

Demystifying the cloud



By [Carolyn Holgate](#)

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While much has been written, spoken and hyped about the cloud and cloud computing, the reality is that the cloud itself is not new. What is new is the growing realisation that the cloud can be a powerful business tool.

Anyone who uses social media like Facebook or Flickr to share photographs with friends and family, or applications like Skype or LinkedIn, is already using cloud computing.

When you use a service like Facebook or Flickr, you don't think much about how it works or where your photographs are stored. What concerns you is that your photographs are there, when you want to see them, regardless of where you are or whether you choose to access them from your smart phone, your tablet computer, your notebook, or your desktop computer.

That's cloud computing. It delivers when-you-need-it, where-you-need-it data and applications - without the need for any major investment in IT infrastructure and skills. Simply defined, cloud computing is a general term for anything that involves delivering hosted applications and services over the Internet.

The name "the cloud" comes from the icon that the IT consultants use in diagrams and flow charts to symbolise the Internet. It is drawn as a fluffy white cloud, probably to symbolise the impression that information appears to float from one computer or one business to another, rather like clouds floating through the sky.

There's nothing 'fluffy' about the cloud

However, there's nothing fluffy about the cloud. Its engine rooms are thousands of data centres located all over the world. MWEB operates two of these data centres - one in Johannesburg and another in Cape Town - from where we have delivered a range of hosted services to South African businesses for years. These include email, hosting, storage, back-up and collaboration tools. Additional cloud services are in the pipeline.

The surge in demand for cloud services from businesses can be attributed to improved access to uncapped, affordable high-speed Internet, which is absolutely essential for effective cloud computing; as well as innovations in virtualization and distributed computing.

Internationally, large companies like Google and Amazon already have most of their IT resourced in the cloud because it reduces the amount of hardware they need to purchase and maintain.

The uptake of cloud computing among other businesses is also growing rapidly internationally. In a recent [independent survey](#) of almost 350 CIOs and IT executives* in the United States, which examined current trends on cloud adoption, 92% said that the adoption of cloud technologies was good for business while 67% said cloud technologies helped to deliver better IT systems for less money.

Uptake of cloud services has been slower in South Africa, but we are starting to see a marked increase in interest from business of all sizes.

* To access the full "Current Trends in Cloud Adoption: A Survey of CIOs and IT Executives" report, visit <http://www.hostanalytics.com/dimensional-research>

For more information on the best connectivity products contact 08600 32000 or visit <http://www.mweb.co.za/productspricing/Hosting/StoreIt.aspx>

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