

# Are off-the-cloud desktop applications dead? [closed]

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago   Modified 16 years, 3 months ago

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3



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Closed 10 years ago.

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Although somewhat related to [this question](#), I have what I think is a different take on it.

Is a desktop app that has no connections to the "cloud" dead? I believe that some things are going to continue to be on the machine (operating systems obviously, browsers, some light-weight applications), but more and more things are moving to network-based applications (see Google Docs for office suites, GMail and other web-email clients for email, flickr for photo management, and more).

So other than the lightweight applications, is there anything that, in 5 to 10 years, will continue to be (either out of necessity or just demand) remain on the desktop and off the cloud?

desktop-application

cloud

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edited May 23, 2017 at 12:01



Community Bot

1 • 1

asked Sep 9, 2008 at 18:21



Thomas Owens

116k • 99 • 317 • 436

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What does it mean for a technology to be dead? It's not a black or white thing. Is ASP dead, or MFC, or Cobol?

– [Captain Sensible](#) Jan 22, 2009 at 14:38

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You could also have a desktop application that's "cloudified" by service like [pinemango.com](http://pinemango.com) - Taking away the need to rewrite desktop application into web-based. – [Ming Tsai](#) Aug 31, 2013 at 15:41

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9 Answers

Sorted by:

Highest score (default)



10 years or more ago this would have been, "Are non-internet applications dead?"

7



There's things the cloud does better than desktop applications, and in those places I'm sure non-cloud applications will become increasingly rare. But there's plenty of applications where you might not want to use the cloud, the benefits don't outweigh the costs, or the complexity just isn't worth it.

It's a new tool, and it's a better tool than desktop applications for many things. However, you don't throw away a hammer when you buy a screwdriver, you simply reserve it for when a nail needs to be driven.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:35



OwenP

25.4k ● 13 ● 70 ● 105



4

Video editing and other resource intensive tasks will probably stay off the cloud for a long time.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:28



Geoff

9,340 ● 7 ● 39 ● 48



I thought about that. Then thought about PhotoSynth. That's got to be some heavy image processing, although static images... – [Thomas Owens](#) Sep 9, 2008 at 18:30

Resource intensive tasks are perfect for the cloud as you can distribute the processing across hundreds or thousands of nodes – [John Channing](#) Sep 9, 2008 at 18:44

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You can also do CPU intensive tasks in runtimes such as the JRE. Not everything needs be ECMAScript.

– [Tom Hawtin - tackline](#) Sep 10, 2008 at 8:08

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@John, yes you can distribute the processing but you also have to distribute the data. – [MarkJ](#) Sep 16, 2009 at 23:06

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3

IDE's will probably be "off the cloud" for a long time, if ever... powerful customizable editors like Emacs will also probably stay "off the cloud" for a while.



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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:26

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[Mike Stone](#)

44.6k ● 30 ● 114 ● 140



if a long time is 10-15 years, I agree. But it will happen.

– [Tony BenBrahim](#) Sep 10, 2008 at 5:32

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IDEs are one of the first things I'd want on the net. NetBeans, for instance, already has some collaboration features. It'd great to be WebStartable. Just launch the app from any (safe) machine and get to work with colleagues.

– [Tom Hawtin - tackline](#) Sep 10, 2008 at 8:06

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[pinemango.com](#) offers cloud desktop environments where a real IDE can be offered directly from a browser! Note: It also comes with collaborative feature enbaled if needed.

– [Ming Tsai](#) Aug 31, 2013 at 15:44

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If I look at the application that we've selling and at the applications I've written as a consultant, I must very much agree with you. Most of them are useless if there is no internet connection. Some do work in disconnected mode, some don't, but all of them are pretty useless if you cannot connect to the big supporting system hidden far far away.

On the other hand, I wouldn't want to say that everything will move into the cloud in 5 years. Too much work with porting. There will be desktop applications that will function as a thin and offline-able client (just like, for example, Google Reader does if you install Gears) and there will be fully "clouded" :) applications.

I have no idea what will happen in 10 years. If I put myself 10 years back (and that is very easy to do as I was writing a lot for a local computer magazine in that time), I totally couldn't predict how the computing will become internet-dependant in 2008.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:29

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[gabr](#)

26.8k ● 10 ● 79 ● 142

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+1 Don't believe the conventional wisdom and the conventional predictions. Slightly off topic. 10 years ago everyone was predicting that "content would be king" and you'd only make a profit from the Internet if you owned content. Then came Google, YouTube, Facebook, and this place. – [MarkJ](#) Sep 16, 2009 at 23:09

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Gosh, I hope not as that's my job.

