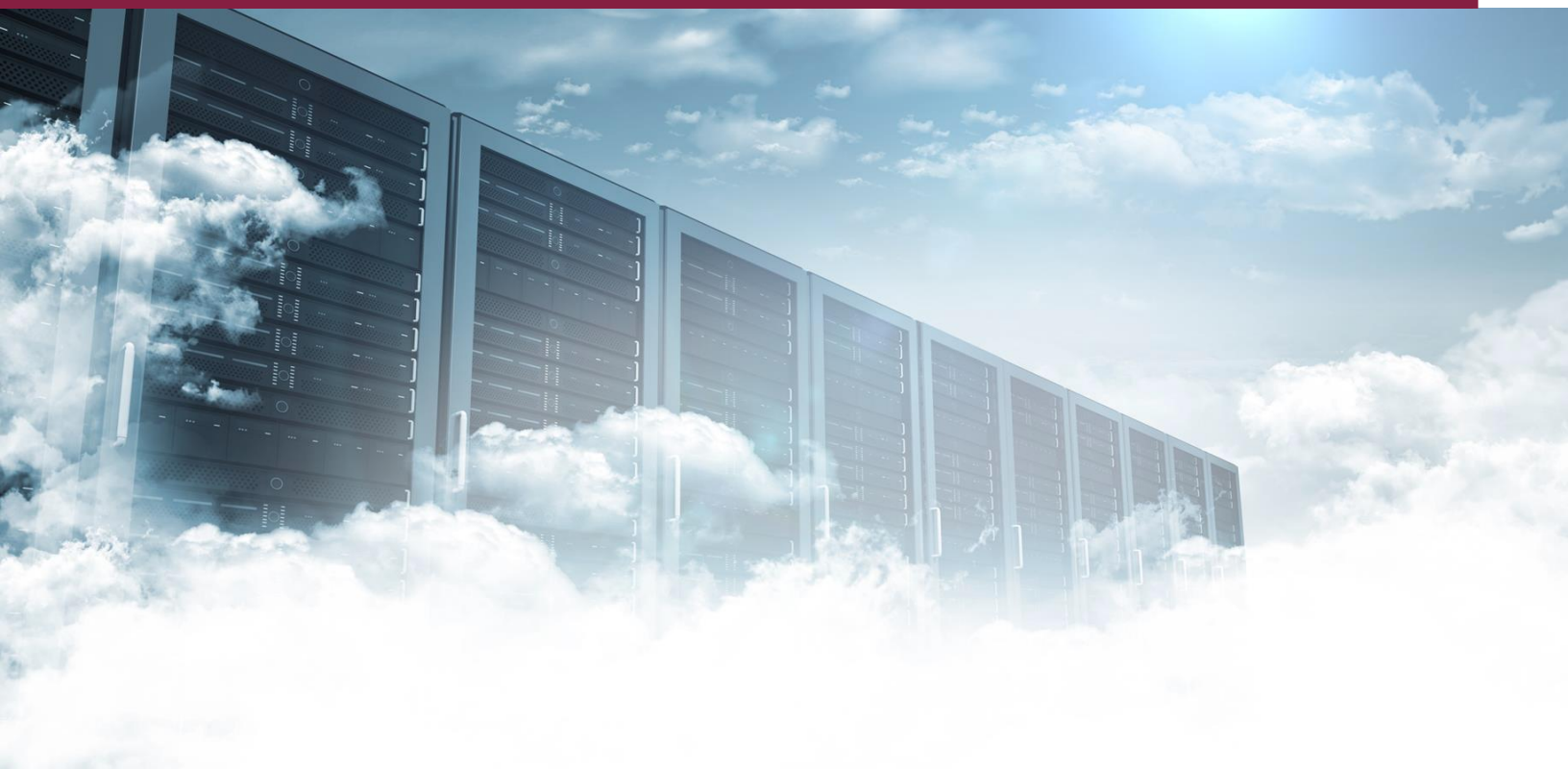




5 Critical Facts Every Business Owner Must Know Before Moving Their Network To The Cloud

Discover What Most IT Consultants Don't Know Or Won't Tell You About Moving Your Company's Network To The Cloud



Windstar Technologies, Inc.
www.WindstarTech.com

A Letter From Stefanie:

Why Was This Report And Who Should Read It

Dear Colleague,

When deciding to look into transitioning your computer network and operations to the cloud, you were probably met with conflicting advice, confusion and no real answers to your questions and concerns over security, cost and whether or not it's appropriate for your organization.

