CLOUD SERVICES

A NON-TECHNICAL GUIDE TO MOVING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE CLOUD
(IN 'BYTE' SIZE CHUNKS)
BEN KILLEEN

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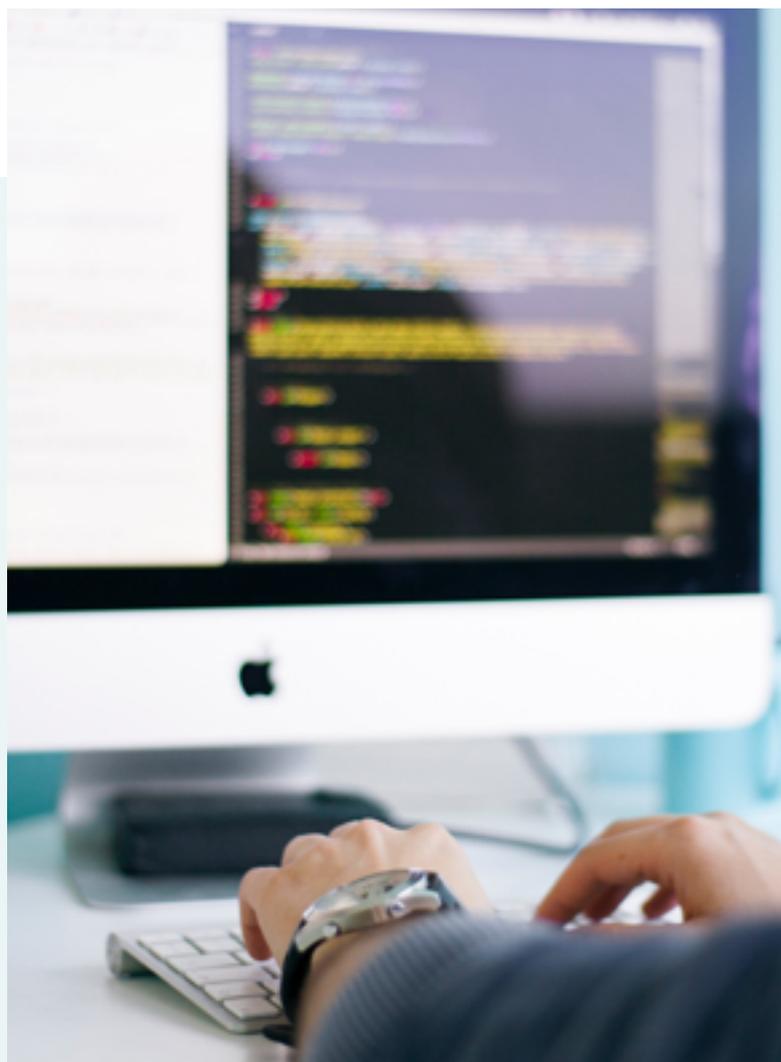
About the Author

Ben Killeen

Managing Director, SenSys Technology

My name is Ben Killeen and I am the Founder and MD of the SenSys Technology Group based in Enfield, 25 minutes outside Dublin. I have worked in the area of network technology and IT for 11 years. My Co-founder Alan Hogan and I have worked with Corporate businesses, Semi-States, Startups and Large Event Networks with critical IT infrastructures. Over the past 11 years we have worked on our fair share of IT projects in helping clients to implement or upgrade their IT requirements and as a business owner myself I understand the importance of using technology to improve efficiency, automate processes and ultimately improve profit on the bottom line. I hope you enjoy and find this short synopsis informative and look I forward to connecting.

www.sensys.ie   Ph: 019060553

Introduction

This topic comes up time and time again when we speak to prospective clients throughout Ireland. There is always the same questions and confusion over 'The Cloud'.

