together how they prefer with a central place for calls, instant messages, meetings, and documents.

Microsoft Teams is the Office 365 group collaboration hub. People can chat, highlight what they're working on, ask questions, make calls, hold meetings and more. It integrates across the whole Office 365 platform, becoming the central place for daily planning and discussions.

The Office 365 advantage

The cloud opens up many opportunities to gain the competitive edge against competitors, improve efficiency, and help employees become more productive. With Microsoft Office 365 this is taken to the next level; providing a complete cloud platform which integrates many different services mentioned in this booklet, and others.

With Office 365 you can quickly integrate

- Email
- Cloud storage
- Data security
- Office document editing
- Instant messaging
- Web conferencing
- Group collaboration

Services run across phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, and the web. Employees are free to use the platform they prefer and organisations keep control of the valuable business data.

The SMS advantage

SMS have been providing cloud services since 2006 and we constantly strive to offer the highest level of service to customers. Bringing SMS on-board as your partner in the cloud means you get:

- 24 x 7 x 365 UK-based support
- An ISO accredited partner
- Access to the widest portfolio of cloud services

To make sure you've got the right cloud services for your organisation, or to learn more about how the cloud increases your business potential call one of our team on

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