



## THE CASE FOR THE CLOUD

5 reasons small business should  
make the switch



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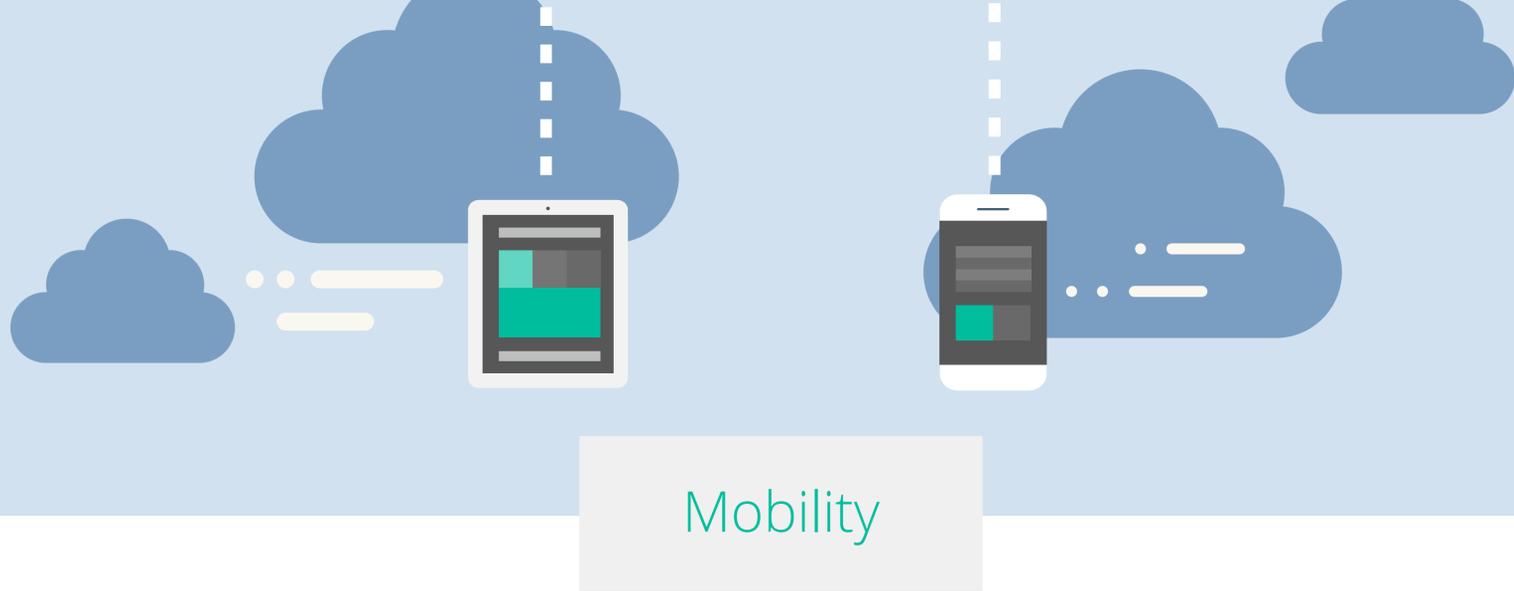
## Cloudifying your business

Ah cloudification - yes that really is a word - the mission to embrace cloud technology on a race to the top of the pile. A worthy aim and it's just on time. The cumulous nimbus are gathering overhead and they are here to stay. This is an important point to make – cloud technology is not a trend that will go away politely, it will inevitably get even smarter and morph into newer technologies, but it is rather clear that desktop tech is on its way out whether you like it or not.

The cloud is like electricity once was before it was normalised a century ago, setting the stage for the next wave of technology while increasing the efficiency of current every-day tasks.

Jumping aboard a trend for the sake of it is never advisable, however the cloud is not a trend, fad or craze. It is now clear that the cloud represents the immediate and long-term future of information technologies. In fact, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the year from 2015 to 2016, the number of Australian businesses using commercial cloud computing services rose from 19 percent to almost one-third. This trend shows no sign of abating.

