

BUILDING AN UNBEATABLE SERVICE

WHAT EVERY ACCOUNTANT
NEEDS TO KNOW





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Connect with the cloud

Accounting software has long been a crucial tool for accountants and bookkeepers across the globe.

For years you have used accounting software to record and process transactions, with the aim of increasing productivity and serving your clients to the highest possible standards.

Accountants are seen by their clients as a **trusted business advisor**, so having access to clients' most up-to-date financial information at the click of a button in order to provide them with actionable, proactive business advice is of paramount importance.

Like most business solutions, accounting software has progressed leaps and bounds over the years, developing alongside the evolution of technology. Now cloud-based solutions are becoming a preferable option for business professionals – and accounting professionals are taking notice.

Over a third of accountants are already using some form of online accounting software and a further third are planning to do so within two years¹, but some accountants are still reluctant to move to Software as a Service (SaaS) offerings, including cloud-based tech.

There is huge demand coming from business owners, particularly those running smaller companies, for cloud accountancy solutions. Our research has found that 87% of small companies want cloud-based services yet less than 15% of the accounting software that serves them is cloud-based.²

Regardless of whether a practice is embracing cloud accounting solutions, or is reluctant to do so, all accounting professionals share the same end goal – **to deliver the best services possible to their clients.**

If you're striving to achieve this goal, you're about to discover:

- Why the move to cloud will improve your quality of service.
- Why some of your peers are already using the cloud.
- How you can become your clients' strategic advisor with cloud-based technology.

¹ Sage (2013)

² Sage (2015)

How the cloud is transforming quality service

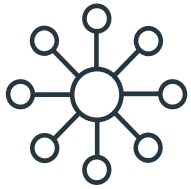
Most accounting professionals at one time or another have met with their existing clients to discuss their financials, and have suddenly realized that the documents they need are on a computer back at the office and can't be accessed remotely.

Or maybe you've been working at home in the evening and need access to a file that's only available on your office server. It should be simple to open up your laptop, tablet or mobile device and start working, but you simply don't have remote access to vital information.

Scenarios like these are all too familiar for accounting professionals, but by working in the cloud, you could begin to notice drastic improvements to your firm's productivity and your relationship with clients.



Here are three ways cloud technology could improve the service you deliver



Connect and collaborate

Using cloud-based accounting software can help keep your clients compliant.

Yes, this can be done via on-premise solutions, but with the cloud you can serve your clients from anywhere in the world and on multiple devices. So if you're moving from place to place, you can seamlessly serve your clients no matter where you are.



Low set-up costs

If you decide to use on-premise solutions instead of cloud-based technology, not only will you have to pay for the hardware, you'll also have to pay for storage space, IT personnel to maintain the system and the software itself.

With the cloud, the vendor takes responsibility for these things, meaning less on boarding stress and reduced costs.



Everyday advisor

The cloud allows you to be there for your client 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

Many cloud-based packages allow your clients to be linked to their online bank accounts, automating the importing of bank transactions. This gives you real-time visibility into your clients' finances, allowing you to set achievable goals for your clients and warn them when they are running low on cash, reinforcing your role as a proactive advisor.

These are just a handful of benefits you'll receive from the cloud, but don't just take our word for it – hear from accounting professionals who've already transformed their services with help from the cloud.





Your cloud stories

We spoke to two accountants to find out how the cloud has made their services unbeatable.



Meet Alan Peace,
a Chartered Accountant and
owner of Swift-link Business
Services.

Once a traditional accounting firm with an office and two other members of staff, Alan began using cloud technology to service his clients and now operates completely online and works remotely.

"I was renting an office with two members of staff," he recalls. "We had peaks and troughs of workload – I did the calculations and realized that I would be no worse off working from home and going online. It was scary but I made that bold jump."

Peace moved out of the office, found his staff new employment, set up business at home and told his clients of his online plan.

"I'd been looking for years to get data from my clients without waiting for receipts," he explained. "I wanted to get rid of that and find a cloud system where the data could be stored and even out the workload through the year."

After browsing the market, Alan settled on two cloud solutions; one which perfectly suited clients who "don't know what credit or debit is", and another platform for his larger clients.



“Most of my clients were a bit apprehensive [about cloud] because they didn’t want extra work to do and they were worried about their data being hacked. I assured them that everything was encrypted and the integrated nature [of the cloud] meant it was easy for them to manage,” said Peace.

Alan’s small business clients, many of whom are tradesmen, have been able to get on with what they do best – running their business.

“They want to fit their boilers and go home at night without having to worry about their accounts. The cloud is brilliant for cash-based workers – payments in, payments out. Simple.”

