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How Cloud Can Change Your Architecture Landscape

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The changing needs of the profession

The architect, planning and design professions never stand still. The way projects are delivered has required constant change for the business.

The sustainability of your practice now relates more to the way operations are managed, than brilliant design capabilities. The need to meet constant legislation changes, manage staff expectations and present a profitable business is challenging. Add into the mix the increased reliance on technology, and now practice owners need to be 'masters of all'.

What practices are doing to survive

While some practices are struggling to differentiate their services in a competitive market, others are thriving. Why the difference?

When times are tight there are a few strategies you can consider to help you get ahead:

1) Differentiate yourself through specialisation.
2) Increase your business efficiencies.
3) Get global…

Smart practices are doing all three at once.

The role of cloud computing in business success

Cloud has a role to play in both increases to business efficiency and globalisation.

Selecting the right cloud based business applications for your practice will not only increase the efficiency and transparency of your business operations, it will also reduce the overheads associated with traditional

software and infrastructure up keep. No more backups, disaster recovery plans, servers or infrastructure costs, and application providers proactively manage software enhancements and updates.

Having 'anywhere, anytime' access to your business applications enables a practice to market itself as a global specialist with the knowledge staff can work anywhere, anytime on any device. Whether physical or virtual, an office can be opened in any country and have staff productive and 'connected' within hours.

What should I look for in a cloud application?

If you're ready to, or have already started looking at cloud solutions, here is some information to consider during the evaluation process.

1) Robust Security Model

The provider must be able to demonstrate an enterprise level security model. Good experienced cloud providers know their share price is directly related to their security model and will hold your data and the system in a highly secure environment.

2) Multi-site Hosting / Always Backed up / Always On

Look for solutions that have an optimal hosting environment with redundancy and multi locations (e.g. up to 3 separate hosting centres globally).

Good cloud providers will guarantee the system and your data are constantly backed up and nearly always available. This can be down to the minutes. Many providers will also have the five 9's reliability. 99.999% uptime. That speaks for itself. Not to many 'on premise' software solutions in small to medium businesses can guarantee this.

3) Multi-tenancy architecture

True cloud providers have built their product from the ground up specifically as a cloud solution. This means they've designed the solution to cater for multiple tenants or users. Just like the landlord in a block of flats, the solution provider will look after the building, the common areas, and the externals and upgrade the entire environment when needed. You as the owner of one flat, can paint the walls any colour you like, place your furniture as you like it and do as you please in your flat, however you will receive the benefits of the landlord implemented structural upgrades and other benefits that are added over time.

4) Subscription Based

A subscription model gives you the benefit and flexibility of being able to scale your investment to your business needs. Each and every staff member's cost of technology can be known and budgeted for. You might be surprised to know that many of these systems cost less than a cup of coffee per day per staff member. When times are good, you buy more licenses, and when the market's tough, you peg it back to the basics. This puts your technology investment in line with your Profit & Loss.

The maximum 'lock in' period should be 12 months. Good cloud providers are kept on their toes by the knowledge you can cancel your subscription. Unlike traditional 'on premise' software that once purchased is typically used for many years, cloud providers are constantly needing to be provide additional features and functions otherwise there is the threat you may walk.

5) Access anywhere / anytime / any device

Good cloud providers are technology agnostic. They build their solutions to work within any Internet browser and operating system

and they're also accessible mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones. And they are always on…

6) You own your data

It's yours and you can get it 'out' if needed. You own your data and your specific configuration. You should also be able to extract your data in an easy format such as CSV or Microsoft Excel files.

These are just some of the things we look for when doing our due diligence on cloud offerings… and you should too.

I want to know more – who can help?

So you understand how cloud computing can benefit your practice, and we've given you information to help when evaluating cloud solutions. If you still need help, your next challenge is deciding WHO can help.

While you may have a great relationship with the company that fixes your computers, or provides you with network and systems administration services, you need to engage the services a business technology specialist with expertise in true cloud applications. Get your cloud investment wrong and it can lead to very grey skies.

That's where **Practice Design** comes in. We can provide you with the services of industry experts in cloud computing.

Call us on **1300 657 323** or email information@practicedesign.com.au to set up an appointment to discuss your needs.