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**HOODSWEENEY**

## Head in the cloud

**Head in the Cloud  
but feet on the  
ground**

### **Hood Sweeney helps businesses navigate cloud computing options.**

As its name suggests, cloud computing allows organisations to soar above the physical capacity of their on-premise IT but a smart business avoids the zealous all-or-nothing approach of a new convert.

While the prospect of cost savings initially drove many businesses to take up cloud computing, other benefits in transforming their business have turned out to be more significant.

Cloud computing — using a network of remote servers hosted on the Internet rather than on-site servers to store, manage, and process data — is invaluable in removing business boundaries.

By allowing staff to access business systems from any internet-connected computer at any time, cloud computing enables businesses to be flexible and mobile, and to manage their risk of data loss more effectively.

As the Sydney Morning Herald has noted: "Two separate reports... independently reached the conclusion that cloud computing is now mainstream and is being adopted not simply for expediency and cost savings, but to meet strategic IT and business goals."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, relying solely on a cloud solution increases risk and using a cloud-based business model based on volume can compromise a more personal approach to business.

Hood Sweeney understands that the most successful organisations work out when to use a particular ICT solution and why before adopting it.

Here are some tips to help you ensure that your cloud strategy is right for you.

### **Tip 1: Align your strategies**

Ensure your ICT strategic planning is closely aligned to your business strategy. Will cloud computing deliver business benefit to the organisation and how will you measure your return on cloud investment (ROI)? Are you across the opportunities and risks associated with cloud computing?

## Tip 2: Know the cloud offerings available to you

Understand how the different cloud offerings might add value to your organisation before investing. Cloud options include the traditional "X as a service" offerings, Infrastructure (IaaS), Software (SaaS) or Platform (PaaS), as well as Communication (CaaS), Desktop (DaaS) and Backup (BaaS). Any of these, or a combination, may offer significant benefits.

## Tip 3: Understand the Consequences

If cloud solutions are to be productive, you'll need a sound internet connection. Your internet connection must be reliable and have sufficient capacity to that the cloud solutions can perform efficiently.

## Tip 4: Understand the Risks

Moving your information into the cloud has certain legislative and regulatory implications. The Australian Privacy Principles are clear on the treatment of personal and sensitive information. You must be confident that by releasing your information onto someone else's servers, you won't be breaching regulations. You'll need to actively manage Service Level Agreements with cloud service providers to mitigate the risks.

Your risk management strategy needs to factor in problems associated with losing control of your information. Consider issues such as: who owns your data; what are the host's service standards; who is the parent entity of the hosting company and does the location of your data breach data sovereignty laws. Consider what would happen if the hosting provider became insolvent and shut down its hosted data networks. Do you have business continuity plans in place to cope?

## Tip 5: Using the Cloud for Business Continuity

Cloud-based solutions can be a useful plank in your business continuity planning, providing a backup should your IT systems fail. These options include cloud-based data backup and restore, and disaster recovery failover systems that can be switched over in a very short timeframe after an incident. This will enable your organisation to remain up and running after a critical incident.

## Tip 6: Ensure platforms talk to each other

Ensure that your user devices (desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile phones) are compatible with any cloud solution you deploy. The key question is: which devices and applications will enhance your business capability? You should also consider adequate training for staff to ensure they are skilled in using systems effectively, and how to make your solutions intuitive for customers.

## In Summary

It's a complex decision for the layperson so it is important to have either the internal skills or a trusted partner to help ensure that you deploy the cloud solutions that support your business objectives.

Hood Sweeney can provide solid business and ICT strategic advice about the options and the issues, and can provide expert technical assistance to deliver solutions that will enhance your business.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smh.com.au/it-pro/cloud/cloud-computing-is-now-mainstream-and-australia-is-ahead-say-new-reports-20141103-11fze9.html#ixzz3IO1eUYmk>

The Technology Services team at Hood Sweeney specialises in reliable, cost-effective and scalable solutions for information and communications, including:

- Strategic planning and consulting on information technology
- Analysing and selecting systems
- Planning for disaster recovery and business continuity
- Total solutions for mobile devices and communications
- Designing technology architecture
- Supporting your network and infrastructure
- Help desk and user support
- Procuring hardware and software.



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