Small business, with small scale and lower employee counts benefits the most when it comes to cheap and mobile cloud solutions. If you are running your own small business and have been reticent in joining the community in cloud city, you may want to reconsider your motives and investigate the benefits to cloudifying your business.



This is a big one. If you listen to current media and advertising trends you will know we are apparently always 'on the go'. So busy, so rushed, so mobile. (Insert image of a busy working parent on the phone with kids in tow while eating a snack bar).

Well this phenomenon may have been cynically milked a tad too much by marketers, but the core tenant remains quite true. As a society and as a marketplace we are now more mobile and untethered than ever.

Even if you work in a traditional office or fixed address, you are rarely required by technology to stay there, rather your employer requires you! You have access to work systems through cloud apps, social media and email, all of your internet browsing capabilities and even hundreds of gigs of cloud-based document storage etc. right there on your phone or tablet.

I think we have all heard of the untethered, always-on travelling businessman. We all know about digital nomads. We are fully aware that when a lot of people are leaving work they are still potentially 'in the office' with email on their phone. But this is just the start, true mobility in business is starting to mature and the possibilities look vast.

We could cut this a few ways, but let's have a look at a realistic example of cloud mobility being expressed in a small business context.

### **Roaming retail**

The traditional fixed store retail environment is being unchained with the advent of the cloud.

Here's an example. Jack White is the proud owner of a trendy market stall selling t-shirts printed with famous cartoon characters eating fast food. Awesome.

He is getting popular with the inner-city turmeric latte set and suddenly his pencil box full of change and his pen and paper sales record is not cutting it. To remain mobile and untethered from any single location, he needs his business to reside in the cloud.

As a savvy market stall owner, armed with a mere tablet and a few cloud apps, including cloud POS, and a cloud accounting app, he will now be able to do all of the following remotely:

- Manage his inventory
- Do his banking
- Sell on the go
- Market his business
- Communicate and collaborate remotely

In fact, he probably never has to be under a roof or remain in a fixed location for the rest of his working life!

Being mobile will probably be the standout function for Jack, as he does not have a traditional storefront. He can take his stall from town to town with no hassles whatsoever. With mobile POS, he can approach customers anywhere around the market and help them with their buying decisions. And if the POS software is integrated with good cloud accounting software, his employees can handle credit card payments immediately and email the customer their receipt.

He can even use social platforms on his mobile to take photos and market his business and products to his followers on Instagram. He can pay his employees while sitting on a park bench, issue invoices on a bus or collaborate on a new t-shirt design laying on a beach. Jack can also track how many sales Lenny the hairy student makes when he takes his kombucha break... He suspects not many.



The bottom line is exceptionally important when it comes to small business. Lower it if you can!

The beauty of cloud products is in their service nature. Software as a Service (SaaS) has flipped the idea of ownership on its head, much like car share apps and bike swaps. As you essentially rent your technology, upfront costs are typically low and operate on a basis of use in that you ditch what you no longer use without abandoning something you have invested money in.

