Is Your Business Ready for the Cloud?

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A great deal has been said and written about the subject of cloud computing over the past several years. Many businesses are moving or already have moved to the cloud model, but what about your business? Is it time to move to the cloud? The appropriate answer to this difficult question rests firmly on the specific circumstances surrounding your business.

What Is Cloud Computing?

In a nutshell, cloud computing represents the delivery of data storage and computing as a service, rather than a product. Instead of thinking of these things in terms of products that you purchase and install on your computer or network (software) or physically in your place of business (data storage devices such as hard or optical drives, for example), the cloud represents the concept of remote access to these things. Applications and data are located on external servers and are

accessed remotely over a network, via any network accessible device (from a traditional computer to phone), typically using a browser or some sort of app.

Pros and Cons of the Cloud for Businesses
As is the case with just about everything, the cloud model has both potential advantages and disadvantages.

Pros

Savings: Depending on your businesses specific computing and network needs, you may find the cloud model provides significant monthly savings over a more traditional hardware/software model, particularly in the areas of Web hosting, e-mail and virus protection and periodic hardware upgrades.

Ease of Use, Maintenance and Collaboration: Some businesses find it easier to deal with applications over the cloud compared to the need to install software on microcomputers, for instance, or to upgrade software. In a cloud environment, these things are effectively taken care of externally. Additionally, access to your data, applications and services is available anywhere at any time, using any compatible device. And because of the ease of access, collaborating using the cloud is far easier than any traditional computing/data storage method.

Natural, Remote Data Backup: a cloud-based service removes the data from any local problems that might crop

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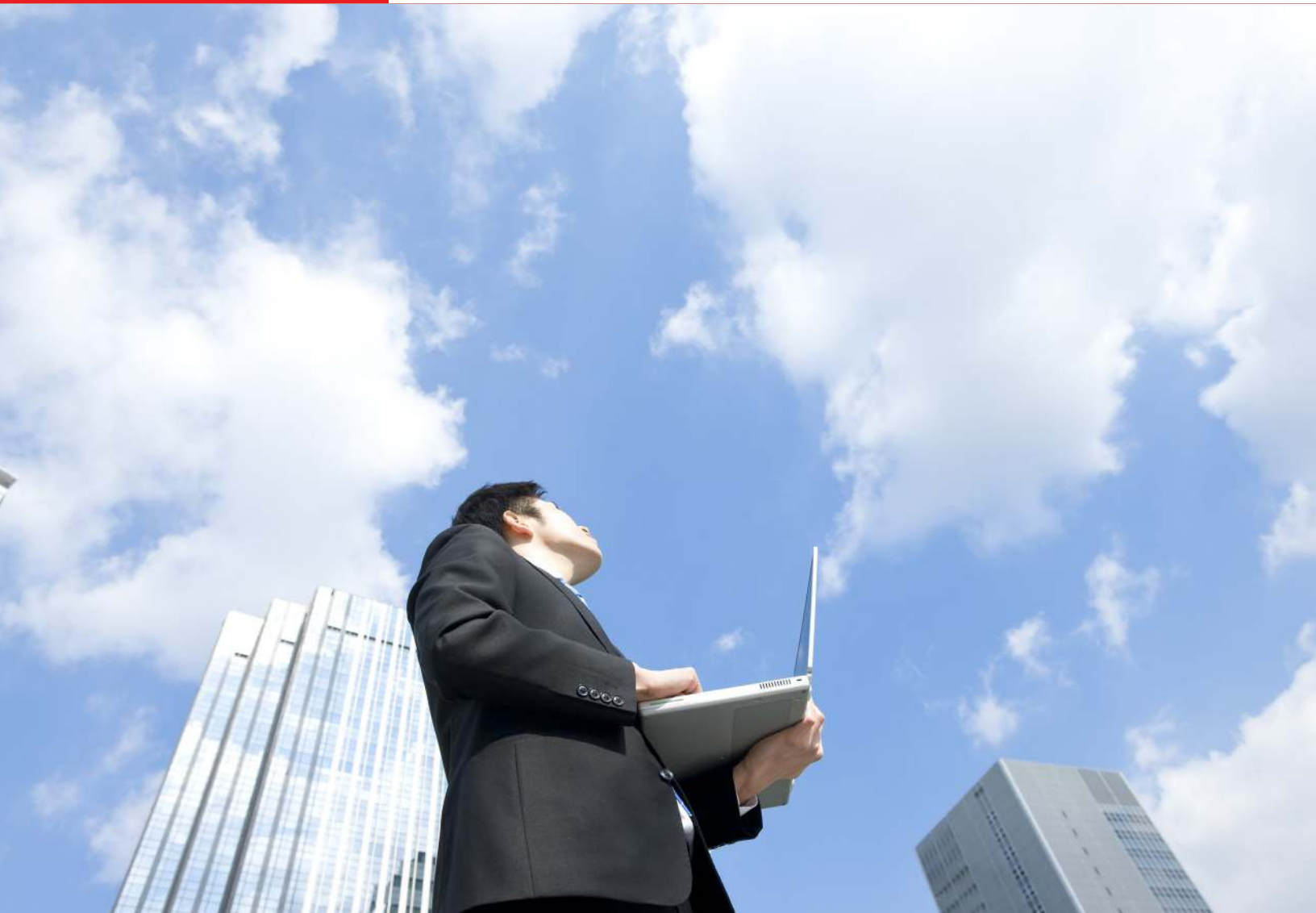
up and, in at least some cases, provides redundant backup capabilities as part of the service itself. A cloud approach can also provide an iterative backup to data that you choose to keep in house.

Cons

Security Concerns: While data isn't necessarily totally secure anywhere, problems with cloud security breaches have been well documented.

Privacy: Some people can't help but wonder how much information cloud companies are gathering about their customers and what they plan to do with it.

Service Availability: When a cloud company service goes down, access to the tools and data you need may be unavailable to you.

Service Robustness and Flexibility: What happens if your cloud provider gets out of the business? Will you be able to retrieve your data and will it be a simple matter to transfer it to another provider?

Seeking Advice

So is your business ready for the cloud? It's a tricky question to answer. You may want to discuss this question with a qualified computer consultant for advice about whether to take the plunge and, if the cloud is in your immediate future, suggestions about the best way to go about making the transition.

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