Hence, I decided to write this 'byte sized' e-book (last pun I promise) to clear up some of the myths and just clearly answer some of the questions you may have around 'The Cloud' , help you to define an action plan for your organization's strategy to move to the cloud and to assist you to deciding whether it is a good idea for your organization.
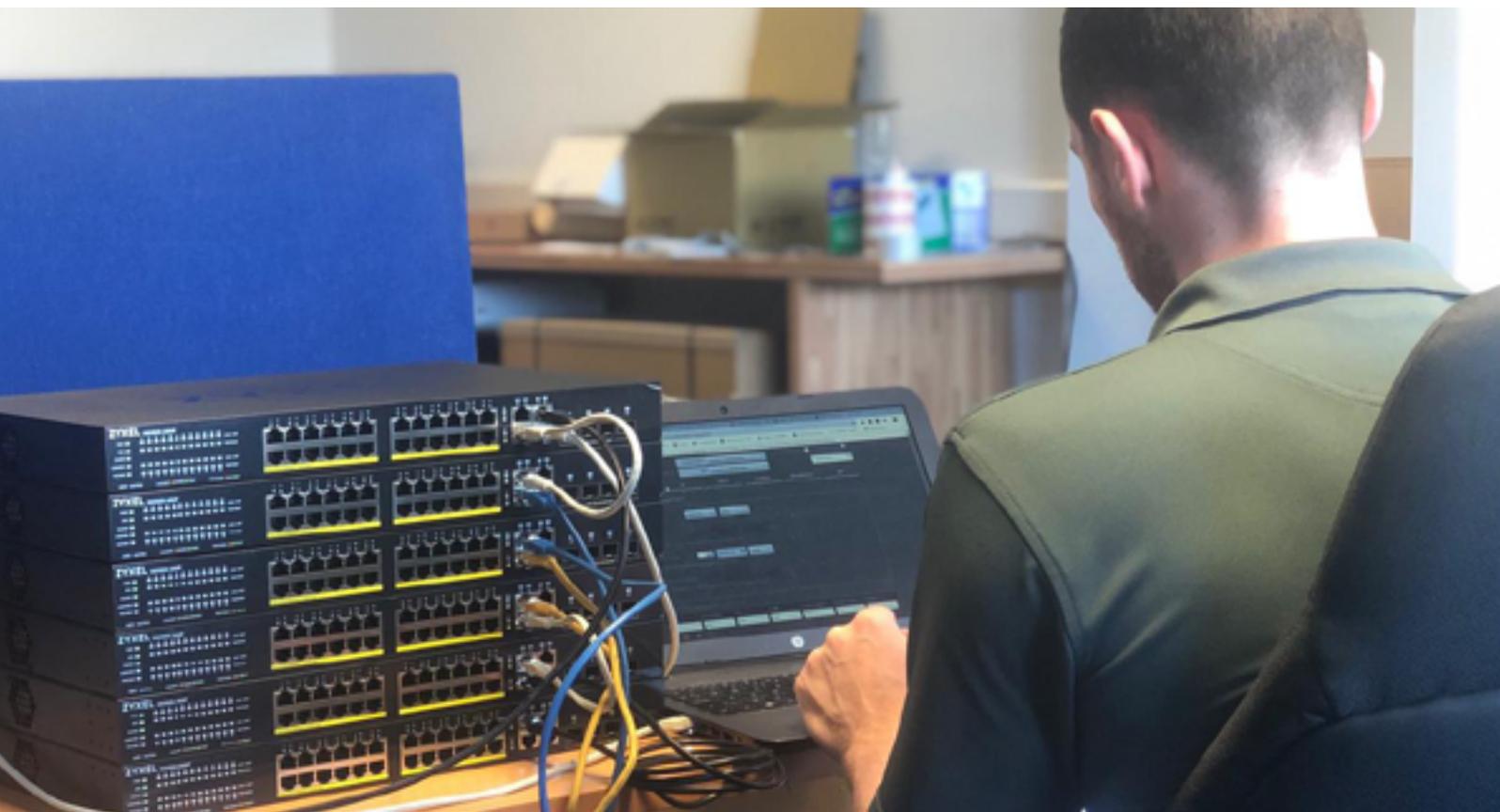
A Customer Profile

Just Like You! Meet Mark - from a Dublin air conditioning and refrigeration company.

