



Sync, send, and receive:

Why cloud-based email and storage make sense for your business

INTRODUCTION

Two of the most valuable services currently available to small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) are cloud-based email and storage—and many tech-savvy SMBs are starting to take advantage of the extraordinary time and money savings these two services offer.

By any measure, the benefits are impressive. In October 2014, PC World and Rackspace reported¹ that among SMBs using cloud-based email, storage, and other services:

- *51 percent reduced the time they spend managing information technology (IT)*
- *50 percent found that they required fewer internal IT resources*
- *94 percent realized security benefits*
- *75 percent improved service availability*
- *96 percent found they worried less about outages*

And in terms of time-and-money savings that led to key business benefits, SMBs that adopted cloud services reported the following:

- *50 percent found they could pursue new business opportunities due to time saved by managing security in the cloud*
- *70 percent were able to reinvest money saved as a result of moving to the cloud*
- *36 percent said they improved customer service after adopting cloud services*

This white paper explains how SMBs that adopt cloud-based email and storage can increase productivity and collaboration, improve security, and reduce their capital expenditures and operational costs.

¹ *Infographic: SMB Cloud Adoption Trends in 2014*, PC World, October 7, 2014



THE ADVANTAGES OF CLOUD-BASED EMAIL

Although instant messaging (IM), text messaging, and social media are becoming increasingly popular, especially among consumers, email remains the go-to form of communication in the business world. Given the continuing importance of email for business communication, it's no surprise that a growing number of SMBs are choosing to move their email to the cloud.

The benefits of cloud-based email include:

Lower maintenance

When you move your business email to the cloud, you can relax, knowing that the experts who created the software that is now supporting your email are taking care of the maintenance. Meanwhile, your team retains control over your company's capabilities and how your employees use email features.

Automatic updates

Software updates and fixes are delivered automatically as soon as they are released. Although the management and updates are fully automated, you are still in control when you need to be.

Strategic use of IT staff

By offloading the time-consuming job of managing mail servers, you and your team can spend more time on the core operations that build business value rather than keeping up with persistent hardware maintenance.

Reduced costs

Instead of spending increasingly larger portions of your capital budget on servers for email storage and workloads, you can think strategically and support business managers in a much more agile fashion, quickly responding to their needs. By reallocating IT staff time and purchasing only the cloud services you need, when you need them, you may also be able to reduce your operational costs.

Easy scalability

When your email is in the cloud, it's easy to scale up or down, adding and removing users as your needs and circumstances change.



HOW CLOUD-BASED STORAGE CAN BENEFIT YOUR BUSINESS

One of the most valuable features of cloud storage for SMBs is that it synchronizes across different devices and platforms, making your company data available anywhere. You're always looking at the latest version of a document, no matter how you access it.

Businesses also need to know that their data will be kept secure and private when it is stored in the cloud, and that they will still control the access to their information.

The benefits of cloud storage include:

Productivity

By supporting worker mobility and remote access to company data, cloud storage increases employee productivity. According to a March 2014 Dimensional Research study of 300 SMB IT professionals, 97 percent of those surveyed said that anytime, anywhere access to data and applications makes employees more effective.²

Collaboration

By providing a central repository for company information that employees can access from any location and on any device, cloud storage enhances collaboration. According to a report by IBM, more than two-thirds of chief information officers (CIOs) from top-performing companies see internal collaboration and communication as the keys to innovation.³

Data security

More than half of IT professionals name security as their main reason for using cloud applications, and 85 percent of current cloud users say they are confident in their provider's ability to ensure a secure environment. Only about 20 percent of SMBs believe that data is less secure in the cloud than in their on-premises systems.⁴ Cloud storage companies have teams of experts who focus full-time on providing state-of-the-art data security for their customers.

Compliance

Some SMBs work in healthcare, financial services, or other industries that require strict compliance with various industry and government regulations. Cloud storage providers have compliance experts to help them keep abreast of the latest rules and regulations. Providers also adopt a range of state, federal, and international standards to give their customers the assurance they need.

² *Business Applications and Tablets: A Survey of IT Professionals at Small and Mid-Sized Organizations*, Dimensional Research, March 2014

³ *2011 Global CIO Study*, IBM, 2011

⁴ *Why Small Businesses are Flying to the Cloud*, Frevvo, 2015

Data privacy

Many businesses are concerned about data privacy. They worry that cybercriminals and government agencies may gain access to their data if it is in the cloud. If you choose a leading cloud provider with strong privacy policies, that fear is unfounded. Your data may be stored in the cloud, but your IT team manages access to the information and sets up rights and restrictions. Your company is the sole owner of your data. Some cloud storage providers have even adopted an international standard for cloud privacy, which establishes a uniform international approach to protecting privacy for personal data stored in the cloud.

No data loss

One major benefit of using cloud storage is that you will no longer fear losing any data should a natural disaster hit your offices. You also have the same assurance if one of your employees' devices goes missing. Your cloud-stored data won't be affected. With online storage, you won't have to worry about losing your important documents.

Cost savings

On-premises servers are expensive to run and sometimes even more expensive to maintain. By outsourcing your data storage, you can save a lot of money on hardware and maintenance costs.

To learn more about the benefits of cloud-based email and storage, and how Microsoft can help your business, visit office.com/business.