That's why we created this report. **We wanted to give CEOs a simple, straightforward guide that not only answers your questions in plain English, but also provides vital experience-based information that most IT companies don't know (or may not tell you) that could turn your migration into a big, cash-draining nightmare.**

My name is Stefanie Groot. My organization has helped many clients transition to the cloud, helping them to achieve greater efficiency, and security, while simplifying the administration process and costs. We have successfully migrated business workloads such as Email, File Services, SQL, Active Directory, Custom Web Apps, and more to the cloud, allowing our clients to be more scalable, and agile in licensing costs and allocating workload resources. In many cases this has lowered total IT costs by as much as 30% overall for those clients who have gone with either hybrid or pure cloud solutions.

The simple fact is, cloud computing may NOT be a good fit for every part in the company operations, and if you don't get all the facts or fully understand the pros and cons, you can end up making some VERY poor and expensive decisions that you'll deeply regret later. The information in this report will arm you with the critical facts you need to avoid expensive, time-consuming mistakes.

Of course, we are always available as a resource for a second opinion or quick question, so please feel free to contact my office direct if we can clarify any points made in this report or answer any questions you have.

Together, We Make I.T. Secure,

Stefanie Groot

President, Windstar Technologies, Inc.

5 Critical Facts You Must Know Before Moving To The Cloud

In this report I'm going to talk about **5 very important facts you need to know before you consider cloud computing for your company**. These include:

1. The pros AND cons you need to consider before moving to the cloud.
2. Migration GOTCHAS (and how to avoid them).
3. The various types of cloud computing options you have (there are more than just one).
4. Answers to important, frequently asked questions you need to know the answers to.
5. What questions you need to ask your IT pro before letting them "sell" you on moving all or part of your network and applications to the cloud.

I've also included some actual case studies from other businesses that have moved to cloud computing, along with a sample cost-comparison chart so you can see the impact this new technology can have on your IT budget.

At the end of this report there is an invitation for you to request a **Free Cloud Readiness Analysis** to determine if cloud computing is right for your particular business. I encourage you to take advantage of this before making any decisions since we've designed it to take a hard look at the functionality and costs for you as a business and provide you with the specific information you need (not hype) to make a good decision about this new technology.

What Is Cloud Computing?

Wikipedia defines cloud computing as "the use and access of multiple server-based computational resources via a digital network (WAN, Internet connection using the World Wide Web, etc.)."

But what the heck does *that* mean?

The easiest way to not only understand what cloud computing is but also gain insight into why it's gaining in popularity is to compare it to the evolution of public utilities. For example, let's look at the evolution of electricity.

Back in the industrial age, factories had to produce their own power in order to run machines that produced the hard goods they manufactured. Be it textiles or railroad spikes, using machines gave these companies enormous competitive advantages by producing more goods with fewer workers and



in less time. For many years, the production of power was every bit as important to their company's success as the skill of their workers and quality of their products.

Unfortunately, this put factories into TWO businesses: the business of producing their goods and the business of producing power. Then the concept of delivering power (electricity) as a utility was introduced by Thomas Edison when he developed a commercial-grade replacement for gas lighting and heating using centrally generated and distributed electricity. From there, as they say, the rest was history.

The concept of electric current being generated in central power plants and delivered to factories as a utility caught on fast. This meant manufacturers no longer had to be in the business of producing their own power with enormous and expensive water wheels. **In fact, in a very short period of time, it became a competitive necessity for factories to take advantage of the lower-cost option being offered by public utilities.** Almost overnight, thousands of steam engines and electric generators were rendered obsolete and left to rust next to the factories they used to power.

What made this possible was a series of inventions and scientific breakthroughs – but what drove the demand was pure economics. Utility companies were able to leverage economies of scale that single manufacturing plants simply couldn't match in output or in price. In fact, the price of power dropped so significantly that it quickly became affordable for not only factories but every single household in the country.

