



Web hosting vs. Cloud computing



Introduction.

In today's IT-driven world, the burden on companies to manage specific hardware, software and Web technologies in-house has decreased. It is now common for companies to outsource a significant portion of their IT infrastructure by way of a third-party hosted solution.

The two main options for hosting data that have emerged in the marketplace in recent years are Web hosting and cloud computing. Both methods involve hosting your data online, and each has its own set of pros and cons. However, when you delegate critical IT functions, data privacy becomes a big issue. How do you know the bank account numbers, social security numbers and other confidential documents residing in your system are in good hands? Which method is best for your data?

Let us walk you through a number of factors to consider in assessing the best hosting method for your company.

Overview of hosting options

Web hosting. A Web-hosted model allows businesses to host their website data on large, powerful servers that are connected to the Internet 24/7 at a specific physical location. Companies rent server space which can be shared with multiple businesses, or dedicated solely to them depending on space and security requirements and website traffic level. A dedicated server for data provides peace of mind for businesses in industries such as healthcare, financial services and government, where privacy is at a premium and security breaches lead to massive lawsuits and irreparable reputation damage.

Within a successful Web-hosted model, teams of technicians and managers are devoted to addressing problems at a moment's notice and ensuring that downtime is low or virtually non-existent. To further ensure data stability, Web hosting typically employs a redundant backup server in another geographic location that continues to run in the event of a disaster where your main server is located. Dual firewalls and multiple Web, mail and FTP servers diversify your resources and further guard against disruptions to your service.

Cloud computing. A cloud computing model entails the interaction of several virtualized resources that connect and share data based on moment-to-moment demands. It is helpful to view cloud computing as a set of pooled servers that allocate resources among each other based on a website's needs for more or less hardware to handle the amount of traffic it receives at any given time. As such, its key differentiating value is scalability. Cloud computing is provided as a service over the internet, often with the option to host your data on either a public or private cloud. A public cloud leverages virtualization technology—software that hosts data on shared hardware and divides it up into virtual servers. A private cloud, on the other hand, leverages dedicated hardware running hypervisor software, which allows you to create multiple virtual servers on a single physical server.

Web hosting vs. cloud computing

When comparing Web hosting vs. cloud computing, Web hosting's major advantages are having resources dedicated exclusively to your business, security and privacy. All information that you upload to your dedicated server is available only to you and those to whom you grant access. Because you are not sharing hardware or leveraging virtualized servers, the chance that your information may accidentally be viewed by an unauthorized user is eliminated. Within a Web-hosted model, your data is managed by a third party team whose sole responsibility is to keep your website running smoothly and constantly back up your data, which minimizes the risk of an interruption in service or loss of information.

Web hosting admittedly tends to be less energy-efficient than cloud computing, as unused space on your hard drive continues to consume power. However, when client information is highly sensitive – as is always the case within financial services – the high level of security afforded by a Web-hosted server is critical.

The main benefit of cloud computing, on the other hand, is its ability to scale in order to handle large fluctuations in traffic, therefore ensuring that your website will never crash due to too many hits. If for some reason your website traffic spikes on a certain day, your cloud hosting service will automatically distribute your traffic onto unused space on virtualized servers. When the traffic spike subsides, so will the number of servers used to maintain your website. The user or business has no hand in the scaling of their hosting as it is all done behind the scenes by the cloud vendor.

Cloud computing is also parceled out on a significantly more affordable pay-as-you-go billing system – you are charged only for what you use (i.e. you pay more when you are using more server space and less when you use less). The scalability and price point are attractive to companies that cannot predict how much traffic their site will receive on a given day.

Cloud computing, however, is less secure than Web hosting, as it may utilize multiple servers in insecure locations to address a website traffic spike. In other words, your information is out there, in an unknown location, co-mingled with other businesses. In security-conscious industries, this type of hosting is not sufficient and much less reliable than the Web-hosted model which is a dedicated server in a known physical location.

Conclusion.

Cloud computing offers scalability and affordability for smaller, more budget-conscious companies that do not invite major legal risks. Web hosting, on the other hand, offers security and stability. Companies operating in heavily regulated industries that incur severe penalties for security breaches may find it worthwhile to invest in dedicated servers, maintenance teams and backup resources to protect critical data. Additionally, companies can deal with any challenges associated with scalability through a Web-hosted model by simply securing enough server space to meet any foreseeable traffic spikes.

Company overview

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