Mark is a business owner in Dublin. He owns and runs an air conditioning and refrigeration company which operates nationwide, installing and servicing refrigeration and air conditioning for commercial clients, primarily the hospitality industry.

A business owner

Mark has 16 office based staff and 19 service engineers in vans all over Ireland, his business operates around the clock.

As a growing and thriving business, Marks' dependencies on IT and communications are more important than ever. Mark contacted me at Sensys Technology through a referral from a mutual business friend. Mark explained to me that he was very busy and constantly working on what he does best 'refrigeration'. He divulged that he was struggling keeping up with the latest in IT technology. He has always had an interest in technology as he is an engineer at heart and a 'hands-on' business owner. Mark described his existing IT set up and how his network was configured in basic terms. He had often heard of the *'The Cloud' being* discussed and circulated about and knew he should look at moving his business to the cloud or at least wanted to learn more about the benefits.

When I met with Mark we went through the complimentary SenSys 22 point **IT and Technology audit** as we do with all clients and I soon realized that Mark didn't really understand the full benefit of 'The Cloud' and he had heard plenty of myths and had questions which needed to be answered.

Mark had a typical IT set up for an SME. He was the owner and he had a refrigeration engineer, James who was the 'tech guy' aswell as the go-to guy for all IT and technology issues in his company. This wasn't ideal as it distracted James from doing what he does best, support his refrigeration clients. Mark also had a local IT company who he drafted in on an ad-hoc basis when they had computer issues beyond their in-house capabilities, but no formal IT plan or strategy to help his business efficiencies and add money to that bottom line.

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A Typical set up

Mark's business used a **common set up** of Sage accounting software, a payroll software, a project management and PO's software and staff scheduling software, a file share, AutoCAD/BIM software all running on a server in their Dublin based office.

In addition to that he had a phone PBX, a CCTV DVR and Access control server plus a time attendance server all sitting in a messy comms cabinet in the comms room in his office.

The main trigger point for calling me was that he was opening a new branch office in Cork and had been frustrated with accessing files remotely when he was 'on the road' or trying to catch up on work at home. During the snow last year, Mark was frustrated when the majority of his office staff had little or no productivity and caused great inconvenience when trying to work from home!

Mark enquired about setting up a VPN to his office from his laptop and I explained to Mark; "although we can do that Mark, we should look at the bigger picture. *Let's look at your complete IT set up and evaluate the current state. Then we can weigh up the pros and cons of migrating data to the Cloud".* So, as I have previously prepared for other business clients I brought Mark through 8 key points and considerations before moving to the cloud.

Ask These Questions

Before moving to the cloud I think it's important for business managers and IT managers to understand the fundaments and to ask the correct questions:

1. Knowing what is 'the cloud'.

2. What are the benefits for my business?

3. What about team buy in and how much business disruption will there be?

4. Will my data be secure?

5. Who are the main players?

6. Who else is using the cloud?

7. Do all businesses and IT Applications suit the cloud?

8. How much will it cost?
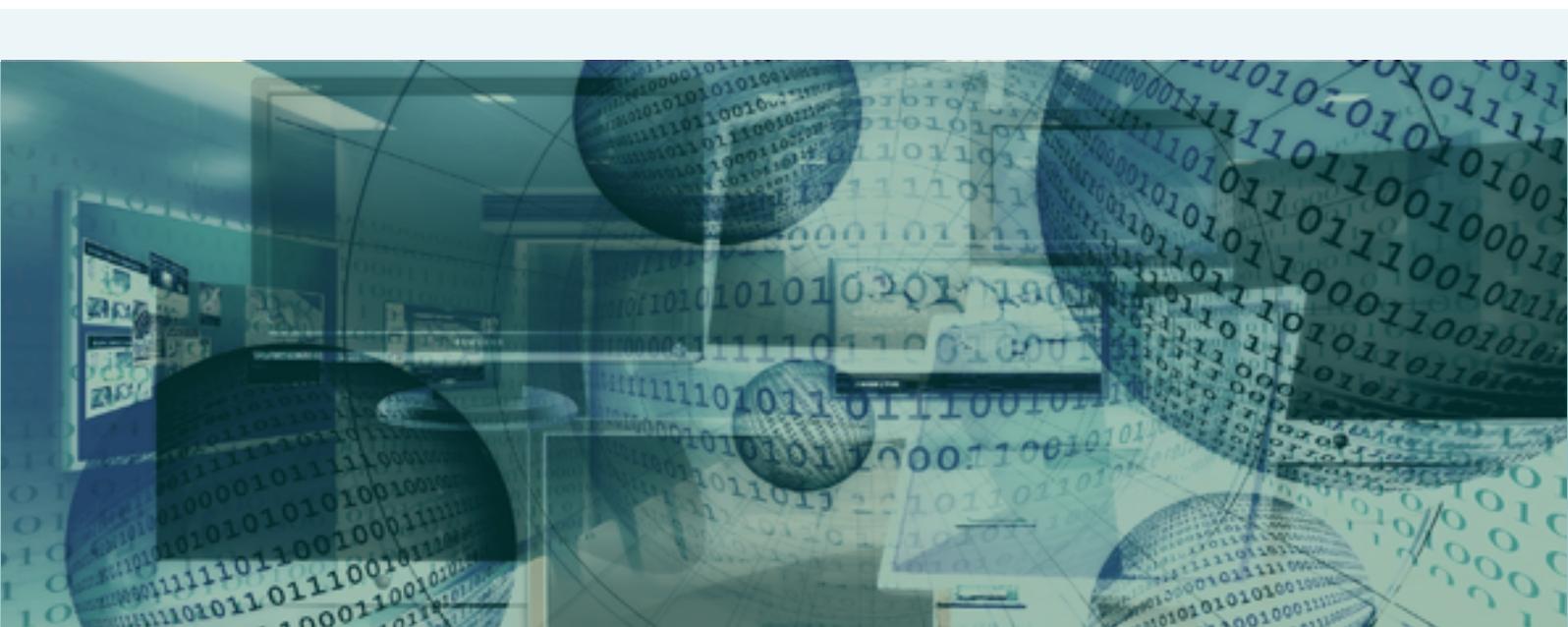
What is 'the cloud'?

It's important, after all we are discussing moving your business IT operations to the cloud and migrating your important business and client data. **So where does it actually go and what is 'the cloud'?**

The definition for the cloud can seem murky, but essentially, it's a term used to describe a global network of servers, each with a unique function. The cloud is not a physical entity, but instead is a vast network of remote servers, housed in data centres around the globe all which are hooked together. These servers are designed to either store and manage data, run applications, or deliver content or a service such as streaming videos, web mail, office productivity software, or social media.

Instead of accessing files and data from a local or personal computer, you are accessing them online from any internet-enabled device and the information will be available anywhere you go and anytime you need it. The likelihood is that you may have used the cloud before without ever even thinking about it. If you have ever used Google Drive, Dropbox or any business application that you log on to through an internet browser then you are using 'cloud services'. The challenge with businesses is that very often some people use Google drive, some use Dropbox, some staff store information on the server and some just to their laptop hard drive. Business managers and IT directors should formulate a plan to have one centrally managed cloud location for all staff managers to store, share and collaborate.

What are the benefits for my business?

The cloud offers lots of benefits but let's first focus on the fundamentals;

Better and easier access to your data from anywhere any time.

If your business - has restricted access to the data and files when you need it from any internet enabled device, then the chances are your productivity is restricted when away form your desk. With smart phones, tablets and laptops businesses don't work in the one static place anymore and only having access to a file share or your accounts software package from your desk is holding your business back from growth.

Better collaboration with your team:

Are your book keeper and your managing director working off of the same excel sheet or is there a revised version? When working on an online document stored in the cloud. You are always working on the **most up-to-date version of the document** and you can collaborate from any device be it your desktop, smart phone, or laptop!

