

TRANSITIONING NONPROFITS TO THE CLOUD

A roadmap for nonprofit organizations as they consider options outside their own IT infrastructure for data and applications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many IT leaders at nonprofit organizations face significant challenges as they seek to reach a global audience, while keeping pace with technological innovations. Users and stakeholders expect nonprofits to provide technology similar to what they encounter in the private sector, while staffing, budgeting and data management issues may limit a nonprofit organization's ability to provide those services. As IT decision-makers strive to meet ever-increasing demands, they often choose to deploy cloud-based solutions to assist them in providing modern, high-quality IT services.

Cloud-based solutions bring agility, innovation and cost effectiveness to IT. However, they also present serious challenges for nonprofit organizations. When deploying IT services, nonprofits place a high priority on security and reliability, which are less understood factors for many IT leaders when considering cloud deployment. Nonprofit IT staff members may also lack the skills and experience required to implement locally constructed cloud services.

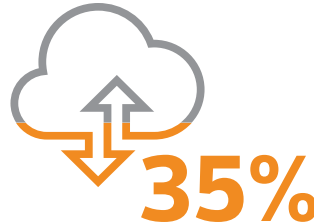
Fortunately, many nonprofit organizations have found ways to address these obstacles and move to the cloud. They serve as role models for deploying cloud solutions in a nonprofit environment.

The Situation

Maintaining an effective and secure on-premises IT infrastructure can be challenging. Data and mobility requirements can stress aging infrastructures. This strain can create difficulties for nonprofit IT leaders if they require additional resources to help expand their infrastructures to meet the emerging demands of end users.

At the same time, nonprofits are challenged to attract and retain qualified IT staff. Technologists with specialized experience in high-demand areas, such as networking, security and database administration, command high salaries in the private sector. The candidates most qualified for open positions often will not accept the salary and benefits offered by nonprofits. And as existing staff members develop high-demand skills, they often leave the nonprofit world for more lucrative positions in the private sector.

These budget and staffing challenges drive nonprofit IT leaders to consider new and innovative approaches to computing. Existing on-premises IT infrastructure may be unable to support the rise of new consumer- and data-oriented services. Yet, many nonprofit IT leaders don't have the budgetary resources needed to expand the existing infrastructure to meet emerging data needs and to sustain the staff necessary to manage it. For these reasons, many nonprofit organizations are considering getting out of the data center business altogether. Cloud services represent a smart option to help achieve this goal.



The percentage of IT services today that are delivered totally or partially by the cloud*

cloud services ranked third on a list of CIO investment priorities for 2015, with 32 percent of CIOs listing it as a priority. That marks a significant increase from the 27 percent of CIOs who prioritized cloud investments in 2014. CIOs are rapidly deciding to implement new services in the cloud and migrate legacy services to cloud environments.

Cloud-based solutions promise to help nonprofit organizations overcome the limitations of on-premises infrastructure by leveraging the economies of scale found in sharing infrastructure with many other customers. Cloud service providers operate massive data centers that serve millions of customers globally, and they can build and operate their systems at unprecedented scale. From turnkey Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions to the technology building blocks of Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), cloud providers noticeably reduce the burden of IT on nonprofit organizations.

As organizations begin cloud migration, they typically find that SaaS solutions, as an alternative to enterprise software purchases, offer the greatest early value because of the ease of implementation and degree of cost savings. Email storage and Voice over IP (VoIP) telephony are popular IaaS solutions for the same reasons.

Both of these categories deliver mature technology solutions and offer nonprofit organizations a low-risk option to get comfortable with the cloud. Many nonprofits also give close consideration to the migration of their backup and disaster recovery operations to the cloud, which can deliver greater capabilities at a lower price point than can be provided with in-house solutions. Organizations also are exploring Desktop as a Service, a cloud offering that provides a virtual desktop environment with far fewer demands on IT infrastructure and staff. Other common migration targets include storage and web services.

Many nonprofit CIOs see the value of migrating to cloud services and want to embrace the change as quickly as

The Solution: Cloud Computing

IT leaders in many types of organizations find themselves turning to the cloud. In a survey of CIOs, Gartner found that

CLOUD BENEFITS

Cloud computing holds special appeal for nonprofit organizations because it transfers much of the burden of operating technology infrastructure from employees to service providers. Cloud deployment provides four key benefits:

- 1. Access to the latest computing technology:** For example, with Software as a Service (SaaS), application upgrades become a thing of the past. Service providers continuously update software on the back end with minimal effect on internal staff.
- 2. Extended IT operations:** Nonprofit organizations typically lack the resources to operate 24/7 help desks, leaving users waiting until business hours for assistance. Cloud service providers often offer around-the-clock support, maximizing employee productivity.

- 3. Reduced costs:** Cloud service providers achieve economies of scale that are not typically possible in a nonprofit environment. The cloud delivery model also allows agencies to budget for IT services as an operational expenditure, rather than requiring a substantial upfront investment in capital expenditures for infrastructure.
- 4. Driven innovation:** Cloud-based services not only provide staff with tools to increase productivity, but they also allow IT workers to focus on mission-oriented initiatives rather than mundane tasks involving maintenance of the technology infrastructure.

These benefits capture the promise of cloud computing to help revolutionize nonprofit IT operations.

their organizational culture and regulatory requirements allow.

