



TECHNOLOGY

Manage risk with the private cloud

By Heinan Landa

Here's a technology term you may be familiar with: cloud computing. But in case it's new to you, cloud computing refers to the practice of delivering software and computer applications, servers, storage space, and other IT-related capabilities to end users by a third entity—or "the cloud." Cloud computing has a number of advantages, including saving money, but as with everything, it also has its negatives. Specifically, public cloud computing presents some significant security and reliability risks. The solution for associations may be the private cloud.

What the Private Cloud Is and How It Works

Private cloud computing provides the same benefits as public cloud computing but reduces security and reliability threats. Instead of all data, servers, appli-

cations, and so forth being stored in a cloud at Amazon or Google, they are stored on an organization's own network. The private-cloud technology—a combination of cloud computing and virtualization—allows associations to bring the cloud safely to their office or a dedicated data center.

In addition, the private cloud-computing model lets small and mid-sized associations implement public cloud-computing principles in a secure, reliable, and scalable way—providing hardware and software services within their own networks. This virtualized environment consists of a large, centrally managed storage area network for all virtual servers and workstations and one or more powerful physical servers on an organization's network. This physical equipment can virtualize all the other servers (or even workstations) an organization needs. Managed by a trusted, local IT partner, this private cloud-computing model allows an organization to increase or decrease resources upon demand, provides a high level of redundancy, and delivers all the benefits of cloud computing—without the security concerns—to the organization.

Benefits of the Private Cloud

With the private cloud computing model, organizations receive all of the benefits of traditional cloud computing with these additional ones:

Ease of integration. The private cloud integrates readily with existing networks, providing much faster access than any internet connection could.

Ease of management. With private cloud computing, a technology provider can solve many challenges remotely, including adding servers or standardizing workstation applications.

Enhanced reliability and security. The private cloud resides inside an organization's network, so data never leaves the building. It is as secure as an association having its own hardware in its server room. In addition, applications will be stronger, because associations are not relying solely on the internet for operability and bandwidth.

Decreased downtime. Working within a private cloud means continuous virtualization of servers and workstations. This means that if a virtual server fails, an organization can gain access to the backup of that server within minutes, which means minimal data loss for an association.

Cost effectiveness. With private cloud computing, IT costs become a monthly operational expense based on usage, not a series of capital expenses, which makes the budget planning process much simpler.

The private cloud-computing model is continuing to become an option for small and mid-sized organizations. Even better is that it is easier than most associations may think to set up and implement. Before you begin planning your next major systems upgrade, consider how private cloud computing might be the solution.

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