Eliminate your server hardware and reduce energy cost:

If you like Mark have a communications cabinet filled with servers, have a think about the cost to maintain those servers and hardware keeping them maintained and updated is expensive and can be a big chunk from your business budgets.

When you take into consideration the cost of energy to run the hardware 24/7 and keeping them nicely air conditioned and cooled it starts to become a business headache and a no-brainer to want to eliminate this cost, business burden and do the right thing for the environment.

Reduce Capital Spend with predictable monthly costs.

It suits most business to eliminate or reduce capital expenditure, and as I discussed with Mark, he told me he would prefer to pay a fixed managed monthly cost than a large capital expenditure that depreciates on his business accounts. Also having to forecast when servers would need to be upgraded, would need new software updates or even failures was a business headache. Cloud services providers provide a f**ixed monthly cost for file storage usage and running applications** such as your business applications, phone systems, access control systems and team communication platforms.

Scalability – Grow your cloud, as your team grows.

The Dublin air-conditioning company explained that they had ambitious growth plans and whatever they did now with their IT and data migration needed to be scalable and grow with his team. I explained to Mark that with most cloud providers now you pay per user and only the storage and processing you use and need. You can add and grow from 1 user to an unlimited number of staff, so if Mark's Air-conditioning and refrigeration company doubles in size over the next

12 months then we could just add the cloud users and storage as and when it is required, so there is no need to have the storage or users now so only paying for what is required kept Mark's accountant happy!

Failover/Disaster recovery – Eliminate the risk.

I discussed all of the nice features of migrating Mark's business to the cloud from increasing productivity to the obvious cost benefits but then I asked Mark what it would mean if his server crashed and was down for even a day or worse lost days' worth of data and hard work or if his on-premise phone system crashed losing calls to his business. He explained that it wasn't worth thinking about as all of his staff would be affected and would have a major cost and reputational risk to his service-based business. Mark asked about a failover server or back up of his data and I explained to Mark that was definitely an option but then again, another back up to maintain, another cost overhead and another point of failure. We discussed that Microsoft, Google, Amazon and other leading cloud providers remove this headache with their network of serves in data centers. So if one data center was to fail they will have a failover data centre and network that would mean operationally Mark's air-conditioning business wouldn't even be affected.

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What about team buy-in?

What about team buy-in? How much business disruption will there be?

It all sounds great explained Mark, but I am so busy with my own customers I don't have the time for the migration, I cannot afford any downtime or to lose any of my existing files or data and I have staff in the office who have been here for years and always worked with the system the way it is and will be reluctant to change.

The move to the cloud doesn't have to mean complete business changes to the way your team currently operates, I explained. I will introduce your team to a Technical Solutions Architect from SenSys Technology, and this is where we introduced Paul from the SenSys IT team who met with Mark's office team to explain the benefits of the move to the cloud and how it would make their jobs easier with better access and collaboration. Paul, our Technical Solutions architect is well experienced with change management and migrating businesses of all sizes and industries to new cloud technology. We drafted up a change and migration plan to ensure that nothing was missed, all data was transferred and most importantly that all management and staff's concerns were addresses and suggestions were taken on-board. As we turned off the old server in the comms cabinet all staff smoothly transitioned to the new cloud platform with zero time or business disruption.

Will my data be safe?

Is it secure asked the team? We have lots of confidential business data, our client data needs to be protected. What about the hackers?

Yes, cloud storage with a reputable provider is very safe and secure and indeed safer than your offices current IT configuration as the server is sitting in a comms cabinet with remote access through port forwarding on your firewall. I explained to Mark's team that fortune 500 companies use the cloud and reputable companies use technologies such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon who use Enterprise grade threat protection. A hacker attack happens somewhere in the world every 39 seconds so it's an important issue to make sure you use a trustworthy and tested protection for your IT systems and cloud. Microsoft and Google have advanced protection technologies to protect against spam, malware, viruses, phishing attempts, malicious links and other cyber threats. GDPR and user access is also important factors when choosing a cloud provider and all reputable cloud providers will have the ability to restrict certain user profiles to certain data. With security as the driving factor for the likes of Microsoft, the company has included a financially backed SLA with a 99.9% uptime guarantee with every Office 365 subscription. No matter how skilled your internal IT staff is, most companies can't come close to 97% uptime.