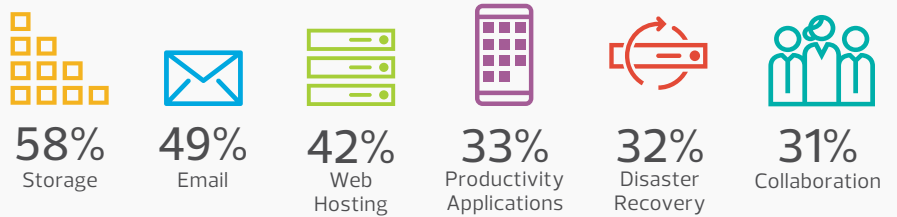
Cloud Obstacles

The deployment of cloud-based solutions presents challenges for nonprofit organizations, the biggest of which include securing sensitive data and training IT staff.

For nonprofits, information security is critical. They handle a wide variety of sensitive information about volunteers and donors, such as Social Security numbers, donors' credit card data and the personal or private information of nonprofit service recipients. As IT decision-makers consider deploying cloud-based solutions, they must ensure that they can maintain at least the same degree of security control in the cloud as they do in existing on-premises deployments. They also must make sure that the cloud providers they consider can meet the requirements of regulations, such as the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The Cloud Security Alliance has addressed cloud security concerns with the creation of the Security, Trust and Assurance Registry (STAR). This program certifies cloud service providers that successfully implement the controls detailed in

Services That Organizations Have Migrated or Plan to Migrate to the Cloud



47%

The percentage of IT leaders who say that security is the biggest barrier to moving more services to the cloud*

CSA's Cloud Controls Matrix (CCM). Many nonprofit organizations do not have the resources to conduct their own security assessments of cloud providers and find STAR a convenient shortcut to certifying solutions for their own use.

Another major obstacle facing nonprofit organizations turning to the cloud is a lack of experienced IT staff. Cloud technology is relatively new, and technologists with strong cloud backgrounds are in demand. Rather than hiring new staff, nonprofit IT leaders are relying on trusted partners to assist them with a cloud migration. With this approach, organizations can benefit from a partner's experience, while internal IT staff hone the skills necessary to deploy and support cloud services as they continue to operate the legacy IT infrastructure.

NONPROFITS TURN TO OFFICE 365 SaaS SOLUTIONS

As nonprofits consider cloud computing, they often seek out the "quick wins" that validate their cloud strategies and deliver maximum value to the organization as quickly as possible. One of the most common starting points is outsourcing email, calendaring and office productivity solutions.

Microsoft's Office 365 Software as a Service platform offers nonprofits access to services traditionally delivered through a complex on-premises infrastructure consisting of Microsoft Exchange, SharePoint and file servers. Moving to a SaaS approach allows nonprofit IT organizations to offer their customers best-in-breed solutions while also freeing up their time to focus on other initiatives.

Cyrus Despres, IT manager at public radio station KEXP in Seattle, [summarized](#) the benefits of a cloud office productivity suite well: "Switching to Office 365 made it so much easier for us to work together, in a safe place, where we have control of the information."

How to Get Started in the Cloud

Cloud-based solutions promise efficiency and cost savings, but each nonprofit organization should consider its own unique requirements when planning to migrate. The array of cloud services appropriate for one organization may not be a good fit for another. Each must consider its own needs, limitations and risk tolerance.

According to Jack Nichols, a cloud client executive for CDW, nonprofit organizations should start by evaluating their existing business models. "It's fairly easy to determine the costs of cloud services," he says, "but a lot of organizations don't know what it costs them to deliver the service in-house. To evaluate the cloud, you need to know your own costs."

Once an organization has the information needed to develop a cloud business model, it can outline its cloud strategy. Many nonprofit organizations begin by conducting a handful of pilot migrations to build confidence in the cloud model. These pilots often take advantage of proven cloud service models, such as email/collaboration and VoIP telephony. Pilots help IT leaders better articulate a long-term strategy appropriate for the organization.

The nonprofit Global Washington serves as an excellent illustration of this strategic approach to cloud computing. The Seattle-based group helps other nonprofits work together to

fight poverty. It created a sophisticated geographic information system application delivered as SaaS from the cloud, providing a platform that helped its nonprofit partners work together. Global Washington's IT staff worked with a VMware vCloud data center to create a global database that connects these nonprofits and helps eliminate redundancy in service delivery. Migrating to vCloud allowed Global Washington to create this service with a small IT staff and quickly begin delivering value to member organizations.

The right cloud deployment for a nonprofit organization depends on a variety of factors, including budgetary restrictions, business requirements, risk tolerance, security and the capabilities of cloud service providers. These factors inform the development of a cloud strategy consistent with the organization's culture and values. Organizations should turn to a trusted technology partner for assistance in developing their strategies and assembling the array of cloud services required to implement that strategy.

CDW Nonprofit: A Cloud Partner That Gets IT

CDW solution providers serve as cloud partners to help nonprofit organizations create pathways to the cloud and integrate solutions seamlessly. If necessary, they can even manage day-to-day operations. We also provide the risk management methodologies that organizations need to secure data, maximize continuity of operations and put disaster recovery plans in place.

CDW Nonprofit account managers, solution architects and engineers assist customers at every phase as they select and implement the cloud technology they need. We take a comprehensive approach to identifying and meeting the needs of every customer. Each engagement is designed to help clients achieve their cloud objectives in an efficient, effective manner.

To learn how a nationwide nonprofit upgraded its IT infrastructure by building a private cloud, read the CDW case study "IT Lends Children's Miracle Network Hospitals a Hand."

The CDW Approach



ASSESS

Evaluate business objectives, technology environments, and processes; identify opportunities for performance improvements and cost savings.



DESIGN

Recommend relevant technologies and services, document technical architecture, deployment plans, "measures of success," budgets and timelines.



MANAGE

Proactively monitor systems to ensure technology is running as intended and provide support when and how you need it.



DEPLOY

Assist with product fulfillment, configuration, broad-scale implementation, integration and training.