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TECHNOLOGY

Microsoft Office Substitutes and CCH Mobile

Brian Looks at Two Apps for Microsoft Office and the CCH Mobile app.

Brian Tankersley • Oct. 29, 2012



This month's column discusses two competing apps which provide hosted cloud-based access to Microsoft Office, as well as the new version of the CCH Mobile app.

Microsoft Office Substitutes on Tablets: CloudOn and OnLive Desktop

One of the challenges of working with mobile devices is the lack of functionality available in some of the substitutes for Microsoft Office on mobile platforms. The weak capabilities of the spreadsheet tools in many make them almost unusable for anything other than the most basic of edits. While there is no substitute for the full, PC-based version of Microsoft Excel for most users, many small firms have not incorporated mobile access into their technology plans, and thus do not have access to hosted versions of Microsoft Office. Fortunately, there are tools which provide these capabilities on both Android and iOS-based tablet devices, including CloudOn and OnLive Desktop. Although these services (and any integrated cloud-based file storage solutions) do not provide the enterprise grade security needed for confidential client information, they do provide access to a more robust version of Office than is currently available on iOS and Android tablet computers.

CloudOn

CloudOn is a tool which provides a limited version of Microsoft Office linked to a user's existing cloud-based storage services, including DropBox, Box.net, and Google Drive. The versions of Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint are similar to those available on a desktop computer, and are delivered from remote hosted computers. CloudOn uses a small app to connect remote user's iPad and Android and allows users to create, edit, and save documents in native Office file formats directly to supported cloud storage platforms. CloudOn is available from the Apple iTunes store or the Google Play Store, and the service is free.

OnLive Desktop

OnLive Desktop is a tool which provides a more traditional hosted desktop experience to Android tablet and iPad users. Users can access a hosted Windows desktop with access to full versions of Microsoft Office for free using the OnLive Desktop App. The company delivers these services using a more traditional hosted Windows desktop interface, and also indicates that they plan to offer versions of their service which will work with Smart TV's, personal computers, and other devices in the future.

The OnLive desktop provides a more robust solution than CloudOn's more limited offering, but its lack of integration with existing cloud-based storage solutions makes it more difficult to use. Like CloudOn, OnLive's app and base service is free, however, OnLive offers access to other applications such as Microsoft Internet Explorer with Adobe Flash installed, as well as plans with dedicated cloud-based storage for an additional monthly fee of \$4.95-\$9.95 per month.

It should also be mentioned that both companies are startups, and OnLive went through a restructuring in August which reportedly included laying off half of the company's employees as well as moving all of the company's remaining assets to a new corporation. These services are very useful, but users are advised to keep offline backups of all files in the event of an unscheduled service interruption.

CCH Mobile

Research and accounting firm application publisher CCH, a Wolters Kluwer Business, recently released a new version of its CCH Mobile App. The new version includes significant enhancements for tablet computers such the Apple iPad, as well as support for phones and tablets running the Google Android platform. Where the CCH Tax News app covered earlier this year is targeted at all practitioners, the CCH Mobile app is designed to give existing IntelliConnect subscribers access to their information from anywhere.

The new version of the application includes a number of enhancements, including support for keyword and citation based searches, mobile alerts for new and breaking news, and access to research folders. The application also allows users to create new searches on the go, and provides access to tools like IntelliConnect Smart Charts and the US Master Tax Guide from a wide range of smartphones and tablets.

CCH Mobile is available through the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. Although the app itself is free, users of CCH Mobile must have a paid subscription to the CCH IntelliConnect research platform.

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