So, Mark's refrigeration engineers can access all the technical documents in one central location but have restricted or zero access to the 'finance folder' or purchase order system. All reputable cloud providers have lots of information and endless amounts of technical data displayed on their website with lots of independently certified penetration tests and security certifications. So, like everything with IT, nothing is 100% hack proof or safe but it is our job at SenSys Technology to configure and advise you on your cloud migration to ensure the safest, most secure and reliable cloud platform for your organization.

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Who are the main players?

Microsoft, Google Cloud and Amazon Web Services are all trusted and mature providers of cloud computing and data centers.

Who else is using the cloud?

"More than 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies use Azure" (source: Azure)

You're in good company as Businesses and organizations around the world—small and large, old and new—rely on trusted cloud services.

Source: Azure on Medium

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Do all businesses suit the cloud?

Do all businesses and applications suit the cloud?

9 times out of 10 the answer is Yes, the cloud is tried and tested at this stage and there is no need for any business to feel like they are the guinea pig, From 1 band startups to fortune 500 companies with staff all over the world, business employees are using the cloud in every walk of life. There are definitely some points to be considered:

Internet speed and reliability

Do you have good internet speed and is it reliable?

When accessing your data or working on your business accounts, you will be doing so over an internet connection. It is important that you choose the best internet connection you can afford and is available.

Wi-Fi

Very often when businesses say their internet is poor and this was the case with Mark's business.   When our SenSys Technology team surveyed Mark's office during the complimentary 22-point IT and Technology audit his internet speed was indeed very stable with good upload and download speed at his router.

The SenSys Technology team carried out a Wi-Fi heat map analysis around Marks building and found that while his broadband was good at his router, his Wi-Fi was being distributed poorly around his premises with a mismatch of Wi-Fi access points installed in the wrong locations. This lead to a poor user experience. With the installation of some new SenSys 5Ghz, channel managed Wi-Fi access points, located

in the correct areas as pre-determined with the use of our predictive Wi-Fi heatmap. We ensured that the Wi-Fi was rock solid offering high speed to staff and management who could work from any device anywhere in the building.

Video and CCTV

When lots of high definition (HD) video content or lots of high definition CCTV recordings are being stored and processed, there is more of a conversation to be had around the cloud. While storage and processing in the cloud is available and getting cheaper, it is worthwhile still doing a cost analysis versus benefits when storing high amounts of these large files and content and using lots of bandwidth to upload the content. It is not always negative and there are lots of Irish businesses who do store HD video, but certainly a consideration.

How much will it cost?

If we take Google and Microsoft as an example, you can get the essentials from €4.20 per user per month and increasing to €10.50 per user per month for the premium features and more storage than you will ever need. On top of this, you will get business email, team collaboration software, video conferencing facilities and access to document, spreadsheet, and presentation software that you have come to know and love using.

Final thoughts

In terms of migration costs to the cloud, SenSys Technology offer the professional services to migrate your existing business to the cloud while offering on-going support and maintenance. If like Mark, you are not sure where to begin then talk to SenSys about tailoring IT solutions and services to suit your specific business, SenSys Tech recommend meeting with key personnel.

Book your complimentary SenSys 'Move your business to the cloud' suitability audit.

Watch our videos:

"Frequently asked questions on cloud services"

Free IT Audit Offer

What is VoIP

Book Audit Here

SenSys Tech

Freephone:

1800 815 683

Email:

info@sensys.ie

Address:

Unit 5, Teach Buí,
Main Street, Enfield,
Co Meath A83 VF62

(01) 906 0553

The Atrium,
Blackpool,
Cork

(021) 242 8888

www.sensys.ie