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**ACCOUNTING & AUDIT**

# 2016 Review of Hosting Providers for Accounting Firms

No longer do business owners have to choose between an online version and a desktop version of a product. Using an application hosting service, users can access their favorite products remotely.

**Mary Girsch-Bock** • Nov. 17, 2016



A short twenty years ago, when a business decided to implement new software, a variety of things had to happen prior to that software being installed. First, IT staff needed to determine if the current system in place had enough memory available to run the program. If the hardware checked out, IT could proceed with purchasing the product. If it didn't, additional memory would need to be installed, or worse yet, the hardware would need to be upgraded, or replaced.

Once the software was received, IT staff would proceed to install the product from the discs that were sent in the mail. The installation process always varied, with some products taking minutes – others taking upwards of several hours. Once this process was completed, IT would then need to install the product on each of the users' desktop computers, mapping a drive to the installed product on the server.

Over time, the process became a little easier. Software companies, responding to the demands of their customers, strived to simplify this process, with many beginning to deploy their product in the software-as-a-service (SaaS) model. This simplified the process considerably, with users able to simply subscribe to the software rather than spend valuable time and resources to install and manage the product locally.

Shortly thereafter, some software vendors began offering online versions of their product, where users would purchase a subscription and simply login to the product. Unfortunately, many of these early online products were pared down versions of the desktop product.

The growth of the application hosting industry has changed all that. No longer do business owners have to choose between an online version and a desktop version of a product. Using an application hosting service, users can access their favorite products remotely. The use of virtual private servers has taken this capability to a new level, allowing users to create a custom server with all of the applications they need – managed by an application host.

The benefits of using an application host in your office can be tremendous and include:

- **Ease of Access** – Employees can access the product from anywhere with an Internet connection; a must in today's mobile society.
- **Simple Product Integration** – For business owners using multiple software products, integrating multiple software systems has always been a logistical nightmare. Not so when the products are hosted on a single server.

- **Reduced IT and System Maintenance Costs** – Remember the example above? How many times did you find the perfect software for your business or your firm, but had to spend significant amounts of money to upgrade your system in order for that software product to work effectively? Or your IT person is on vacation when the software crashes? Using an application hosting service, all of those problems go away. The software and the maintenance are the responsibility of the hosting service, while you can concentrate on the important things, like keeping your clients happy.
- **Automatic Updates** – Users will always have the latest version of the product available to them when they login to the system.
- **Easy, One-Stop Support** – No longer do you need to keep multiple support numbers handy in case of an issue. All support is handled by the hosting application.

In this issue, we looked at six application hosting products. The services available range from simple QuickBooks hosting, to the ability to create a custom server with the applications you desire.

Click to read the reviews of these products:

[Cetrom CPA Cloud](#)

[Cloudnine Realtime](#)

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So whether you're looking for a host for one or a half dozen applications, taking a look at the products in this review is a great place to begin.

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