INTRO TO CLOUD COMPUTING

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

From The Desk of: Stephen M. Zetzer, CISSP, HCISPP
CEO, eWranglers, LLC

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 selecting a vendor.

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 computing can actually lower their IT costs by 5-30%, 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 questions, so please feel free to contact my office directly if we can clarify any points made in this report or answer any questions you have.

Dedicated to serving you,

Stephen M Zetzer

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Stephen M. Zetzer is the founder and principal owner of eWranglers, LLC. I founded eWranglers in January of 2000 as a Montana firm focused on the Information Security needs of small offices. Customers quickly found that secure systems were also reliable systems and his firm has grown to provide quality IT services to clients in Montana and Colorado. Our core focus on industry leading information security practices is built in to every client solution from the ground up.

Stephen’s experience includes enterprise level network infrastructure and security consulting through IBM Global Services and other firms. Stephen was a team leader on successful global projects for AT&T, Lucent Technologies, Comcast, and Oracle among others. A graduate of the Indiana University Kelly School of Business, Stephen holds the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) credential. The CISSP is considered by many in the industry to be the highest level security certification available. Stephen also recently earned the elite Healthcare Information Security and Privacy Practitioner (HCISPP) certification.

Interesting facts.....

- Stephen has spent over a decade researching, developing, testing and refining IT infrastructure and computing for small and professional offices.
- eWranglers has a select group of clients who value the impact that properly planned and implemented IT security strategy has on their ability to get things done.
- Stephen has spent the last 15 years listening to customers – business owners – researching and discovering what they look for when outsourcing their IT support or buying IT services.
- Stephen believes in what he does and sells to the extent that eWranglers operates their own fully digital office with end-to-end automation. eWranglers Bozeman office runs on a fully cloud based architecture.
- Stephen is a #1 Bestselling Author “The Business Owners Essential Guide To IT And All Things Digital: 22 Critical Facts Every Business Must Know To Maximize Their Company’s Efficiency, Security, Employee Productivity and Profits version 2.0”
- Stephen is dedicated to constantly learning and always improving what eWranglers does.
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 answers 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 an actual cost comparison chart from a project we completed 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 connection using the 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 cloud 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. However, Google Apps for Business does a knock down job of handling email, email security, mobile device security and spam filtering. About 25% of our client base uses Google Apps for Business with great success.

Microsoft’s Office 365 is a newer entry in this space. Unlike Google Apps, you get full usage of Microsoft Office Professional Plus (on your desktop) in addition to the hosted (or onsite) Exchange server. Considering costs of licensing Microsoft Office for desktop use alone vs. through Office 365 can lead to significant savings. Similar to Google Apps, Microsoft’s Office 365 does a knockdown job of handling email, email security, mobile device security and spam filtering. We have a smaller but growing percentage of our client base successfully using Office 365.

Even Adobe now has a great subscription based cloud offering for those who use the Adobe Creative Suite applications. A low cost, monthly subscription allows users to access cloud storage, basic functions of the creative suite applications and download current versions of full desktop applications as needed.

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 – have 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 5% 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. I personally love this feature about the cloud environment we've deployed in my office. It used to be a lot more difficult to work from remote locations. Now, I have full access to everything I do in the office from my mac or iPad. And, my experience has been that remote access performs much faster than the old way when I used to make a VPN connection into my office.

- **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 apile 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. Many small businesses ignored these risks in the past as they were simply too costly to plan for. With a well-designed cloud solution, it’s just built in with no extracost.

- **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. Since you pay as you go, you only pay for software licensing and computing power on demand. So, scaling up your headcount won’t require a big investment. If they are dedicated to a project, the costs of supporting them can disappear when the project is over and they leave.

- **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. I’m currently tracking power cost savings in my own office. I expect to be able to eliminate the need for additional cooling once 1 more of my servers can be shut down.
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... Many of our cloud solutions run on 64 bit servers. Some specialized or older or poorly written line of business software applications simply won’t work. You may have to consider changing to a different line of business application in order to leverage the cloud.