Today, we are in a similar transformation following a similar course. The only difference is that instead of cheap and plentiful electricity, advancements in technology and Internet connectivity are driving down the costs of computing power. With cloud computing, businesses can pay for "computing power" like a utility without having the exorbitant costs of installing, hosting and supporting it on-premise.

In fact, you are probably already experiencing the benefits of cloud computing in some way but hadn't realized it. Below are a number of cloud computing applications, also called SaaS or "software-as-a-service," you might be using:

- Gmail, Hotmail or other free e-mail accounts
- Facebook
- NetSuite, Salesforce
- Constant Contact, Mailchimp or other e-mail broadcasting services
- Alchemer, SurveyMonkey and other survey tools
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- All things Google (search, ads, maps, etc.)



If you think about it, almost every single application you use today can be (or already is) being put "in the cloud" where you can access it and pay for it via your browser for a monthly fee or utility pricing. You don't purchase and install software but instead access it via an Internet browser.

What About Microsoft 365 And Google Apps?

Microsoft 365 and Google Apps are perfect examples of the cloud computing trend; for an inexpensive monthly fee, you can get full access and use of Office applications that used to cost a few hundred dollars to purchase. And, since these apps are being powered by the cloud provider, you don't need an expensive desktop with lots of power to use them – just a simple Internet connection will do on a laptop, desktop or tablet.

Microsoft 365 Business products are an excellent and secure way for a company to begin their path to the cloud. Office and Windows can now be purchased as a subscription, allowing for continuous updates to each for no additional cost. Add Microsoft Entra ID and a Serverless office is now completely plausible.

Pros And Cons Of Moving To The Cloud

As you read this section, keep in mind there is no “perfect” solution. All options – be it an in-house, on-premise server or a cloud solution – have upsides and downsides that need to be evaluated on a case-by-case scenario. (Warning: Do NOT let a cloud expert tell you there is only “one way” of doing something!)

Keep in mind the best option for you may be a **hybrid solution** where some of your applications and functionality are in the cloud and some are still hosted and maintained from an in-house server. We'll discuss more of this in a later section; however, here are the general pros and cons of cloud computing:



Pros Of Cloud Computing:

- + Lowered IT costs.** This is probably the single most compelling reason why companies choose to move their network (all or in part) to the cloud. Not only do you save money on software licenses, but on hardware (servers and workstations) as well as on IT support and upgrades. In fact, we save our clients an average of 10% to 30% when we move all or part of their network functionality to the cloud. So, if you hate constantly writing cash-flow-draining checks for IT upgrades, you'll really want to look into cloud computing. Included in this report are examples of how we've done this for other clients and what the savings have been.
- + Ability to access your desktop and/or applications from anywhere and any device.** If you travel a lot, have remote workers or prefer to use an iPad while traveling and a laptop at your house, cloud computing will give you the ability to work from any of these devices. By having access to both data files and team information from any browser or mobile device, collaborating from remote locations is as effective as being in the office, while removing the need for traditional VPN infrastructure to maintain secure access.
- + It's a “greener” technology that will save on power and your electric bill.** For some smaller companies, the power savings will be too small to measure. However, for larger companies with multiple servers that are cooling a hot server room and keep their servers running 24/7/365, the savings are considerable.

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- + Disaster recovery and backup are automated.** The server in your office is extremely vulnerable to a number of threats, including viruses, human error, hardware failure, software corruption and, of course, physical damage due to a fire, flood or other natural disaster. If your server were in the cloud and (God forbid) your office was reduced to a pile of rubble, you could purchase a new laptop and be back up and running within the same day. This would NOT be the case if you had a traditional network and were using tape drives, CDs, USB drives or other physical storage devices to back up your system.
- + It's faster, cheaper and easier to set up new employees.** If you have a seasonal workforce or a lot of turnover, cloud computing will not only lower your costs of setting up new accounts, but it will make it infinitely faster. For example, one of our current clients has a call center for an online store, and during peak shopping seasons they need to add more users to accommodate the workload. Cloud computing allows for them to add the additional seats for as many weeks or months as they need instantly, and they only pay for what is consumed. For that same client, they have an SQL and Web server in the cloud for their Online Store, and again, in the peak seasons the servers are under heavier loads, which will then automatically be resized with more CPU and Memory resources on the fly, and will adjust back down when the demand is gone.
- + You use it without having to “own” it.** More specifically, you don't own the *responsibility* of having to install, update and maintain the infrastructure. Think of it as similar to living in a condo where someone else takes care of the building maintenance, repairing the roof and mowing the lawn, but you still have the only key to your section of the building and use of all the facilities. This is particularly attractive for companies that are new or expanding, but don't want the heavy outlay of cash for purchasing and supporting an expensive computer network.

