CLOUD COMPUTING: A New Environment for Records Management
By Wayne James, I.T. Consultant

Cloud computing is the next stage in the internet's evolution that provides the means through which everything from power to computing infrastructure, applications, business processes to personal collaboration can be delivered to you as a service wherever and whenever you need it.

The term "Cloud Computing" came from the old "cloud" diagrams that the telephone companies used to show phone lines going into the cloud. It included the central switch routers to the various states and locations into and out of the cloud. This simplified how the entire phone system was connected by not showing too much detail of all the hardware switches and phone lines.

Cloud computing today has four essential characteristics:

1. elasticity and the ability to scale up and down
2. self-service provisioning and automatic deprovisioning
3. application programming interface billing
4. metering of service usage in a pay-as-you-go model.

This flexibility is what is attracting individuals and businesses to move to the Cloud. The world of the Cloud has lots of participants such as:

- End users who do not have to know anything about the underlying technology.
- Business managers who need to take responsibility for the governance of data or services living in a Cloud.
- Cloud service providers who must provide a predictable and guaranteed service level and security to all their constituents.
- Cloud service providers who are responsible for IT assets, maintenance and service.

Cloud computing is offered in different forms: public clouds, private clouds, and hybrid clouds which combine both public and private. Cloud computing can completely change the way companies use technology
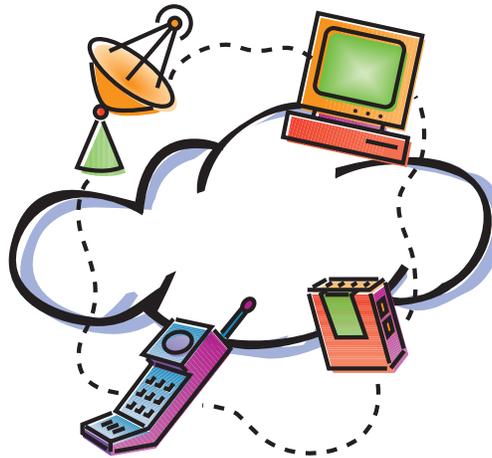
to service customers, partners, and suppliers. Some businesses, such as Google and Amazon have many of their IT resources in the Cloud. Other companies such as IBM and Microsoft have Hybrid Clouds with some systems in the Cloud and some on their distributed system. They sell both of these services. The Cloud eliminates many of the complex constraints from the traditional computing environment, including space, time, power, and cost. The cost savings allows the client to pay only for what they need, similar to a Water and Power bill. These cost savings are substantial for the small and medium enterprises. They do not have to buy extra computers, upgrades, hire expensive technical personnel, or purchase software.

Records Managers should be part of the team when evaluating Cloud computing vendors for their organization. Technical standards for the computer hardware and communications will be processed by the Information Systems departments. However, Records Managers understand records, security, retention, etc. and bring value to the team. Key points to ask a vendor are:

- How is the data stored for immediate and archival access?
- How is the data being modified at other computer terminals? If data is modified, is the original document being modified when it is saved or is it a copy?

- Client Security
  - Is there authentication by user encryption and digital certificates?
  - Are encryption keys unique to the business account? Is the data coded to protect your information assets?
  - What is the cost difference of data secured to the 99.99% level as opposed to the 99.9999% level?
- Federal and Other Business Requirements
  - How do you handle compliance with the rules of:
    - SAS70 (American Institute of Certified Public Accounts number 70 Report)
    - HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996)
    - PSQIA (Privacy and Security Rules and Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act)
    - PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards) which includes social security numbers.

INSIDE ...

COMPLIANCE CORNER

EMPLOYEE CELL PHONE USE MAY LEAD TO LIABILITY

The boundary lines of work have been increasingly expanded, with employees working and making cell phone calls on the way to and from their homes, at home, while on vacation, and while enjoying recreational activities.

It is likely that many of us have used cell phones while driving. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about one in three of all drivers use a cell phone for outgoing or incoming calls while driving.

Recently, employers have been targeted when their employees are involved in car accidents while using cell phones. Accident victims argue that employers should be liable for not taking public safety into account when encouraging and profiting from an employee's cell phone use. Recent cases include:

1. A jury verdict against Dyke Industries ordering them to pay $21 million to a woman who was hit by a salesman for the company while on his phone.
2. A case involving a stockbroker for Smith Barney resulting in a $500,000 settlement to the victim.
3. The State of Hawaii agreed to pay $1.5 million as its share of liability for an accident involving a state employee who allegedly was talking on her cell phone while driving.

