

Construction finds its place in the cloud

Executive Summary

The next wave of momentum moving construction business management forward with technology is the initiative to shift resources out of internally managed IT departments and into externally hosted environments in the cloud. Cloud computing brings convenient, affordable access to construction accounting, project management, estimating software, and mobile solutions that is causing construction companies to rethink their entire IT strategy. The full value of the power the cloud has to offer is enabling a wide variety of users easy access to their applications from wherever they are. Different than just a specific application, this is an important piece in achieving the cloud's potential.

Why Cloud Computing?

For construction companies, cloud computing delivers several distinct advantages, including easier access for workers, and smaller expenditure for IT resources, hardware, and maintenance, as well as efficiencies related to those expenses.

Aside from easy access to your construction accounting, project management and estimating solutions (for your end users), the advantages of cloud computing to the organization as a whole include:

- Elimination of hefty capital expense and saving costs by using software and hardware without buying (capitalizing) it. Smaller contractors, especially, find better pricing with cloud solutions compared to traditional on-premises software and IT resources, and contractors of any size can deploy new applications faster.
- Greatly enhanced security because backup and recovery are inherently part of the cloud solution. Instead of worrying about or dealing with downtime and other related hardware and software maintenance, you can focus on how your IT function will propel your construction business forward.
- More speed and flexibility than typical storage systems and the ability to scale up or down quickly, which is helpful for workforce and staff changes when projects begin or end.
- Increased collaboration with external partners and enhanced team collaboration and productivity for an important competitive edge.

Living in the Cloud

Let's really break down what it ultimately means for business when it comes to living in the cloud. People have become so immersed in their online experiences that their desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc. are

simply becoming gateways to their real computer: the Internet. It is the Internet – the network we now refer to as “the cloud,” and arguably the only network that matters – that has become and is the user’s main data and document management vehicle, or computer.

Data and applications are no longer stored on the hard drive, but instead accessed from an outsourced, managed applications service provider via a thin client. It’s clear that cloud computing is more evolutionary than revolutionary, having evolved from successful prior experiences over several decades, and that adopting cloud computing today is neither a radical nor a risky move. Instead the cloud is becoming ubiquitous in both our personal and business lives.

Why Would a Business Choose Cloud Computing?

The answers to that question depend on the needs of the business. But for many, it’s worth considering that cloud computing supports business in a variable economy. In today’s tough business and economic climate, if the IT resource can speed up the implementation of vital line-of-business software, improve its management of a growing stockpile of valuable data, and/or decrease computer infrastructure costs, then it can have a vital impact on the success of the organization.

Ideally, organizations should be able to obtain the necessary IT resources when and as they’re needed, paying only for what’s used. In a healthy economy, this can support growth and speed up new initiatives. In a bad economy, it can mean survival as it can foster efficiency

Interest in cloud computing has been fueled by the need to do more with less, and it has been made a reality in part by recent advances in fiber optics and storage technologies and the availability of low-cost, space-saving hardware that enables the construction of mammoth new data centers that are more environmentally friendly and more cost-efficient than ever before.

Cloud computing represents a tremendous opportunity because it allows businesses to use less resources to deliver results faster and cheaper.

Moving to cloud computing is appealing to small to mid-size businesses as well as growing businesses. Growing companies typically have limited IT resources. Cloud solutions eliminate the need to maintain on-premises hardware and software. Cloud systems also enable user mobility, since workers can access the application from any computer or device with Internet access. Cloud solutions are also highly scalable, enabling growing companies to accelerate growth without needing to invest capital in technology or add people. Cloud computing represents a tremendous opportunity because it allows businesses to use less resources to deliver results faster

and cheaper. Gartner reports that the cloud is the number one technology affecting IT. Forrester has found that over 50% of companies plan to increase their cloud spending over the next 12 months.

How Does This Relate To Construction?

The concept of cloud computing has grown in popularity, and is now seen as a way for organizations to mitigate some of the risks associated with hosting certain IT capabilities themselves. Most construction project teams are temporary, fragmented, multidisciplinary, and multi-company. Colocation of teams can be costly and disruptive, but creating fast, secure, and reliable IT infrastructures is also challenging and expensive, particularly as these often have to be dismantled at the project's end.

