

Count on the cloud: protect your data in the post-pandemic world

Starting up a new business in the pandemic and post-pandemic world can be daunting. After the uncertainty of the past 18 months and the changes that the global crisis has made to everyone's daily lives, now is the perfect time to take a step back, and look at how your business is using - and protecting - its most critical asset: data.

Temps de lecture : minute

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In early 2020, UKCloud's survey of public sector organisations revealed that 9 out of 10 sought to move their IT into the cloud. Therefore, whilst cloud adoption was expected last year, the rate at which organisations needed to move into the cloud happened at an unprecedented speed. The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) market was forecasted to reach \$116B in 2020, but far exceeded this figure, actually reaching \$225.6B. The market continues to grow, and is predicted to reach \$272.49B by the end of 2021.

The simplicity, flexibility, and security which cloud services provide are all factors creating a rapid demand for SaaS solutions.

How COVID has changed business

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on businesses across the globe and in every industry. The UK government's order to work from home in March 2020 forced organisations here to adapt their processes to allow operations to continue remotely, and for many, these changes were

for the better.

As businesses hurried to provide remote access for employees and install applications that allowed for collaboration and virtual calls, there has been a mass acceleration to the cloud during the past year and a half. And this digital transformation shows no sign of slowing down. With more than 8 out of 10 businesses now implementing a form of hybrid working, it seems unlikely that things will revert back to how they were before.

Remote working, therefore, is here to stay. This is happening across industries all around the world. Neither ASDA's office staff in the UK nor Ford's 30,000 American white-collar workers will be returning to their offices for the usual eight hours a day, five days a week, once COVID restrictions are fully lifted.

With this new normal, demand for cloud services will continue to grow, and in turn so will the amount of business-critical data that is being produced and stored in the cloud. It is essential that businesses know how to keep this data safe and secure. Why?

The importance of protecting data

As employees work from home, the majority of data is now being produced outside of corporate firewalls. This leaves the data vulnerable and has allowed for a spike in ransomware attacks. These grew by 485% between 2019 and 2020 as businesses moved to remote working. Research from Sophos found that 37% of organisations have been hit by ransomware in the last year, of which 54% said the cybercriminals succeeded in encrypting their data. As more businesses become reliant on cloud services, it is predicted that by 2025, 75% of organisations will experience ransomware attacks in a year. Your business needs to be vigilant to these attacks, because after all; your data, your responsibility.

With the average ransom payment in 2020 being \$154,108 and attacks causing an average downtime of 21 days, it has never been more important to protect data from threats. Businesses not only can't afford to risk the financial impact of an attack, even if they don't pay the ransom and recover the data themselves, but there's also the devastating impact on the brand that can be seen once customers are alerted to the incident.

One in four consumers will abandon a company in favour of a competitor after a single ransomware-related service disruption, according to Arcserve research, while over 65% of respondents would turn to a competitor if a business couldn't restore systems and applications within just three days following a cyberattack.

Stay secure in the cloud

Luckily for businesses, the cloud can be very secure as well as being simple and cost-effective – when it is implemented and managed correctly. SaaS cloud models are particularly valuable when trusted organisations collaborate to build a service; SaaS with data protection is one such example of this. Data can be seamlessly transitioned to the cloud without businesses having to manage, monitor or secure it separately from their data protection service.

However, it is crucial to be aware that SaaS vendors are responsible for availability, not data recovery. Not having a data protection solution in addition to your cloud is a risk no business should take. If a cyber attack were to occur and data was lost, they're not responsible for its recovery, meaning it could be lost forever.

A shared responsibility model is a valuable feature offered by some cloud providers, including Microsoft. It splits the responsibility for the held data between the provider and the user. Therefore, a system which combines data protection and disaster recovery is essential. This is where Backup-

as-a-Service, or BaaS, can be a critical addition to your IT environment.

BaaS solutions have multiple layers of redundancy to protect your data. This means that data is stored in at least two separate locations so it will never be completely lost. In the unfortunate circumstance of a ransomware attack, the data can be easily and quickly restored.

BaaS has many additional benefits, primarily the ease of data management. Cloud data storage eliminates the need for storage device rotations or the manual movement of data to secure, remote locations. It also transfers the responsibility for the data from the organisation to the BaaS provider. This means that time-consuming tasks, such as data compliance checks and deduplication, are handed over to the provider, freeing up the business' time to focus on making a profit.

Trust the cloud

Putting your data in the cloud is an easy, safe and cost-effective storage solution. In an increasingly digital world, physical in-house servers are a data storage method of the past.

Cloud services also allow the flexibility required for the modern attitude to working, particularly in light of the pandemic. As offices become a less permanent part of our society, the cloud provides workers with the ability to access their data and work from wherever suits their needs.

For any new businesses starting up in the post-pandemic world, using cloud services to store and protect your data is a wise decision. Having the flexibility, ease of management, and security required for your data will take a load off your plate, and give you time to focus on the parts of the business that will make customers stop and take note.

Jonathan Bowl is VP and general manager – Northern EMEA at [*Commvault*](#).

Article by Jonathan Bowl