Employers fear that these lawsuits will constitute a growing trend and a costly implication for businesses across the nation. Fear of rising lawsuits and concern for safety of employees and the public has lead many employers to prohibit employees from using cell phones while driving. An official written policy on cell phone use is highly recommended, especially in those businesses where employees spend a substantial amount of time commuting or traveling on business.

Employers should require employees to sign a written acknowledgement that they have read and received the cell phone policy. This is a developing area that counsel should monitor for issues of employer liability.

Source: Elizabeth Ison,
Human Resources Fact Finder, December 2010

CRAFT A COMPANY POLICY ON TWITTER & FACEBOOK USAGE

Employees using Twitter, Facebook and other social-networking sites are creating liability and public relation risks with their rants, raves and company gossip – even if they are logging in at home.

Advice: Draft a policy on your organization's expectations for employees' use of those tools. Address usage, disclosure of company information and consequences of disparaging comments about the company or co-workers. Some firms set their networks to block access to Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and other social-networking sites.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, 38.2% employee productivity is lost due to the use of social media at work.

TAKE THE TENSION OUT OF PERFORMANCE REVIEW TALKS

If you give feedback to your employees on a consistent basis, a formal performance review should not be an overly stressful experience. Yet for employees and managers alike, performance evaluations frequently cause anxiety and tension.

It doesn't have to be that way. Here are some strategies for keeping performance evaluation discussions stress-free and productive.

- **Give employees an early look at your completed review form.** Don't wait for the review meeting. Give the employee a copy of your review an hour or two before you begin. This gives employees a chance to read through the entire document, digest what you've said, note some questions to ask, and prepare for the discussion. You'll prevent misunderstandings and defensive reactions caused by the need for an immediate response.

- **Don't focus exclusively on the paperwork.** The review document should serve as a springboard for discussion, not as a substitute for the discussion itself. Begin the meeting by asking the employee for his or her response to your evaluation, and answer any questions that come up. Build the conversation from there, and then you can go into the finer points of the review form.

- **Allow enough time for a full discussion.** This is an important meeting, so do not rush it. Avoid scheduling reviews back to back so you can run through them all quickly, and don't make any appointments that absolutely have to start right at the end of an employee's review. Give yourself and the employee some extra time, if necessary.

- **Seek understanding, not agreement.** Do not try to force the employee to agree with every point, as long as you can back up your comments and ratings. You don't want to get into an argument. Remember that reviews are about the future, not the past, so use the discussion to look ahead at what the employee needs to do next.
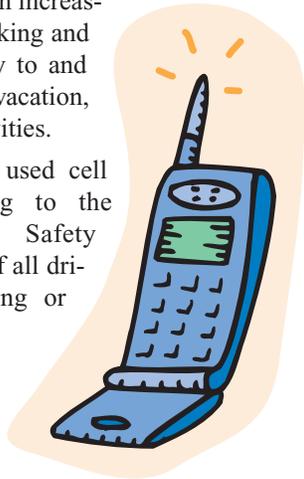
TIP FOR INCREASING EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Employees work harder when they see that you are working harder. Setting a good example boosts commitment. Keep establishing new goals with specific deadlines. Give employees recognition whether or not you can afford raises, bonuses or other material rewards. Be fair to everyone, including people you may not like. Unfair treatment leads to resentment and harms productivity.

CLOUD

- ISO-27001 (International Organization for Standardization)
- FIPS 140-2 (Federal Information Processing Standard 140-2). This is a government computer standard used to accredit cryptographic modules.
- Does the end user's interface comply with clause 1194.21 of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act? This is the Federal Government Act for Electronic and Information Technologies Standards.
- Data Access
  - How are password and other accesses handled?
  - If you offer your own suite of office products (such as world processing), is there a way that altered records are only stored back on the Cloud Computer and not a client's personal computer. This could become an issue for business travelers if the computer is stolen.
  - Is the shredding permanent?
  - Can records and files be masked from selected clients?
  - What is the process for e-Discovery actions and sustaining chain of custody?
- Governance and Compliance
  - Do you know what country your data is being stored?
  - What are the recordkeeping compliance laws in that country?
  - Are policies and procedures in place?
- Contract Review
  - What specific services will your organization receive?
  - What type of constraints has the vendor imposed?
- Vendor Facility Security
  - Is the data mirrored to a replica facility?
  - Is there 24-hour guard service on site?
  - Does the site have firefighting equipment?
  - Is there internal and external monitoring 24/7?
  - Do you have external accreditation from the Uptime Institute?

