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Cloud hosting has been around since long before technology marketers made “going to the cloud” a slogan. Here at *CPA Practice Advisor*, we’ve been covering cloud solutions for more than a decade, but the concept goes much further back.

Even back in the era of mainframe computers (1950s-1970s), the practice of time-sharing was popular, since it helped maximize the usage of the computers. Even tax

preparers were affected by this system, because many of the income tax service

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servers (such as a desktop version of QuickBooks, Sage 50, ProSeries Tax, Microsoft Office or virtually any other program).

Whichever software the firm chooses to have hosted by the provider, the firm usually must possess their own user license agreement with each of the software providers. In some cases, the hosting provider can manage these licenses, as well.

The second usage of hosting is for private virtual servers, which let a business or accounting firm have more flexibility with scaling up their servers, but without their servers actually being in their firm. The servers are accessed online, but can be used in the same manner a firm would use internal servers, but without costs or hassles of IT management.

The Benefits of Cloud Hosting

While online variations on these and many other programs are available, some professionals prefer to work with the original desktop version, but also have the anywhere/anytime availability of a cloud-based program. Hosted solutions also relieve the firm from having to install program updates, since these are managed by the hosting provider.

Hosting providers also offer their own live help desks staffed by experienced users of the programs being hosted, often at times and days outside of the software maker's help desk hours.

For 2014, we looked at the services offered by the following cloud hosting providers. Check them out to see if they have the software and functionality that your firm needs.

- [Cloud9 Real Time](#)
- [CloudVara](#)

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Boxout

Benefits of Hosted Programs

(use checkmarks)

Scalability – Easy to ramp-up or ramp-down, depending on changing needs.

Maintenance – Firms no longer have to perform upgrades or maintenance.

Expertise – Cloud hosting providers are experienced at helping firms with these specific programs.

Cost – Implementation of systems can be less, or at least require less start-up capital, as they are usually billed across a specified period.

Desktop Functionality – Allows use of the full system, with convenience of online access.

Cloud Technology • Firm Management • Technology

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