

Sky's the limit?

As businesses look to the skies for better IT provision, the question is: can cloud computing really deliver?



(l-r) Sharon Pope, Chwarae Teg; Andy Green, Excellence IT; Judy Leering, Chwarae Teg; Andy Beer, Excellence IT

It's the latest trend. And, according to industry experts, cloud computing – remote data storage – is here to stay. "Roughly a third of all businesses are now using or considering the need for cloud services," says Andy Beer, Director of the IT support services company Excellence IT. "These aren't just large, cutting-edge enterprises," Andy Beer adds. "Cloud computing has just as much to offer smaller businesses. In fact any organisation looking to cut hardware costs and increase worker flexibility stands to benefit."

With access to email, work documents, databases, business software, computer systems and more provided via the internet rather than a local area network, the needs of today's mobile workers are better served by cloud computing, according to Excellence IT. "Workforces now demand access to their work whenever and wherever they are," says Andy Beer.

"That can put a strain on internal IT infrastructure and broadband bandwidth, particularly for enterprises which have multiple sites. Business broadband connections are still not quick enough to take this increasing pressure and the cost of leased lines can be prohibitive for most. That's where cloud computing can make all the difference," Andy Beer says.

But it isn't faultless. One of the main criticisms levelled at cloud computing is that it isn't as flexible as locally installed ("on-premise") applications. "While cloud computing is great for 'utility' usage and lends itself well to off-the-shelf offerings like email systems, on-premise applications provide all the functionality that a business needs," says Andy Beer. "But where cloud computing wins is in efficiency; you don't get problems with slow or unreliable internet connections. And we know that those issues cause major problems particularly for mobile and home workers."

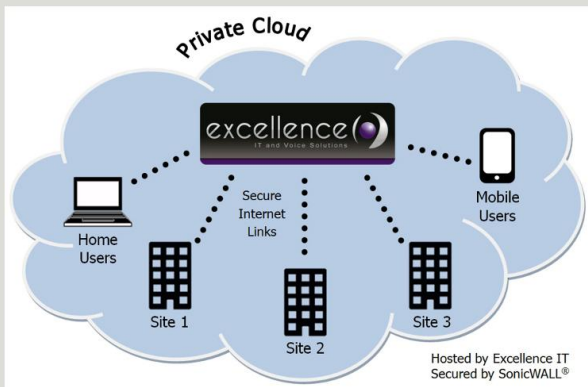
Caerphilly-based Excellence IT, which was established in 2002 by Andy Beer and Andy Green - two former Hewlett Packard consultants - has launched a service which it says provides the best of both worlds. The Private Cloud is designed specifically for SMEs.

WHAT IS THE PRIVATE CLOUD AND HOW DOES IT WORK

A fully managed cloud service which is seamlessly connected to a client's business network, providing the security and flexibility normally associated with on-premise applications.

Using this hybrid approach to cloud computing, companies can access key network resources using a superfast network connection on any device including iPhone, iPad, Android and other mobile devices.

The Private Cloud is created by secure links between a company's networks and Excellence IT's network. Data and systems are protected using best in class SonicWALL Unified Threat Management (UTM) and Continuous Data Protection (CDP) devices. And for maximum security and performance each company's Private Cloud



CHWARAE TEG PRIVATE CLOUD CASE STUDY

Chwarae Teg is a charity with headquarters in Cardiff and three regional offices throughout Wales. The organisation was faced with the challenge of providing 53 mobile staff with a centralised way of accessing and sharing information. Excellence IT managed a project to move Chwarae Teg from standard Windows-based file access to a centralised Microsoft SharePoint solution.

The SharePoint software is now hosted on Excellence IT's Private Cloud infrastructure and provides high speed access to Chwarae Teg's information from branch offices, mobile workers and home workers.

Judy Leering of Chwarae Teg said: "With the broadband speeds at our offices, hosting SharePoint ourselves wasn't workable. We quickly decided on a hosted or cloud-based service but needed a solution that fitted in flawlessly with our existing network and working practices. Excellence IT's Private Cloud offering and fully managed service satisfied all our criteria and has been working successfully since July 2010"

applications are stored in their own virtual network and are not shared with any other customers. It's a cost effective option too. There are very small upfront set-up costs – no expensive server to buy, for example – just a monthly fee to cover hardware hire, licences and full managed support.

We think the end of problematic business broadband is in sight," says Andy Beer. "There are various ways in which we can optimise the data connections between our Private Cloud and a client's business premises, for instance, to improve internet speed and reliability. The options are out there. Cloud computing is a hugely exciting concept; now it's time for businesses to get on board."

For more information or consultancy on how the Private Cloud could work for you, contact:

Andy Beer or Andy Green
Tel: 029 20 887362
www.excellence-it.co.uk/privatecloud