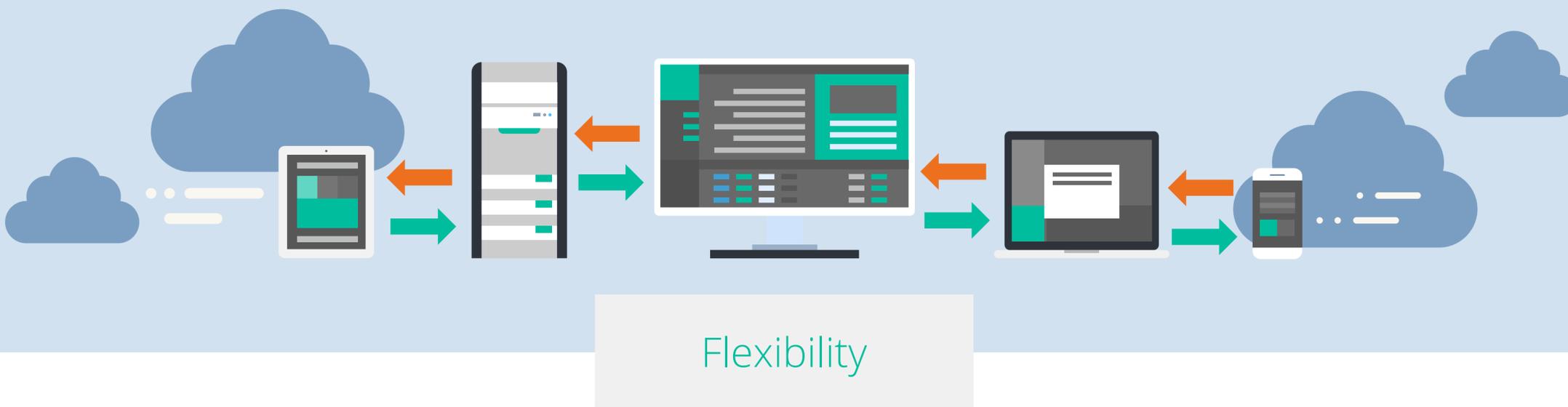
### **SaaS**

In days past for example you would buy an expensive Adobe Photoshop box set from a retail store, install it on a single PC, and a year later you get told the new version is here, buy that too. Nowadays, you sign up for all adobe apps in a single monthly payment, all versions are current, updates are automatic, and you can access or share your account on multiple devices for the same price. You will find that many cloud platforms follow a similar trend, with cost being significantly less than on-premise installations. This is further emphasised by the constant updates applied to cloud tech such as bug fixes and new features, negating the need to buy the next updated version.

### **IT and infrastructure**

Companies that use cloud software benefit from many upfront cost savings. Capital investment is minimal since no servers are at your location as infrastructure is one of the largest costs associated with storing and managing data.

Cloud software also means you need less IT staff, as there are no expensive servers to maintain in-house. Less labour costs can of course translate neatly into significant savings. You can also consider the lower overall cost of keeping your company running, as without servers on site you should use less energy on top of the freedom and agility gained with off-premise infrastructure.



One of the true stand out features of cloud apps is their ability to create flexibility on a number of levels in the business environment. Let's have a look at an example here to illustrate what we mean.

### **The modern studio**

Polly Harvey owns a small graphic design studio with 3 employees, operating from a fixed address. What benefits would she see in using a range of cloud technologies to run her business?

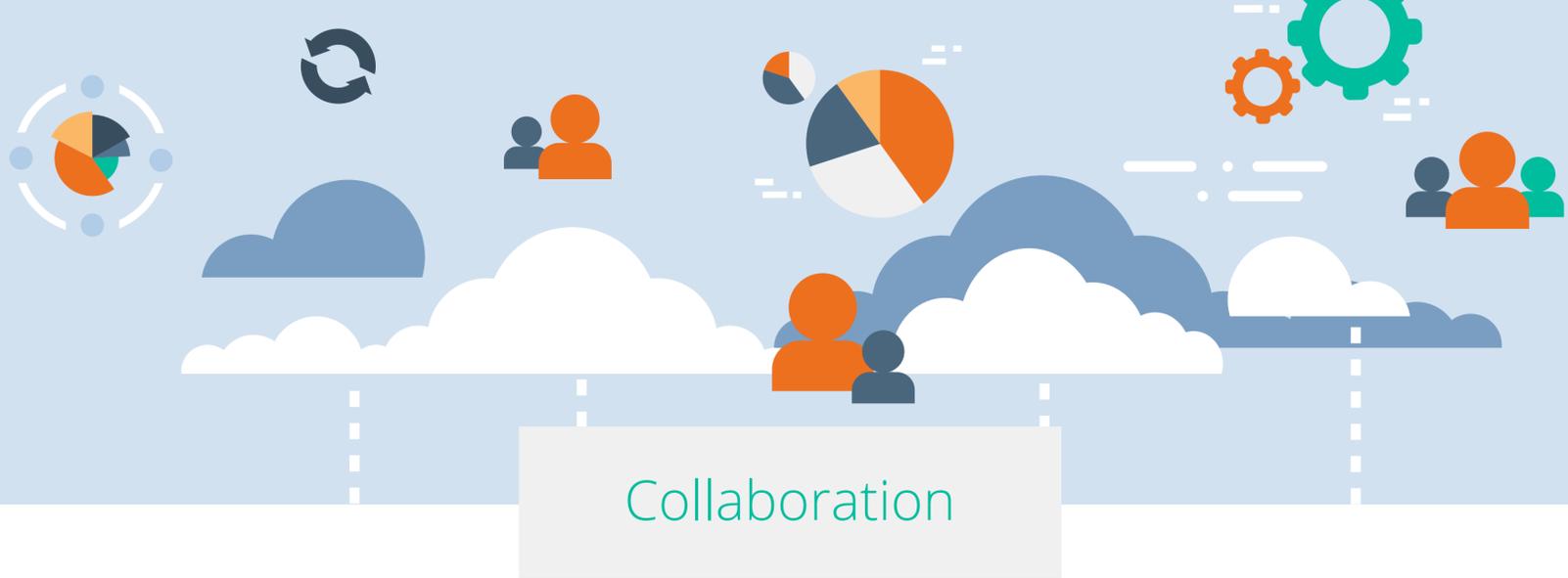
Let's take the Adobe creative suite example from above to have a look at the cloud-based SaaS model in terms of up-to-date technology and the flexibility it affords.

