

## Evaluating and Selecting Cloud Based Web Solutions 10 benefits & advantages for small to mid-size businesses

By Fred Maurer, Web & Marketing Services Director, Parkview Technology Group

The “cloud” is a buzzword for the public Internet dating back to the late 1990s. Services delivered via the Internet used to be called web application services, and the vendors were known as application service providers or ASPs. They’re called “cloud services” or “software as a service” (SaaS) now, but the basic meaning remains the same. With cloud solutions all the application software, databases, servers, etc. are provided by the vendor and reside at the vendor’s data center.

Quality cloud services can enable you to access your data, manage your services, change your settings, and more, all over the web 24/7. You maintain ownership and hands-on control over your content and data with a cloud service, but the solution technology itself is owned and managed by the vendor. Quality cloud services can deliver tremendous benefits and advantages for small to mid-size organizations. Here is a list of reasons to consider cloud services for your organization and things to look for when evaluating and selecting cloud service vendors.

- 1) Focus on core business strategies** - Cloud solutions improve your ability to focus your valuable resources on core business strategies, operational and day-to-day requirements rather than hit-or-miss Internet solution projects and technology concerns. Focusing on your core business yields improved performance and results.
- 2) Fast start-up** - A quality cloud service vendor will typically provide a feature & function rich Internet application solution for you much faster than other solution alternatives. Without the burden of hiring expensive, full-time developers or outside consultants, you can focus on growth. Your resources can be strategically focused on value added activities without the headaches of building and maintaining Internet solutions. Proven functionality, rapid time-to-market, and ability to scale are guaranteed. Because you’re leveraging the cloud vendor’s core strengths, your Internet solutions won’t lag behind your organization’s growth and change.
- 3) Higher return on investment and lower cost of ownership** - It typically costs an organization more to operate and maintain its Internet technology than it does to build it. By focusing internal resources on developing and implementing sales & marketing strategies instead of Internet solutions, you can achieve a higher return on your Internet investment.
- 4) Functional, technical, and operational solution quality** - Companies depend on quality Internet application functionality to operate. But many small to mid-size organizations can’t cost justify the staff or facilities required to develop professional Internet application solutions. Web technology and human resource challenges create barriers to achieving business goals. A quality cloud vendor will deliver highly effective, ready-to-launch web application software, databases, middleware, and client tools. By utilizing cloud services you can get the advantage of proven technology and processes while overcoming traditional time and cost hurdles.
- 5) Data Security** - Quality cloud vendors combine state-of-the-art security technologies with industry standard best practices for security management. Cloud security systems include firewalls, user authentication and authorization, virus protection, and data backups. Backup procedures, disaster recovery processes, and stringent security measures protect your data from hackers, unauthorized access, viruses and unforeseen incidents.

**6) Budget Reduction** - With cloud services, predictable monthly fees replace ballooning in-house staff and consulting budgets. You can utilize your capital to pursue core business opportunities and priorities. Your cloud solution investment makes it easier to grow and manage your operation.

**7) Reliable 24/7 Service** - Quality cloud vendors deliver solutions with guaranteed high availability. This reliability is due to proven systems and centralized server-based computing platforms, which your staff can access remotely. Network load balancing, redundancy, fault-tolerance, and system monitoring are technologies that small to mid-size companies usually don't have. Network access and system availability are the lifeblood of business. At the same time, network management, monitoring and security have become more costly and complex. The professional data centers and network management expertise of quality cloud service providers can eliminate this concern for you.

**8) Application and Database Management** - Since day one of the Internet, many Web consultants and in-house developers have left their employers and clients with costly, complex systems that are even more costly and complex to maintain. Many in-house and consultant developed solutions are left defective, unfinished or unmanageable. Quality cloud service vendors stand behind their systems and processes, and eliminate the hassle and anxiety of acquiring and managing quality Web application solutions. Centralized application development, management, and upgrades insure that you get great solution quality, ease of maintenance, and system continuity at a reasonable, predictable price.

**9) No Internet Department Required** - Quality cloud service vendors provide database administration, network management, solution implementation and support. You don't need to hire people and don't have to worry about turnover. Good IT people are expensive and hard to find. When they leave they take all their knowledge with them. Cloud services can eliminate these costs and headaches.

**10) Single point of resolution** – When you have a question or problem you don't want finger pointing, you want answers and solutions. A quality cloud service vendor will provide a single point of resolution. All the technology and people necessary to operate a successful solution (servers, network, software, support staff) and all the functions necessary to implement and manage the solution are centralized. When problems occur with any information technology system, it's not always easy to determine which piece of technology is causing the trouble. You don't care what caused it. You just want it fixed. A quality cloud service vendor will take responsibility for the whole system from end-to-end.

#### **About the author**

Fred Maurer is an Internet technology & marketing expert with over twenty years of industry experience, including more than ten years of web content management & application strategy, solution design & development, and service delivery. Prior to founding Parkview Technology Group in 1999, he held leadership positions in service delivery, marketing, and product development with several industry leading business technology companies including System Software Associates, Keane Consulting, and Acxiom Corporation. He holds a Bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University, a Master's degree from Illinois Institute of Technology, and is a Microsoft Certified Professional. A versatile speaker and author, he has presented at industry events and universities, and has written articles for respected national business publications. Reach him at (877) 316-8364 or fred@parkviewtech.com.

#### **About Parkview Technology Group**

Parkview is a professional services firm based in Glen Ellyn, IL near Chicago. Parkview provides quality Internet strategy, web content management, marketing, network & IT, and cloud solutions for its small to mid-size business and non-profit customers throughout Chicagoland and beyond. Visit [www.parkviewtech.com](http://www.parkviewtech.com) or call (877) 316-8364.