Introducing Cloud Computing

The basic idea behind cloud computing is to outsource one or more of your net–worked computing resources to the Internet. "The cloud" represents a new way of handling common computer tasks. Following are just a few examples of how the cloud way differs from the traditional way:

» **Email services**

- *Traditional:* Email services are provided with a local server running Microsoft Exchange. Then your clients can connect use Microsoft Outlook to connect to the Exchange server to send and receive email.

- *Cloud:* Contract with an Internet-based email provider, such as Google Mail (Gmail) or Microsoft's Exchange Online. Cloud-based email services typically charge a low monthly per-user fee, so the amount you pay for your email service depends solely on the number of email users you have.

» **Disk storage**

- *Traditional:* Set up a local file server computer with a large amount of shared disk space.

- *Cloud:* Sign up for an Internet file storage service and then store your data on the Internet. Cloud-based file storage typically charges a small monthly per-gigabyte fee, so you pay only for the storage you use. The disk capacity of cloud-based storage is essentially unlimited.

» **Accounting services**

- *Traditional:* Purchase expensive accounting software and install it on a local server computer.

- *Cloud:* Sign up for a web-based accounting service. Then all your account-ing data is saved and managed on the provider's servers, not on yours.

» **Virtual servers**

- *Traditional:* Purchase expensive computers, install a virtualization platform such as VMware's ESXi or Microsoft's Hyper-V, and create virtual machines.

- *Cloud:* Sign up for virtual machines hosted on a cloud provider's servers. Skip the part about buying expensive computers and installing ESXi or Hyper-V.