



The Cloud – The Next Revolution in Computing

The Digital Imaging Association offered members and guests a unique opportunity to hear from the specialists what Cloud Computing is all about, how the Cloud impacts all aspects of computing, Cloud computing's current and anticipated uses. It is statistically and arguably the biggest shift that computing has seen.

What is the Cloud?

“Cloud computing is the ultimate global pooling of resources – rent only what you need (bandwidth, storage, processing power) in per minute increments. Pay attention, print service providers! This is an evolution that can and will have a direct impact on your business...”

- Jennifer Matt “Whattheythink”

The Digital Imaging Association presenters opened the skies. Ron Lokaisingh, VP of Jump I.T. a systems integrator and reseller, reviewed Cloud Computing segments and their related applications. Slava Apel, CEO of Amazing Print, a software developer of print technologies, offered his well-studied insight of the Cloud to attendees. The following offers a brief summary of the depth of information provided to those who attending the presentation.

The Segments

Ron Lokaisingh broke the power of the technology down to two segments: Private Cloud, and Public Cloud.

Basically, said Lokaisingh, the Private Cloud is a dedicated server or machine that is specific to one client. The Public Cloud is a multi-tenant architecture meaning that many customers have password protected access to a server. Essentially what both segments are at their core is software as a service – SaaS – residing on robust servers and storage hardware either on site or at data centres anywhere in the world. On the customer side, it means no upfront investment in servers or software licensing. On the provider side, with just one app to maintain, costs are low compared to conventional hosting – and those costs can be shared by multiple users.

Examples of multi-tenant clouds are Google Apps, Salesforce.com, and Amazon.com, to name but a few. As with these examples, Cloud Computing encompasses subscription-based or pay-per-use service accessed in real time over the internet. A quick ROI definition is that these services offer a way to increase capacity, functionalities, or capabilities on the fly without investing in capital equipment or software – essentially continually upgrading and extending your IT capabilities.

Leveraging Cloud Computing

DIA meeting attendees heard Ron Lokaisingh explain how Web service providers offer application programming interfaces that enable developers to exploit functionality over the Internet, rather than delivering full blown applications. Why buy technology when you can get what you need with you need it. Some business management examples range from payroll processing, integrated Google Maps, credit card processing services, email hosting, data backup, archived storage, virus protection, disaster recovery, helpdesk support – and many others.

It's not about where your computing is located. It's about how it's run, and the expertise of who is running it. Also, it turns a capital expenditure into an operating expense typically paid on a monthly basis.



Cloud Computing cont'd...

Pick a Way to Pay and Calculate the ROI

Slava Apel talked further about the Cloud's payment options and the documented returns. The options are free – Apel tries to do as much of that in his own business as possible, pay-as-you-go – truly paying only for what you use, monthly – offering the ability to define requirements and budget for them. Apel advised, that according to a recent Cloud Computing Report from Gartner, over 70% of IT staff's time is spent on maintenance. Any of the public cloud solutions eliminates most of that. Another statistic from Telegraph Media group shows that a mobile employee is 2.8 times more effective after using cloud-based apps. According to a Radicati Group study in 2008, companies with on-premise email solutions averaged from 30 to 60 minutes of unscheduled downtime and an additional 36 to 90 minutes of planned downtime per month. Cloud computing documents less – if not zero – downtime for subscribers.

In addition to the above productivity factors, there are the real costs of hardware, software, power, physical space, IT staff, and continual upgrades. Apel suggested that DIA attendees seriously consider buying service as a product instead – the ultimate outsourcing. Also remember, said Apel, if you own it you are responsible.

Some Pros and Cons

Apel highlighted things to keep in mind when considering going to the Cloud: privacy, reliability, security. Both Slava Apel and Ron Lokaisingh agreed that selecting a proven service provider significantly reduces any risk associated with the three points noted above. As an example, Google has been operating in the skies for over 10 years, leveraging their own power and innovation to offer a global infrastructure, acquiring the hardware, developing the software, and hiring the best technologists to facilitate it. DIA attendees agreed that in the cloud, data can be more secure and backed up more frequently, offering true peace of mind in accessible off-site data storage.

Apel cited printing industry examples of the successful use of Cloud Computing:

- FedEx Office outsources to Vista Print
- BCT dealers are using BCT Cloud
- Sir Speedy uses Mimeo Cloud

He concluded by encouraging the DIA audience to migrate to the cloud. Printers, he said, will benefit measurably by storing production and business data on a cloud that hosts this data across multiple centres. He strongly recommends migrating email hosting to Cloud. Pay less for collaboration. Pay less for maintenance. Pay less for support. And there are statistics to back this up.

About the DIA

The Digital Imaging Association holds regularly scheduled educational sessions that offer attendees a dependable way to stay current with the industry. The DIA achieves this by asking experts in various fields to address topics of interest to the membership. On behalf of the attendees, DIA President Rebecca Buffi thanked the presenters for their explicative information.

Become a member of the Digital Imaging Association today. The privilege of membership enables companies to send as many employees as they deem appropriate to each informational session at no additional charge above the low cost of membership. Contact Marg Macleod, Association Manager 416-482-2223 or marg@digitalimagingassoc.ca. As a member of the DIA, you're not just a name on a list. You become part of a network of professionals dedicated to the strength and future of the industry.