Upon moving some or all of the business to the cloud, it is possible to start focusing internal resources on getting the line of business applications producing more efficiency, than to focus resources on keeping the infrastructure up and running. Cloud data centers are very stable and have built in failover making the administration of them mostly automated.



Cons Of Cloud Computing:

- **The Internet going down.** While you can mitigate this risk by using a commercial-grade Internet connection and maintaining a second backup connection, there is a chance you'll lose Internet connectivity, making it impossible to work. Although, today this is less and less of an issue, as more internet options become available.
- **Data security.** Many people don't feel comfortable having their data in some off-site location. This is a valid concern, and before you choose any cloud provider, you need to find out more information about where they are storing your data, how it's encrypted, who has access and how you can get it back. You'll find more information on this under "What To Look For When Hiring A Cloud Integrator" later on in this document.
- **Certain line-of-business applications won't work in the cloud.** For example, certain Database applications that are written in older languages may have requirements of a local server, or not work over VPN tunnels due to being data intensive.
- **Compliance Issues.** There are a number of laws and regulations, such as Gramm-Leach-Bliley, Sarbanes-Oxley and HIPAA, that require companies to control and protect their data and certify that they have knowledge and control over who can access the data, who sees it and how and where it is stored. In a public cloud environment, this can be a problem. Many cloud providers won't tell you specifically where your data is stored.

Most cloud providers have SSAE 16 certifications, which require them to be able to describe exactly what is happening in their environment, how and where the data comes in, what the provider does with it and what controls are in place over the access to and processing of the data; but as the business owner, it's YOUR neck on the line if the data is compromised, so it's important that you ask for some type of validation that they are meeting the various compliance regulations on an ongoing basis.



Migration Gotchas! What You Need To Know About Transitioning To A Cloud-Based Network

When done right, a migration to Microsoft 365 or another cloud solution should be like any other migration. There's planning that needs to be done, prerequisites that have to be determined and the inevitable "quirks" that need to be ironed out once you make the move.

Every company has its own unique environment, so it's practically impossible to try and plan for every potential pitfall; however, here are some BIG things you want to ask your IT consultant about BEFORE making the leap.



Downtime.

Some organizations cannot afford ANY downtime, while others can do without their network for a day or two. Make sure you communicate YOUR specific needs regarding downtime and make sure your IT provider has a solid plan to prevent extended downtime.



Painfully Slow Performance.

Ask your IT consultant if there's any way you can run your network in a test environment before making the full migration. Imagine how frustrated you would be if you migrate your network and discover everything is running so slow you can barely work! Again, every environment is slightly different, so it's best to test before you transition.



Third-Party Applications.

If your organization has third-party plug-ins, for example with Exchange for faxing, voice mail or integration into another application, make sure you test to see if it will still work in the new environment.

Test Data Migration.

Ask your consultant to do a test migration of a sample of one or more computers and user profiles, and data in the event of Exchange or email other migrations. There are several different ways email servers can be connected to, and that impacts where the data is stored. This will be a major part of the decision on how the migration should proceed. Also, ensure you have a good backup of any and all data for all users where it is critical to the business, just in case the migration goes wrong, and manual remediation is required.

Cloud Versus A Traditional Network: A Comparison Of Costs

As we said earlier, each client has a unique set of circumstances and needs that will factor into the cost savings and benefits. But in order to give you an idea of what you can save when moving your network to the cloud, we've put together a sample business scenario we commonly find, and the savings obtained with cloud computing. You'll find it on the next page.