The benefits construction companies can realize include:

- **Ease** – Though often overlooked, this is “easily” the most powerful benefit. Since Viewpoint manages all software upgrades, service packs, and fixes, you can be confident that you are always on the latest and greatest version, while simultaneously relieving your IT staff of the cost and burden of managing your mission critical software.
- **Cost** – Most vendors operate on a subscription basis, charging monthly, quarterly, or annually for their services, so expenditure on software, hosting and support is more predictable. With less investment in hardware, there is less depreciation of company assets and immediate expensing of operational costs.
- **Flexibility** – New software can be implemented more quickly, with training and ongoing support delivered on demand. Little or no capital outlay is required on new hardware or software, as access is usually via a standard internet browser. Pay-as-you-go services can be turned on and off quickly, and processing power, memory, bandwidth, etc. can be scaled up or down as needed.
- **Reliability and Security** – Software services are provided 24/7 from highly resilient data centers with security, back-up, and secondary systems that would be difficult even for the largest corporates to replicate. Cloud storage offers better disaster recovery, with automatic back-up and improved security.
- **Risk Transfer** – Responsibility for ensuring constant availability of data to a project team is transferred to a specialist third party. This third party is less likely to become embroiled in any construction disputes which may arise between the construction businesses, providing higher levels of neutrality and trust.

Conclusion

Using the cloud to grant unfettered access to accounting, estimating, and other critical software applications— Cloud computing represents a tremendous opportunity because it allows businesses to use less resources to deliver results faster and cheaper the tools construction companies need to do their job well—may very well be the next stage in the cloud's life cycle. The maturity of cloud computing may just be underway as this



new economy has companies searching for more effective ways to manage IT, data, software applications, and computing infrastructure. Depending on the company's size, geographic scope and reliance on IT, cloud computing offers a broad spectrum of solutions to meet the IT challenges companies face.

While a large company seeking to offload stress from its data center may look to a cloud solution, a very small company may use it to act bigger with enhanced data security and more collaborative and mobile IT solutions.

Decidedly Different

Viewpoint provides fully managed solutions, not simply hosting or co-locating equipment.

This is a fundamentally different level of service than hosting companies that lead with low price, charge for every enhancement, and don't have the expertise or depth to stand behind what they're selling.

In contrast, Viewpoint provides all updates, patches, maintenance, and optimization – from data center to end user. Viewpoint stands behind our Cloud computing reliability and security – one call to Viewpoint for all your support, whether for a Viewpoint software application or related to the Cloud.

This is the best way to support our customers and ensure that Viewpoint solutions and related applications are actually running, maintained, optimized, and available..

Viewpoint stands behind our Cloud computing reliability and security

Viewpoint's Cloud platform is designed to offer our customers:

- Supreme accessibility—MS Office, Project Management, Estimating, Email, and mobile solutions.
- An alternative to having to buy, license, configure, optimize, and back-up Viewpoint software and related software applications.
- 99.99% uptime so you can focus on your construction business, not your IT infrastructure.
- Device and operating system independence for all your mobile and desktop devices.
- The opportunity to move some or all systems into a private Cloud designed and supported by Viewpoint.
- Industrial-grade back-up solutions for critical business data.

Viewpoint Can Help

Viewpoint's Cloud technology offers a simplified and flexible IT experience that shifts the burden and associated headaches of upgrades, maintenance, and backups from your business to Viewpoint so you can focus on



what you do best – building great projects. Our Cloud technology is a web-based desktop that hosts your other business applications, without any downloads or plugins. Simply accessing the website remotely produces an experience that looks, feels, behaves, and responds as if you're in the office. This simplified access, available at any time and any place saves you the time and resources ultimately needed to make every project more profitable.

For more information, please call [800.333.3197](tel:800.333.3197) or visit www.viewpoint.com. Viewpoint customers please contact your account manager.



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