Hidden Benefits of Cloud Computing

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By MIKE YAMARIK, RWD Performance Matters Blog

It’s pretty apparent to anyone in the technology world that cloud computing is an established and accepted approach to the delivery of computer software and infrastructure as a service. From music and movie streaming services, such as Netflix and Pandora, to personal storage offerings, such as iCloud and SkyDrive, to business software platforms, such as Force.com, Azure and Amazon Cloud, the cloud concept has permeated everywhere into our computing lives.

There are even a series of *Cloud Computing for Dummies* books available, as perhaps the greatest testament to its mainstream acceptance. And as network bandwidth reliability and availability continues to improve throughout the world, cloud computing will only continue to grow and expand.

As the cloud computing concept emerged and was beginning to take hold, many notable benefits were presented and touted by cloud proponents to, what was, a skeptical audience at the time. The primary benefits that were identified are widely accepted as truth today: reduction in fixed software, hardware and infrastructure costs; ease of accessibility from multiple locations and devices; built-in upgrade paths that are relatively seamless to end-users; and flexibility and scalability of the platform as user counts grow. These advantages had significant impacts to the decision-makers who were considering cloud services, and have proven to provide benefits that far outweighed the risks and concerns at the time.

But as these cloud services have developed and matured, a number of other “hidden” benefits have also emerged, which are just as significant in their own right. Some of these fall on the “soft side” of the cost/benefits scale, but are still contributing advantages with using cloud computing:

Focus. By delegating the management of your information technology (IT) plumbing, it creates opportunity to focus your IT staff on more effective ways to help your business, such as proactively addressing end-user needs and exploring innovations that might benefit your organization in different ways.

Free to try. While this is a no-brainer in our new world of apps and online offerings, many businesses don’t realize the relative cost and effort savings in leveraging free-to-try cloud-based business software. Not having to set up servers, and install and configure software can be a big help in saving time, as well as grief and aggravation.

Going green. The reduction in hardware and infrastructure means less energy costs for your company. This might be viewed as a small benefit on an individual business level; however, the cumulative effect of many organizations reducing their energy

consumption can add up to a significant impact to our carbon footprint. While these costs have been moved on to the cloud-hosting provider, dynamic scaling of cloud instances allows systems to scale up and down in accordance with demand. This, in turn, offers a tangible energy savings.

These are just a handful of the benefits of cloud computing that don't necessarily make the headlines or the 30-point bold bullet in the PowerPoint slide, but they are still important when considering using a cloud service.

What's your take? Please share your thoughts about using the cloud on this blog post, Hidden Benefits of Cloud Computing*, that was posted on RWD's blog at* http://blog.rwd.com/2012/06/hidden-benefits-of-cloud-computing/ *[1] or below in the comments section!*

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