Please note we've shown this over a three-year period since that is the normal span of time when all workstations and servers need to be replaced and software upgraded; and to account for the fact that you don't have to purchase new hardware as often (which is a huge cost savings when moving to the cloud), we need to show this over a three-year period to show the true and full cost savings.

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Cloud Versus A Traditional Network

ACME Consulting

This is a professional services firm that has 25 employees all using Microsoft Office. Other applications being used include QuickBooks, Microsoft Exchange, SharePoint and GoldMine.

Item	Traditional Network Cost Over 3 Years	Cloud Network Cost Over 3 Years
Hardware		
Server 1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Server 2	\$3,000	N/A
Server 3	\$3,000	N/A
Workstations (25)	\$25,000	\$15,000
Other Devices (Firewall/Web Filtering Appliance)	\$2,900	\$800
Software		
	Traditional	Microsoft 365 Business Premium 25 users * \$792 3-year license = \$19,800
Microsoft Operating System	\$8,025	Included
Microsoft Office Licenses	\$6,250	Included
Exchange Server	\$900	Included
Exchange User Licenses	\$1,750	Included
SQL Server	\$2,700	\$5,000
SQL User	\$4,000	N/A
SharePoint	\$7,000	Included
Antivirus	\$1,625	Included
Spam Filtering	\$1,000	Included
Other Costs		
Internet Connection	\$4,000	\$2,160
Firewall	\$3,240	\$ 1,820
Backup (on-site and off-site)	\$12,600	\$5,400
Storage	\$1,000	Included
Labor		
Outsourced IT Support for Maintenance	\$132,300	\$89,100
Internal IT Support Costs	\$200,000	\$200,000
Total Costs	\$418,290	\$342,080
Savings:	\$76,210 or 18%	

As you can see, the cost savings are often compelling enough for business owners to overlook the risks of cloud computing; and if carefully planned, those risks of downtime and security are greatly minimized. In fact, our average client saves between \$900 and \$2000 when they move to our cloud and experience LESS downtime, problems and system crashes than they did with their in-house network.

Different Types Of Cloud Solutions Explained:

1

Pure Cloud:

This is where all your applications and data are put on the other side of the firewall (in the cloud) and accessed through various devices (laptops, desktops, iPads, phones) via the Internet.

2

Hybrid Cloud:

Although “pure” cloud computing has valid applications, for many it’s downright scary. And in some cases it is NOT the smartest move, due to compliance issues, security restrictions, speed and performance. A hybrid cloud enables you to put certain pieces of existing IT infrastructure (say, storage and e-mail) in the cloud, and the remainder of the IT infrastructure stays on-premises. This gives you the ability to enjoy the cost savings and benefits of cloud computing where it makes the most sense without risking your entire environment.

3

Single Point Solution:

Another option would be to simply put certain applications, like SharePoint or Microsoft Exchange, in the cloud while keeping everything else on-site. Since e-mail is usually a critical application that everyone needs and wants access to on the road and on various devices (iPad, smartphone, etc.), often this is a great way to get advanced features of Microsoft Exchange without the cost of installing and supporting your own in-house Exchange server.

4

Public Cloud Vs. Private Cloud

A public cloud is a service that anyone can tap into with a network connection and a credit card. They are shared infrastructures that allow you to pay-as-you-go and are managed through a self-service web portal. Private clouds are essentially self-built infrastructures that mimic public cloud services, but are on-premises. Private clouds are often the choice of companies who want the benefits of cloud computing, but don’t want their data held in a public environment.

FAQs: About Security, Where Your Data Is Held And Internet Connectivity



How long will it take to transition my on-premises server to the cloud, and what's the process?

Our Answer: While we generally allow for 30 days to transition servers to the cloud, the process can usually be completed in less time, based on usage, and allowing for proper planning and testing.



What if my Internet connection goes down? How will we be able to work?

Our Answer: While this is a valid concern, we overcome it in the following way for our clients in the cloud. Because the servers are always connected via the Cloud Data Center, it really becomes a need to make sure the Client computers are able to connect to the Internet, today this is easily accomplished via cellular or satellite internet as a backup or redundant connection type.



What happens if the Internet slows to the point where it's difficult to work productively?

Our Answer: We resolve this by keeping a synchronized copy of your data on your on-site server as well as in the cloud.

