

What every business owner should know about migrating to the cloud

 By [Aron Thornton](#)

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Today, having recognised the many critical benefits of moving IT services to the cloud, savvy business owners are embracing the global shift to cloud-based technology models.

In today's fast-paced and highly competitive business environment, businesses can no longer afford to rely on legacy infrastructure which is expensive to maintain and increasingly risky from a security point of view. Indeed, new and streamlined Cloud services enable every business to become more agile, responsive, secure and adaptive in the face of ongoing digital disruption.

When migrating to the cloud, however, business owners, managers and leaders need to be aware of the potential risks involved - and take specific steps to mitigate these risks. Too often, services are migrated without this awareness, and without professional assistance - which can have disastrous consequences. For example, businesses can suffer data loss, which usually occurs because the business failed to implement regular backups. (Rule #1 one: Always back up your data!)



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Another major risk is a failure in business continuity or prolonged 'downtime' because the internet connection is insufficient or doesn't have adequate failover capability. This can shut down the business entirely because the data is now in the cloud - and unreachable - due to the lack of a robust connectivity solution.

Preparation is Key

To begin with, it's important to note that the risks associated with cloud migration are precisely the same as those associated with installing a new server. The following elements significantly mitigate these risks: using an experienced project manager; developing, documenting and following well-structured policies; and utilising qualified IT engineers. Once the technical work is out of the way many businesses forget about another key ingredient: training. Don't wait until the last minute and send staff youtube links. Rather prepare for the training up front and make sure it's engaging enough to get buy-in.

Common mistakes you can avoid

Having made the decision to move to the cloud, it now becomes imperative that the business has uninterrupted, reliable and protected access to the internet. This is another place where mistakes are often made, with business owners/leaders making the following critical mistakes:

- Failing to upgrade internet access: You have to ensure that it is fast enough to allow your workforce to engage properly with the systems and software that are now 'cloud-based'. The days of running off of one ADSL line are over. Fibre has dropped in price to the extent that businesses should always consider this their first option.
- Failing to ensure that the staff, the businesses data and the intellectual property are protected by a firewall. Now that you have high-speed Internet and constant connectivity you must consider the increased threat of hacking. A firewall is one of the most fundamental defence mechanisms.
- Failure to consider endpoint security. Most cloud platforms are extremely secure. More secure than having your own server. However, all of that security counts for nothing if one of your users gets infected with malware or clicks a link they shouldn't. Having top quality anti-virus software or 'next-gen' anti-virus software is key.
- Failing to ensure that internet access is redundant by adding a second (and different) method of connectivity: The most common (and best practice) solution to this would be to have a fibre connection that is guaranteed by the provider under a service level agreement; additionally, have a wireless/microwave or LTE solution as a failover connection in case the primary goes down. Very importantly make sure you have a router or firewall which can switch between links seamlessly and automatically.

ABOUT AARON THORNTON

Managing Director at Dial a Nerd

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