Not only does the monthly cloud-based design software subscription save Polly money when compared to on premise installations, she is also incredibly flexible. With cloud, she can install the design apps she needs on any device or computer she likes with the same account and associated costs. In days past, if she were on a different computer? Bad luck, no work for you.

Now Polly can have her employees working on projects in the office, the same employees working on the same software on their home computers or even have them working remotely on laptops. Try doing that with desktop. So even though the work is primarily office/studio based, if Polly or an employee need to work from home for the day or she sends out a staff member to visit a client offsite, the same quality of work can be achieved on the same account.

### **Agility**

Furthermore, Polly may decide after a new graphic design software launch that she wants to switch out her current software for something new. No worries! Since she has no lock in contracts, no capital placed down for software, nothing installed on premise and no downtime, she can! This agility can be priceless if your subscription goes up, the software quality begins to lag or a new mover and shaker storms the space with a superior product. Now you are no longer trapped, no longer invested and no longer slow to adopt change.



This is a major boon for cloud-based software over desktop or manual processes. Collaboration is hinged on the premise that you are all on the same page. The cloud allows this with razor sharp efficiency.

Let's recruit Polly again to see what we mean.

Polly's lead designer Alice is working with Polly and a major client on an important rebranding project. To manage the project, they have subscribed to a cloud based project management tool like Trello and a cloud storage account like Dropbox. Instead of countless meetings, 30 000 emails, dozens of versions of files and long confusing strings of commentary on design changes, Polly has clarity in the cloud.

### **Single source of truth**

They can discuss projects, tasks and milestones in a single mobile platform, ensuring up to date and clear communication and mutually agreed changes. With a single cloud folder of imagery, they know they all have the same current design in front of them. The savings in time and the gains in efficiency and error reduction are outstanding.

Even Jack White and his t-shirt business can get in on this action! As one of Polly's smaller clients, Jack works with her in a similar way. When working on a new t shirt design, Jack manages the project in a similar fashion, tracking progress, commenting on tasks in Trello, suggesting changes and uploading doodles from his smartphone as to what he wants to see. Jack can be in Tamworth while Polly is in Melbourne as they work together as quickly and seamlessly as if they were in the same room.