Here's how this works: Microsoft offers a feature with Windows called "DFS," which stands for Distributed File Systems. This technology synchronizes documents between cloud servers and local servers in your office. So instead of getting rid of your old server, we keep it on-site and maintain an up-to-date synched copy of your files, folders and documents on it. If the Internet goes down or slows to a grind, you simply open a generic folder on your PC and the system will automatically know to pull the documents from the fastest location (be it the cloud server or the local one). Once a file is modified, it syncs it in seconds so you don't have to worry about having multiple versions of the same document. Using this process, you get the benefits of cloud with a backup solution to keep you up and running during slow periods or complete Internet outages.

Q

What about security? Isn't there a big risk of someone accessing my data if it's in the cloud?

Our Answer: In many cases, cloud computing is a MORE secure way of accessing and storing data. Just because your server is on-site doesn't make it more secure; in fact, most small to medium businesses can't justify the cost of securing their network the way a cloud provider can. And most security breaches occur due to human error – one of your employees downloads a file that contains a virus, they don't use secure passwords or they simply e-mail confidential information out to people who shouldn't see it. Other security breaches occur in on-site networks because the company didn't properly maintain their own in-house network with security updates, software patches and up-to-date antivirus software. That's a FAR more common way networks get compromised versus a cloud provider getting hacked. For Instance, with Microsoft 365, Advanced Threat Protection for the end point and email server is included in the plan at no extra cost. Multi-Factor Authentication can also be integrated for an additional layer of authentication, and with Data Loss Prevention configured, you can control the movement of company data and who it is shared with.

Q

What if YOU go out of business? How do I get my data back?

Our Answer: We give every client network documentation that clearly outlines where their data is and how they could get it back in the event of an emergency. This includes emergency contact numbers, detailed information on how to access your data and infrastructure without needing our assistance (although our plan is to always be there to support you), a copy of our insurance policy and information regarding your backups and licensing.

We also give you a copy of OUR disaster recovery plan that shows what we've put in place to make sure we stay up and running.

In fact, you should never hire ANY IT professional who won't give you that information. We provide a playbook of all important information relating to your in house network as well as your cloud setup. This way you have the roadmap of your entire infrastructure.

Q

Do I have to purchase new hardware (servers, workstations) to move to the cloud?

Our Answer: No! That's one of the selling points of cloud computing. It allows you to use older workstations, laptops and servers because the computing power is in the cloud. Not only does that allow you to keep and use hardware longer, but it allows you to buy cheaper workstations and laptops because you don't need the expensive computing power required in the past. Even in the simplest of cloud implementations like Microsoft 365, the expected useful lifetime of a workstation increases from 3 years to 5, giving you a 40% drop in workstation cost alone.

What To Look For When Hiring An IT Consultant To Move Your Network To The Cloud

Unfortunately, the IT consulting industry (along with many others) has its own share of incompetent or unethical people who will try to take advantage of trusting business owners who simply do not have the ability to determine whether or not they know what they are doing. Sometimes this is out of greed for your money; more often it's simply because they don't have the skills and competency to do the job right but won't tell you that up front because they want to make the sale.

From misleading information, unqualified technicians and poor management, to terrible customer service, we've seen it all, and we know they exist in abundance because we have had a number of customers come to us to clean up the disasters they have caused.

Automotive repair shops, electricians, plumbers, lawyers, Realtors, dentists, doctors, accountants, etc., are heavily regulated to protect the consumer from receiving substandard work or getting ripped off. However, the information technology industry is still highly unregulated and there are few laws in existence to protect the consumer – **which is why it's so important for you to really research the company or person you are considering, to make sure they have the experience to set up, migrate and support your network to the cloud.**



Anyone who can hang out a shingle can promote themselves as a “cloud expert.” Even if they are honestly *trying* to do a good job for you, their inexperience can cost you dearly in your network's speed and performance or in lost or corrupt data files. To that end, here are 15 questions you should ask your IT person before letting them migrate your network to the cloud:

Critical Questions To Ask Your IT Company Or Computer Consultant **BEFORE** Letting Them Move Your Network To The Cloud (Or Touch Your Network!)

Q

How many clients have you provided cloud services for to date and can you provide references?

