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**Mike Johnson** • Jul. 31, 2014



Many accounting practices enter that time of year where new solutions to old challenges are sought. Top on their lists are the new challenges of cloud computing

and mobile technology to mention a few.

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with how to approach this technology strategy. Accounting firms continue to “discuss” the merits of cloud computing and whether it applies to their organization. These firms struggle with systems being outside of their own physical locations or control, where the data is stored, who might be able to gain access to that data, will the systems be up and running when they are needed, and the list goes on and on.

As a former CPA firm partner, I have been there. You might think that if you have your own data centers, integrate disparate applications from different vendors, manage your own intrusion detection (hacking prevention), maintain your own backups, etc., install all of your own software applications, and much more that you are actually “in control” of your computing environment, you're efficient and you're cost effective. The sad truth is, you are not.

The on-premise approach requires a capable server to process the abundant emails, maintain calendars, coordinate task, etc. all the while sucking up disk space for the poorly managed or never managed email boxes (email retention is a topic for another day). In addition, remote access to the behind-the-firewall Exchange server must be configured and maintained along with the access of all the various remote devices now wanting to feed from the Exchange server trough. In addition to these hardware and communications needs, a capable IT department must be maintained and trained to deploy the product, keep it updated, and insure availability much less take advantage of the enormous feature set available from Microsoft Exchange. It is for these reasons that many firms find themselves always running older less capable software applications.

## **Enter Office 365**

As I started my new consulting firm and moved down the cloud path, we found Microsoft Office 365 helped solve many of the technology issues we and most CPAs

are trying to solve. Here are just a few things Office 365 did for us and can do for you

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### **Scalability and Accessibility**

- Office 365 subscriptions exist for virtually every size of CPA firm. The per-user subscriptions in many cases provide:
  - the ability to install Office on multiple-machine – up to 5 licenses per user helped us manage software costs
  - business-class email eliminated our in-house storage needs
  - Web-conferencing, instant messaging, and share presence improved internal and external communications and help our team members better collaborate across multiple locations
  - Eliminated the need for in-house storage through their cloud storage.
  - Documents were accessible from any machine anywhere
  - Any tablet, including iPads, could now be used more productively.

### **Reliability**

- No longer had to maintain spam and malware protection because microsoft does this.
- We moved to 99.9% uptime. Microsoft utilizes geo-redundancy (multiple locations) to ensure uptime and backup continuity
  - Current desktop versions of Office were always running

### **Lower Total Cost Solution**

- Total Cost of Ownership for Office 365 has proven to be significantly less than maintaining similar resources on-premise.

These are just a few of the benefits we found when we deployed Office 365. I am sure many more will come. Whether you are new to cloud or have been contemplating

this for a while, Cloud technologies from major companies with proven track records

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*career working for international and regional CPA firms and spent 35 years working with successful entrepreneurial businesses as a certified public accountant and partner in a public accounting firm. Mike's varied exposure to the challenges of an entrepreneurial business provided a broad array of experience in operations, finance, and technology.*

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