3



The main piece of software I write controls electronic hardware (PXI boards and the like) for testing. Without

"real" hardware, there's nothing to test. Even the very nature of the tests themselves prevent simultaneous

access (once you set the state of a switch, you don't want someone else moving it).



So as long as you interact with any hardware, you're off-the-cloud.

Oh, and some companies have security issues with being on the Internet; I'd say security would also drive desktop apps with no connections.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:31



**Richard Morgan**

7,681 ● 9 ● 50 ● 87



There's no reason that many corporations will move to an online system simply because of security concerns.

2



For example, One of the greatest assets of Outlook is to go offline and continue working. Sure Google Gears has similar functionality, but then you're trusting Google with your corporate security.



answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:26

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enigmatic

295 ● 1 ● 5



2



Such applications are dead since 15 years, ever since Sun took market leadership with their [JavaStation](#).

No, wait. They did not. And things are not "more and more" moving to network-based applications. Sure, there is Webmail, but even GMail is FAR away from the comfort of modern Outlook or Thunderbird Clients. Same for office. Google Docs is a nice toy for occasional use, but it's vastly inferior to conventional Office suites.

The Desktop is not dead and it will not die anytime soon. Internet Applications are alternatives in some situations, but be are just starting getting proper functionality and performance. Let's face it: JavaScript performance is still a Joke, the IDE Support is not there yet and Browsers are too unstable at the moment.

Google Chrome, IE8 and Firefox 3.1 start to go in a better direction, but it will take years for them to be mature enough to create JavaScript applications that actually can fully replace desktop apps. But that would require some proper standardization accross browsers, and we all know that this will not happen before the next millennium or so.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:30



Michael Stum

181k ● 119 ● 407 ● 541

- 
- 1 Not sure I agree with "FAR away from the comfort of modern Outlook" or "vastly inferior to conventional Office suites". I gave up MS Office a couple years ago for OpenOffice, and I've now given that up for Google docs. I've never looked back. I've not once wished for MS Office – [Ben Collins](#) Sep 9, 2008 at 18:35
- 

And I still use Word to write my Blog Posts :- ) MS Office 2007 is actually quite good, but it's overkill for small lists and documents, yet in my corporate environment it's lightyears ahead of Google Docs. OpenOffice is also a good alternative, that then depends. – [Michael Stum](#) Sep 9, 2008 at 21:20

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2



About 1% of users actually use Google Docs&Spreadsheets full-time. Almost all of the rest use Microsoft Office. So, no, off-the-cloud applications are not dead simply because a Google office suite exists. And those are, really, the only high-profile true web applications out there that are meant as desktop app replacements.

Webmails are a special case though. It actually makes sense to use those rather than a desktop app, since your email is next-to-useless without a connection anyway. But most applications don't NEED a full-time Internet connection. A word processor certainly doesn't.

What will definitely remain on the desktop:

1. Games
2. Small apps (calculator, notepad type of stuff)



3. Anything that generates data that needs to be secure (I don't imagine tons of people or companies want to trust their accounting details to Google, for example)
4. Web browsers (obviously)
5. IDEs (Visual Studio via Ajax? Come on...)
6. Auxiliary development tools (SVN, etc), since good security policy would forbid their use through a web browser
7. Anything that needs high enough performance that network latency would be an impediment

What will probably remain primarily on the desktop, at least for the next 5 years:

1. Office tools (unless web-based limitations can be lifted... which would require much better-performing web browsers than we have now)
2. Photoshop and such tools
3. Chat clients (web-based equivalents are disappointing so far)

That's not to say that any of the above cannot have an Internet-based component, of course.

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 18:31

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**TheSmurf**

15.6k ● 3 ● 41 ● 48



0

I personally will never leave my stuff on the web under someone else's control. All of my photos and e-mails I keep on local hard drives that I control.



I prefer to make my own stuff available to me through the web on my own hardware. The only way to have reasonable performance and be productive when offline is to use local apps.

To me the future will be local, but remotely accessible and synchronized. At least for the next 20 years or so.

Not only do I think it's not dead, I think it's the way everyone will want to go once we have a few disastrous failures (ie, websites disappearing with users content that isn't backed up anywhere or severe privacy breeches as some large company loses control of access to the data they are protecting).

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answered Sep 9, 2008 at 19:39



[bruceatk](#)

5,138 ● 2 ● 27 ● 36

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