Our Answer: You don't want someone practicing on your network. At a minimum, make sure they have deployed similar network configurations as yours. While no two projects or networks are the same, there are enough common areas to ensure they have done it before.

Q

How quickly do they guarantee to have a technician working on an outage or other problem?

Our Answer: Anyone you pay to support your network should give you a written SLA (service level agreement) that outlines exactly how IT issues get resolved and in what time frame. I would also request that they reveal what their average resolution time has been with current clients over the last three to six months.

They should also answer their phones live from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and provide you with an emergency after-hours number you may call if a problem arises, including on weekends.

If you cannot access your network because the Internet is down or due to some other problem, you can't be waiting around for hours for someone to call you back OR (more importantly) start working on resolving the issue. Make sure you get this in writing; often cheaper or less experienced consultants won't have this or will try and convince you it's not important or that they can't do this. Don't buy that excuse! They are in the business of providing IT support, so they should have some guarantees or standards around this they share with you.

Q

What's your plan for transitioning our network to the cloud to minimize problems and downtime?

Our Answer: We run a simultaneous cloud environment during the transition and don't "turn off" the old network until everyone is 100% confident that everything has been transitioned and is working effortlessly. You don't want someone to switch overnight without setting up a test environment first.

Q

Do you provide a no-risk trial of our network in the cloud to test the proof of concept BEFORE we commit to a long-term contract?

Our Answer: We provide all of our clients a free 30-day cloud “test drive” using your servers, applications and data so you can see, first-hand, what it will be like for you and your staff to move your servers to the cloud. While this isn’t a full migration, it will give you a true feel for what cloud computing will be like BEFORE committing to a long-term contract. There is no charge for this and no obligation to buy anything. At the end of the 30 days, you’ll know whether or not this is a right fit for you, or if you would prefer to keep your current on-site network.

Q

Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across as arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Our Answer: Our technicians are trained to have the “heart of a teacher” and will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in simple terms.

Q

Where will your data be stored?

Our Answer: You should receive full documentation about where your data is, how it’s being secured and backed up and how you could get access to it if necessary WITHOUT going through your provider. Essentially, you don’t want your cloud provider to be able to hold your data (and your company) hostage.

Q

How will your data be secured and backed up?

Our Answer: If they tell you that your data will be stored in their own co-lo in the back of their office, what happens if THEY get destroyed by a fire, flood or other disaster? What are they doing to secure the office and access? Are they backing it up somewhere else? Make sure they are SSAE 16 certified and have a failover plan in place to ensure continuous service in the event that their location goes down. If they are building on another platform, you still want to find out where your data is and how it’s being backed up.

Q

What is THEIR disaster recovery plan? What happens if they go out of business?

Our Answer: Our clients benefit from the most robust features in backing up and protecting their data. With options ranging from complete Server backups to critical Workstations and all users Email, SharePoint, and Teams data backed up to the Cloud. Every server backup is test restored daily to ensure that when the time comes, their backups are ready to go and up to date. This allows each of our clients a personalized backup and disaster recovery strategy based on the data sets and needs of the organization. Windstar uses industry recognized methods and national providers allowing the organization to maintain complete control over their data throughout the entire lifecycle.

Q

Do they have adequate errors-and-omissions insurance as well as workers' compensation insurance to protect YOU?

Our Answer: Here's something to consider: if THEY cause a problem with your network that causes you to be down for hours or days or to lose data, who's responsible? Here's another question to consider: if one of their technicians gets hurt at your office, who's paying? In this litigious society we live in, you better make darn sure that whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors-and-omissions insurance AND workers' compensation – and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story: A few years ago, Geek Squad was slapped with multimillion-dollar lawsuits from customers for the bad behavior of their technicians. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying and distributing personal information they gained access to on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In other cases, they lost clients' laptops (and subsequently all the data on them) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line: Make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

Q

Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, your critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the "keys to the kingdom"?

Our Answer: All clients receive this in written and electronic form at no additional cost. We also perform a quarterly update on this material and make sure certain key people from your organization have this information and know how to use it, giving you complete control over your network.

Side Note: You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

Q

Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Our Answer: Yes, and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, any of our technicians can pick up where another left off.

