

Getting into the Cloud

After you wrap your head around just how cool cloud computing can be, what should you do to take your network toward the cloud? Allow me to make a few recommendations:

- » **Don't depend on a poor Internet connection.** First and foremost, before you take any of your network operations to the cloud, make sure that you're *not* dependent on a consumer-grade Internet connection if you decide to adopt cloud computing. Consumer-grade Internet connections can be fast, but when an outage occurs, there's no telling how long you'll wait for the connection to be repaired. You definitely don't want to wait for hours or days while the cable company thinks about sending someone out to your site. Instead, spend the money for a high-speed enterprise-class connection that can scale as your dependence on it increases.
- » **Assess what applications you may already have running on the cloud.** If you use Gmail rather than Exchange for your email, congratulations! You've already embraced the cloud. Other examples of cloud services that you may already be using include a remote web or FTP host, Dropbox or another file sharing service, Carbonite or another online backup service, a payroll service, and so on.
- » **Don't move to the cloud all at once.** Start by identifying a single application that lends itself to the cloud. If your engineering firm archives projects when they close and wants to get them off your primary file server but keep them readily available, look to the cloud for a file storage service.
- » **Go with a reputable company.** Google, Amazon, and Microsoft are all huge companies with proven track records in cloud computing. Many other large and established companies also offer cloud services. Don't stake your company's future on a company that didn't exist six months ago.
- » **Research, research, research.** Pour yourself into the web, and buy a few books. *Hybrid Cloud For Dummies*, by Judith Hurwitz, Marcia Kaufman, Dr. Fern Halper, and Daniel Kirsch (Wiley), is a good place to start.