- **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 sees 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 (or not) 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 comparison:

**Cloud Cost Comparison**

This is a firm that has 12 employees all using Microsoft Office. Other applications being used include
QuickBooks, Microsoft Exchange, and an application that manages the business specifically. About 10
additional employees use web and mobile device based only access to Microsoft Exchange. Prior to moving
to the cloud, the office had an aging Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Small Business Server.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Traditional Network Cost Over 3 Years</th>
<th>Cloud Network Cost Over 3 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hardware</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Server 1</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
<td>$101,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workstations (15)</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other devices – Tablets, iPads, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Software</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Operating System</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office Licenses</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Server</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange User Licenses</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-virus</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spam Filtering</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Connection</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewall</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup (onsite and offsite)</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsourced IT Support for Maintenance</td>
<td>$92,700</td>
<td>Included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal IT support costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>$143,400</strong></td>
<td><strong>$150,796</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Savings:</strong></td>
<td><strong>($7,396)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, there may not always be ‘savings’ with cloud solutions. You really have to look at
the total cost of ownership of IT and consider performance, functionality, risks and costs. If
carefully planned, risks are much lower operating in the cloud, functionality can be much higher,
performance can be much better and costs can be similar or lower. Can you say your disaster
recovery plan and strategy is done? In the cloud, it’s built in. Work from anywhere? In the cloud,
that is built in. In fact, our average client saves between $300-$1,000 dollars per MONTH when
they move to our cloud and experience LESS downtime, problems and system crashes than they did
with their in-house network.

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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, and phones) via the Internet.

**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 placing your entire environment in the cloud.

**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. Our office is no longer supporting on site exchange servers for new installations or upgrades. The benefits of placing email in the cloud far outweigh those of running your own exchange server in all but the biggest or most specialized environments. Many line of business (applications designed for a Legal or Medical Office, for example) have cloud offerings where you can subscribe to the service. Intuit does this with Quickbooks. Although functionality is slightly less than the desktop version, Quickbooks online does payroll and other basic accounting functions really well.

**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. Many of the pure cloud solutions we have deployed have been private cloud.

**FAQs About Security, Where You 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. We include dual Internet connections in the main office and any locations with more than a handful of employees. Our security gateways are configured to automatically fail over to the backup connection if the primary one goes down. Also, my office is alerted of the outage so that we may work.

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with the carrier to bring the connection back up without any downtime in the office. In many cases, our clients do not even know if this happens as the alert, failover and our response are all automated.

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

**Our Answer**: We monitor Internet usage and performance in real time. If your provider’s service slows or becomes unstable, we initiate a failover to the alternative connection while the primary connection is diagnosed and fixed. We provide and archive detailed, daily Internet usage reports that identify whether employees listening to Pandora radio, for example are consuming your available bandwidth. The reports are used to find and rule out any internal sources of Internet overload. Depending on your situation, specific Internet service providers will provide better performance for you. We use our data to determine systematically which one is best.

**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 partners put security first.

**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.

In fact, you should never hire ANY IT professional that won’t give you that information.

Upon request, or termination of our business relationship, your data are returned to you promptly via a removable hard disk.

**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. You may
choose to purchase new laptops and tablets after you have the ability to work from any device from any location however.

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 to and support your network in 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 for you, 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 21 questions you should ask your IT person before letting them migrate your network to the cloud:
Critical Questions To Ask Your IT Company Or Computer Consultant BEFORE Letting Them Move Your Network To The Cloud (Or Touch Your Network!)

Customer Service:

Q1: Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voice mail and wait for someone to call you back?
Our Answer: We answer our phones live 24-7-365 so clients can call if a problem arises, including on weekends. Why? Because many of the CEOs and executives we support work outside normal hours and find it the most productive time they have. If they cannot access their computer network AND can’t get hold of anyone to help them, it’s incredibly frustrating.

Q2: Do they have a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?
Our Answer: We guarantee to have a technician working on a problem within 2 hours or less of your call. This is written into every service agreement we give to our clients because it’s standard procedure.

Q3: 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 as 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. Just look at what Mitch and Addie with Double T River Ranch had to say:

“Steve was a major selling point at both our initial meeting and during the install. It became apparent he really knew what he was doing and when he came to our place to install our system we appreciated what a nice guy he is to be around. He eased our transition especially while we were dealing with some things we didn’t totally understand... Steve doesn’t talk techie over you, and that inspires confidence.”

