Secure data backup, greater reliability, better resource and growth management options, and improved collaboration are just a few of the reasons to take full advantage of cloud computing today.

Yet understanding the choices you have can help you avoid some VERY costly mistakes you could wind up seriously regretting later. To help you move forward with confidence, here are some important points to consider.

**Three “Flavors” Of The Cloud**
Not all cloud models are the same. A cloud environment that works for a dental practice with a half dozen locations may not be entirely suitable for a new law firm with just a single office.

In determining what the best cloud model is for your organization, it’s important to know how cloud services are structured. Basically, there are three types of cloud: public, private and hybrid.

**Public Cloud Services Offer Flexibility And Lower Cost**
A public cloud comprises a collection of data storage and software services that can be accessed on an as-needed monthly basis, somewhat like an electric utility or fitness club. It houses data facilities outside the corporate firewall that you access through an Internet browser without having to make any initial or ongoing capital investment.

Well-known examples of public cloud services include Google Drive, Microsoft Office Online, Apple iCloud and Amazon Cloud Drive. They provide data storage and, in many cases, web apps.

Public clouds are best used where a high level of privacy is not required. They can provide access to a growing pool of newer technologies that would not be affordable if developed individually.

**Private Clouds Support Highly Specialized Apps**
A private cloud resides within an organization’s firewall, and is typically owned, managed and supported by that business. IT resources are available to members of the organization from their own data center.

Private clouds can support highly specialized and/or privacy-restricted applications, like medical-records software for a health-care organization concerned about HIPPA requirements, for example.

And, while it can be more expensive to set up initially, a private cloud may deliver a higher ROI in the long run since you’re not paying for ongoing shared services.
Hybrid Clouds: Balancing Complexity With Flexibility
Merging the flexibility of public cloud services with the control of a private cloud, a hybrid cloud can provide the ideal infrastructure for some organizations.

A hybrid cloud enables you to put some of your apps and data – archives and e-mail, for instance – in a public cloud, and the remainder in your private cloud. This provides the cost savings and benefits of the public cloud while retaining the customization and security advantages of a private cloud.

While it can be more complex to deploy and manage than a pure public or private cloud, a hybrid cloud may deliver the best blend of control, flexibility and cost-effectiveness for some organizations.

So Which “Flavor” Is Right For You?
There is no perfect solution – each type of cloud has its own pros and cons. That being said, here are a few key factors to consider when determining the best approach for your particular business:

1. Public cloud solutions are best suited to the flexibility and budget requirements of smaller businesses that want access to the kind of IT resources that bigger organizations can afford, without the cost of development and ongoing support and management.

2. A private cloud, managed and supported by an in-house IT team, may be ideal for your organization if control and privacy are of paramount concern.

3. A hybrid cloud could be the ideal solution for any enterprise that wants to manage sensitive data in-house while availing itself of third-party software and data storage for uses where the data involved isn’t as sensitive.

How To Get The Best Professional Help
While hiring a cloud-computing expert can prove extremely beneficial in the long run, it’s critical to work with a professional who has depth of experience in all types of cloud environments.

We’ve helped dozens of organizations set up and run cost-effective, powerful and secure cloud networks. For a Free Cloud Readiness Assessment, contact us at 312.554.5699 or sales@mxotech.com today.