

Cloud Computing - An Explanation and Its Capabilities

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December 20, 2015

Organizations have been using remote capabilities for years, building their own networks linking multiple locations with dedicated private connections. The huge infrastructure of the internet has now brought the ability to access programs and data stored remotely to the level of small businesses and homes. The term "Cloud Computing" has arisen to describe the use of the internet infrastructure to enable local users to access programs and data stored at a remote site.

PC and Mac based applications use a combination of software and hardware technology that seamlessly enable you to store your data on a remote server for purposes of backup and sharing. All you do is install the software for the target service you choose. Then drag files to the target folder, and everything else happens in the background.

The "everything else" is a background copy of your data to the target service's hardware and synchronization of the data in the target folder among all of your computers that have the targeted service's software installed.

Some of you are probably already using some form of this type of Cloud Computing such as Dropbox, Google Drive, One Drive, Amazon Cloud Drive, etc.

So let's examine the advantages and disadvantages of this type of Cloud Computing:

- Advantage: Your data is automatically backed up on the target service's hardware.
- Advantage: Multiple users sharing the same login credentials on the target service can share the data.
- Advantage: Residential users have a backup of their data in the event their computer hardware fails.
- Advantage: A small business can leverage the advantages of backup and collaboration to avoid the expense of a local data server.
- Disadvantage: Your data is located in a remote location (maybe outside of the US). Your data is as safe (or vulnerable) as the safety (or vulnerability) of the target service's servers and the route that data takes over the public internet infrastructure.
- Disadvantage: Considering the previous bullet point, consider very carefully whether you would store confidential personal data such as tax returns or bank and brokerage statements, or confidential data about your clients, in the target folder, to be uploaded to the target service's hardware.
- Disadvantage: Depending on the power of your computer, you may notice it slowing down as the target service's software is constantly monitoring the target folder on your computer.
- Disadvantage: Depending on the bandwidth of your broadband connection, you may notice sluggish internet response during times that data is being transferred.

Cloud Computing may work for your small business or personal needs. Each user should evaluate the backup and sharing capabilities vs. the potential data vulnerability and reach their own conclusion.