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providers in the world would like to clarify this cloud situation for you.

**Gail Perry** • Oct. 16, 2015



For people who are still on the fence about whether or not cloud-based technology can provide the best solutions for you, we asked some highly regarded technology providers for advice.

“When choosing a cloud solution that is right for your firm, staff and clients look for a solution that provides an open platform and is built to scale,” explained Jim McGinnis, vice president, accountant segment at Intuit. “This allows you to create

customizable solutions with third-party apps to meet the unique needs of each of

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Sharada Bhansali, executive vice president at AccountantsWorld, recommends keeping the following tips in mind when choosing a cloud solution:

- Learn about all of the cloud solutions that are available for the services you offer.
- List all the challenges you currently face in your practice, and then identify the cloud solutions that not only overcome the largest number of those challenges, but also offer new capabilities that were not previously available.
- Explore solutions that increase firm productivity through automation. Fully integrated cloud solutions can streamline processes to never-before-possible levels.
- Before the cloud, accountants were limited to using DIY (Do-it-Yourself) solutions created for small businesses. But now, cloud accounting solutions created exclusively for accountants allow accountants to offer a full suite of services, including highly profitable payroll services, tailored to each business client's needs.
- Finally, make sure the solutions you choose let you offer your clients the kind of advisory services that clients seek using real time data.

“Research shows that by 2020, nearly 80 percent of small businesses will be fully adapted to the cloud, up from 37 percent in 2014. It's imperative that accounting professionals embrace the cloud and start using cloud solutions to ensure their long-term success,” said McGinnis.

It's one thing to make a decision to switch to cloud-based software. But what about the nuts and bolts of making the switch? Are there ways to make implementation and training staff and clients quick and painless?

“We advise accounting professionals to dive right in – start the transition with one client at a time or better yet transition your own firm's software,” said McGinnis. “By

focusing on migrating clients one at a time, you can start with the least complex files

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notify clients. Starting early gives you the time you'll need to make the right choices to make your migration easy and painless. If you wait until the end, you'll go through all the migration pain without much gain."

Once you've transitioned to a cloud-based platform, how do you know if you made the right decision and how do you ensure that you are getting the most out of your product choice?

According to Bhansali, the easiest way to measure success is to determine how the cloud solutions you've selected have accomplished the following:

- Increased your profitability
- Reduced your workload
- Increased client satisfaction and retention
- Improved the work environment in your firm

"Accounting is shifting from computation to consultation," said McGinnis.

Therefore, as you adopt a cloud solution, ask yourself how much time are you saving doing the computation work so that you can concentrate more on providing your clients with consultant services.

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