Q4: Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network’s performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?
Our Answer: We conduct quarterly review meetings with our clients to look for new ways to help improve their operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies and resolve any problems that may be arising. Our goal with these meetings is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient and competitive.

Q5: Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?
Our Answer: We provide detailed invoices that show what work was done, why and when, so you never have to guess what you are paying for. We also double-check our invoices for accuracy before they are sent to you.

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Q6: 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 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 multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for bad behavior by their technicians. In some cases, their techs where accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers’ PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost a client’s laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line: make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

Q7: Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget?
Our Answer: All projects are fixed-priced and guaranteed to be completed on time, in writing. This is important because many unethical or incompetent computer guys will only quote “time and materials,” which gives them free rein to nickel-and-dime you as well as take as much time as they want on completing a project.

**Maintenance Of Your Network:**

Q8: Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24-7-365 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data and other issues?
Our Answer: Yes, our remote network monitoring system watches over your network to constantly look for developing problems, security issues and other problems so we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems.

Q9: Do they provide you with a daily report that shows all the updates, security patches and the status of every machine on your network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?
Our Answer: Every week our clients get a detailed report that shows an overall health score of their network and the updates to their antivirus, security settings, patches and other important network checks (like hard-drive space, backups, speed and performance, etc.).

Q10: Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, 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!
Q11: 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 one has left off.

Q12: When they offer an “all-inclusive” support plan, is it TRULY all-inclusive, or are their “gotchas” hidden in the fine print?
Our Answer: Our “all-inclusive” support plan is just that – all-inclusive. One of the more popular service plans offered by consulting firms today is an “all-inclusive” or “all-you-can-eat” managed services plan. These are actually a good thing because they'll save you a lot of money in the long run – HOWEVER, make sure you REALLY understand what is and isn't included. Some things to consider are:

- Is phone/e-mail help desk included or extra?
- What about network upgrades, moves or adding/removing users?
- Is hardware and/or software included?
- What about 3rd-party software support? (We recommend that this IS included.)
- What are the costs/consequences of early cancellation?
- What if you aren't happy with their services? Do they offer a money-back guarantee?
- If the hardware and software is included, what happens if you cancel the contract?
- Are off-site backups included? To what degree?
- If you have a major disaster, is restoring your network included or extra?
- What about on-site support calls? Or support to remote offices?
- Are home PCs used to access the company's network after hours included or extra?

For you, this means that you know what to ask for. You may not be told that the results you seek require the components above. Hourly, as needed support is usually limited to only those things you ask for, not what you need to obtain satisfactory results.
**Backups And Disaster Recovery:**

Q13: Do they INSIST on monitoring an off-site as well as an on-site backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated tape backups?
   Our Answer: We do not allow our clients to use tape backups because they are incredibly unreliable. We make sure all of our clients have incorporated hard disk based backups with offsite storage where possible. Anyone still using tape backups is given the option to upgrade to current technology.

Q14: Do they INSIST on doing periodic 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. After all, the WORST time to “test” a backup is when you desperately need it.

Q15: Do they INSIST on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?
   Our Answer: We do; and that's simply as a precaution in case a hardware failure or software glitch causes a major problem.

Q16: If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a written plan for how your data could be restored FAST and/or one that enables you to work from a remote location?
   Our Answer: All clients receive a simple disaster recovery plan for their data and network. We encourage them to do a full disaster recovery plan for their office, but at a minimum, their network will be covered should something happen.

**Technical Expertise And Support:**

Q17: 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 important for keeping your data secure.

Q18: Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing 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. Among others, our technicians hold the Microsoft Certified IT Professional certification, Certified SonicWALL Security Administrator, and ISC2 credentials. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent, most of the technicians who apply don’t make it through (guess who’s hiring them?)
Q19: Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?
Our Answer: Our technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. They dress professionally, show up on time, and if they cannot (for some odd, unforeseen reason), we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

Q20: 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.

Q21: 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.

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.
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 **40 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:

Please contact us at eWranglers at (406) 587-5755, by email: accounts@ewranglersbts.com, or go visit our website at www.ewranglersbts.com – we look forward to hearing from you!