Cloud computing is here to stay. Before going into the Cloud, do your homework by creating a set of questions for the vendors. Remember, your data is your most important asset. Be sure it is protected properly!

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SHARON HYDER, CMC, CRM ANSWERS YOUR MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS

Do you have any suggestions for public speaking? I always find it difficult making presentations to management.

Most of us get butterflies in our stomach before we have to speak. Preparation may be the key to a good presentation, but emergencies happen. If you're asked to face an audience with little notice, take a deep breath and keep these pointers in mind.

- **HONESTY**. Don't be afraid to tell the audience you're improvising and need their help. Most people love to root for the underdog and they will appreciate your self-deprecating candor.
- **ENERGY**. Smile, speak up, and let your body language say, "I may not be fully prepared, but I'm going to give it my best shot." Make your points with enthusiasm and your audience will respond in kind. Then you can feed off their energy.
- **CONVICTION**. Be passionate about your subject. Say what you believe; believe what you say. Show that you're a person who is intimately familiar with the subject, not just someone who's memorized data for a speech.
- **EMOTION**. No matter how compelling, facts and figures quickly fade from memory. But if you touch an emotional chord with a personal story or generate laughter with a humorous anecdote, your point will have staying power.
- **RAPPORT**. Make your audience active participants rather than passive listeners. If you're talking about a particular project, mention team members by name. Ask questions, then ad lib from the replies. Create a relaxed, interactive experience for attendees.
- **KNOWLEDGE**. Read publications that help you stay up-to-date on the latest business and industry trends. That way you'll always be ready to call forth current information that further demonstrates knowledge of your subject.
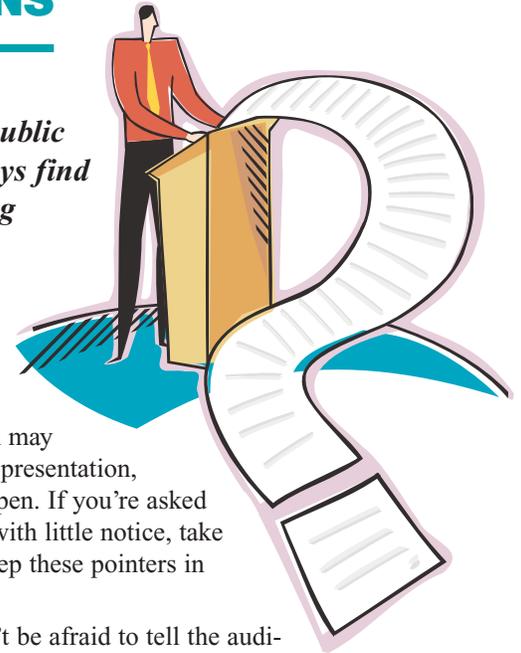
FAMOUS QUOTE

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

— Albert Einstein

TRENDS...

DATA HELPING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

The intelligent use of data is driving major changes to health care. From patient treatment, to the government's role in regulation and reimbursement, there are many factors pushing for and through the suggested modifications.

Large healthcare organizations already use business intelligence and analytic tools as a standard part of their financial and administration processes to streamline billing, manage financial performance, allocate staff and equipment, better manage patients as they move through the organization, and uncover revenue opportunities", according to *Information Week*. They are also starting to use these tools to improve their insight into the effectiveness of patient treatments and to move toward the quality healthcare objectives and pay-for-performance metrics that are becoming an integral part of federal funding and reimbursement.

Healthcare industry business intelligence was a $600 million market in 2009, and it will grow faster than any other business intelligence vertical industry in the next five years. Increased focus on financial performance management, labor productivity, cost control, and analysis of billing, payments, bed occupancy rates, and patient treatment will drive that growth.

Dan Vesset, an IDC Analyst, predicts a 10% annual growth in applications that use business intelligence and analytics to manage patient interactions.

It is anticipated that business intelligence and analytics will have an increased impact on clinical decision making. Doctors and other healthcare providers will have the ability to analyze treatments based on several factors, including who facilitated the treatments, what options were chosen, and when they were given. In addition, they will also be able to look at budgets and personnel and determine how those items affected patient outcomes and recoveries.

Source: Information Week, December 2010

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