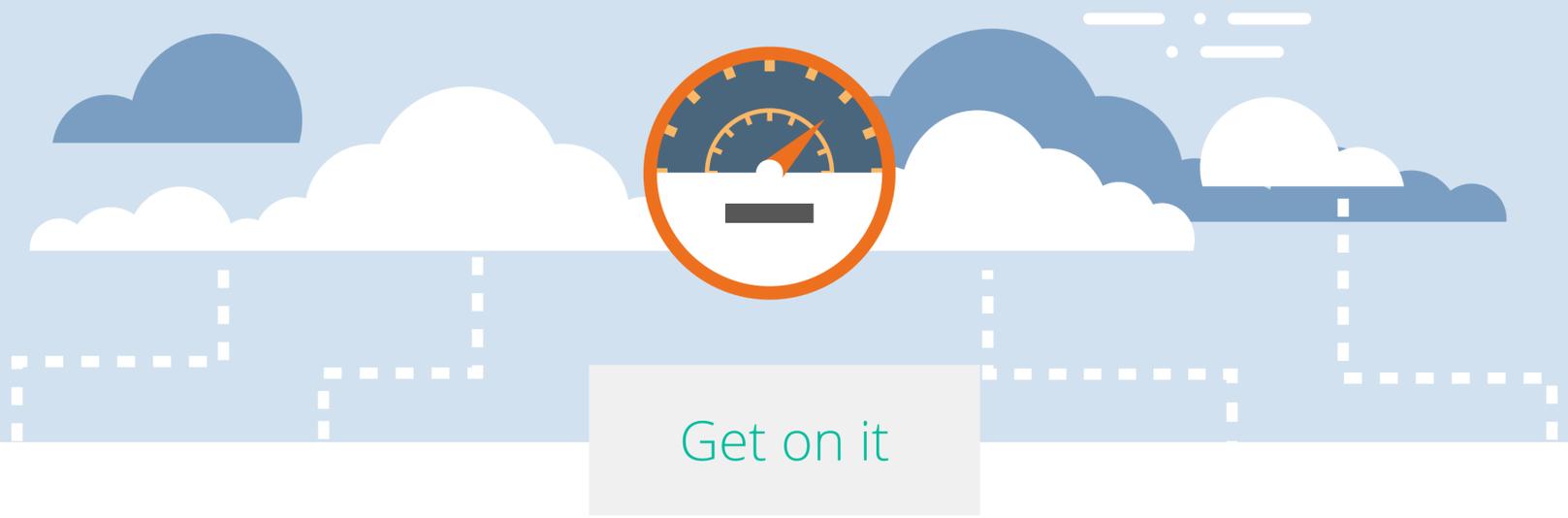
If you are running your business on desktop software and storing your files and data on your hard drive or memory card, you have a lot to be concerned about.

Lost laptops are a billion-dollar business problem. In fact, potentially greater than the loss of an expensive piece of kit is the loss of the sensitive data inside it. Cloud computing gives you far greater security and assurance when this happens as your data is stored in the cloud, behind robust and encrypted security, which remains accessible no matter what happens to your machine.

Furthermore, if lost, you can even remotely wipe data from your laptop or phone so it doesn't get into the wrong hands. So, if some shady thief steals your computer they'll have your hardware but they won't be able to swipe your secrets as you've stored them securely in the cloud.

This essentially creates a scenario where you will never have to truly worry about losing a device again, or ever be too concerned about a system crash. Sure, the laptop or tablet needs replacing but cloud storage has rescued you from the serious despair and massive business dysfunction involved in total data loss. Such a loss, especially of client data, could easily spell the end of your business right there and then.

Remember that sinking feeling when you lost your laptop or dropped your phone in a drink (or worse...)? That feeling will be nicely muted when you realise you have everything you really need. Thanks to the cloud you will still have access to all your data, communications and important files.



So there you go, many more points could be made here but in terms of cloudifying your small business, we now have a compelling set of reasons to contemplate. Each business is different and no one solution will fit all organisations, but as you must be aware by now, the future is in the cloud and it is best to start making those migrations as soon as you are able. As the clouds begin to gather overhead, make sure you aren't caught in the rain, tethered to on premise software.

## About Reckon

Here at Reckon we are more than just accounting software, we are a business solutions hub – and marketing is another way we are helping businesses grow.

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