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And Peace has been able to grow his business, which now serves around 40 clients, many of whom are small business owners.

“For one person working from home that’s quite a lot! But using a cloud system makes it manageable,” he explains.

Peace has no regrets about the move to the cloud. “You are in control of your time,” he says, adding that freedom of how and when he chooses to work has been both liberating and productive.

“Although I never need to meet my clients in person, I make a point of seeing them every now and again. You have to maintain that face-to-face relationship between accountant and client.”

Moving to the cloud, he says, “is a great way to work”.

Your cloud stories



Meet Elaine Clark.

Managing Director of award-winning online accountancy firm CheapAccounting.

We spoke to Elaine to get her thoughts on why the cloud is so important, and why some accounting professionals have yet to embrace the technology.

“I’m a great believer in flexible working and mobile workforces.”

Elaine has been using the cloud for her firm since it started in 2007, having first designed a cloud system of her own to meet her and her clients’ needs.

Sage: What sort of an impact do you think cloud technology has had on the accountancy profession?

Elaine: “I think it’s totally transformed the profession.

“It gives clients much more information about the work that the accountant does for them and it allows clients to split tasks between services they have their accountant perform and the services that they can perform themselves, helping the client to bring their costs down.”

Sage: You’ve been using the cloud for nearly a decade. What was the deciding factor in moving to the technology?

Elaine: “I’m a great believer in flexible working and mobile workforces and in this day and age people can work from anywhere.

“With the cloud your clients can reach out to you about the financial health of their business and you can connect with them when it suits you both.

“Working in the cloud doesn’t limit accountants to meeting up with clients just once or twice a year – you’re having a lot more interaction with clients throughout the year, so you know that they are always going to be connecting with you, which is great for client retention.”





Sage: Why do you think some accounting professionals haven't started using cloud?

Elaine: "The world is changing but some accountants are slightly slow in catching up with the developments in technology. Some just don't like change – it's as simple as that."

Sage: What advice do you have for accounting professionals who are unsure about moving to the cloud?

Elaine: "The advice that I always give to accounting professionals is to analyze your client list."

"At first they may look at their client list and think: 'I can't move to cloud, it's too big of an operation', but my advice is to break your list down and consider which clients are going to be more open to moving to the cloud."

"That way you can break down your 'to do' list into manageable chunks, making the task seem less daunting."

"However, to do this you've really got to know what you want to do within your own practice. Yes, you've got to look at your clients but you've also got to internally look at your practice and how you will structure yourself to run a digital practice."



Five ways to make a stress-free switch to the cloud

Now you've heard from some accounting professionals, discover how you can put their advice into practice.

1

Do your homework

There are various cloud accounting software providers out there, but not all of them will be suitable for you and your client's needs.

Reach out to those providers directly for advice, or connect with fellow accounting professionals who have already made the switch to the cloud. They can provide you with advice and guidance on what software is the best to use, which technology you should avoid and what to do once you've chosen your preferred software.

2

Pick the perfect clients

As Elaine Clarke advised, one of the first things you should do when moving to the cloud is to consider which clients are going to be open to make the switch with you.

Make a list of all your clients, and divide them between those who will favor the move to cloud, and those who won't. By doing this you can ease your way into the cloud naturally, making it a collaborative process between you and your clients.

3

Open up a discussion with your clients

So you've chosen which clients will benefit from cloud-based accounting software, now engage with them directly.

Set up a face-to-face meeting or an online conference call with them to run them through the various cloud options to choose from. It may be the case that your clients have wanted to move to the cloud for a while now, so they might have already picked their preferred solution.



4

Get the training you need

You've picked your cloud accountancy software, now you need to know how to use it.

Many accounting software providers will have training packages available, and their customer support teams will be more than happy to answer any concerns you may have.

The power of technology means that your cloud provider can take you through the software step-by-step on screen, meaning you can ask as many questions as you need to.

5

Train your staff

Once you know how to use the software, ensure that your employees are confident in knowing how to use it too.

Set up time in your team's schedule weeks before you begin using the software for your clients so you can properly show them how to operate it.

Your new way of working is here

Greater collaboration, easier access to data and a deeper understanding of your clients. These are just a handful of benefits that you will gain by using cloud-based solutions.

Not only does the cloud break the chain between your office server and client information, it shatters the limitations that have plagued your clients for years. Using the cloud will allow you and your clients to set positive and achievable goals for their business, putting you at the heart of their success.

If you're convinced that the cloud is for you, discover how Sage Accountant Solutions can help you deliver better quality service.

[Get started >](#)