Q

Is their help desk US-based or outsourced to an overseas company or third party?

Our Answer: We provide our own in-house help desk and make sure the folks helping you are friendly and helpful. We consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, plus we feel it's an important step in keeping your data secure.

Q

Do they INSIST on doing periodical test restores of your backups to make sure the data is not corrupt and could be restored in the event of a disaster?

Our Answer: We perform a monthly “fire drill” and perform a test restore from backup for our clients to make sure their data CAN be recovered in the event of an emergency. Upon completion, we then give our clients a report showing this test restore was conducted and that all systems are a “go.” If there’s a problem, we notify our clients immediately and start working to resolve it the same day. After all, the WORST time to “test” a backup is when you desperately need it.

Q

Do their technicians maintain current vendor certifications and participate in ongoing training – or are they learning on your dime?

Our Answer: Our technicians are required to keep the most up-to-date vendor certifications in all the software we use to support our clients. In addition, all our entire team is regularly trained in Cyber Security Awareness and current exploits and methods used by Hackers to keep Current on the latest threats. Plus, our hiring process is so stringent that 99% of the technicians who apply don’t make it through. (Guess who’s hiring them?)

Q

Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line-of-business applications?

Our Answer: We own the problems with all line-of-business applications for our clients. That doesn’t mean we can fix faulty software – but we WILL be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly for you instead of pointing fingers and putting you in the middle.

Q

When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say, “That’s not our problem to fix”?

Our Answer: We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don’t have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that’s just plain old good service and something many computer guys won’t do.

Free Analysis Shows You How To Migrate To The Cloud And Avoid Overpaying For Your Next IT Project Or Upgrade

If you're like a number of CEOs we've helped, you've already been burned, disappointed and frustrated by the questionable advice and **complete lack of service** you've gotten from other IT companies. In fact, you might be so fed up and disgusted from being "sold" that you don't trust anyone. *I don't blame you.*

That's why I'd like to offer you a **FREE Cloud Readiness Analysis** to show you there IS a better way to upgrade your company network AND to demonstrate how a truly competent IT consultant (not just a computer "mechanic") can guide your company to greater profits and efficiencies, help you be more strategic and give you the tools and systems to fuel growth.

At no cost or obligation, one of our lead consultants will conduct a thorough review and inventory of your current computer network, backups and technologies to give you straightforward answers to the following:



How using cloud technologies may be able to eliminate the cost, complexity and problems of managing your own in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security and instant disaster recovery. I say "may" because it might NOT be the best choice for you. I'll give you honest answers to your questions and detail – in plain English – the pros AND cons of moving your specific operations to the cloud.



Are your IT systems truly safe and secured from hackers, viruses and rogue employees? (FACT: 90% of the computer networks we review are NOT, much to the surprise of the CEOs who are paying some other "so-called" expert to manage that aspect of their IT.)



Are your backups configured properly to ensure that you could be back up and running again fast in a disaster? From our experience, most companies' backups are an epic waste of money and only deliver a false sense of security.



If you are ALREADY using "cloud" technologies, are you adequately protecting your organization from the dozens of ways you and your organization can be harmed, sued or financially devastated due to security leaks, theft, data loss, hacks and violating ever-expanding data privacy laws?

Even if you decide not to move your network to the cloud or engage with us as a client, you'll find the information we share with you to be extremely valuable and eye-opening when you make future decisions about IT. After all, it NEVER hurts to get a third-party "checkup" of your IT systems' security, backups and stability, as well as a competitive cost analysis.

There Is One Small "Catch"

Because our Cloud Readiness Analysis takes between five and seven hours to complete (with most of this "behind-the-scenes" diagnostics and research we conduct), I can only extend this offer to 5 people who respond. After that, we'll have to withdraw this offer or ask that you pay our customary consulting fee of \$1,989 for this Analysis (sorry, no exceptions).

To respond, please call our office at 540-317-1200 and ask for me, David. I personally want to take your call to answer any questions about this letter, my company and how we might be able to help you, CEO to CEO. You can also e-mail me direct at Stefanie.Groot@WindstarTech.com

Together, We Make 'IT' Secure,
Stefanie Groot
www.WindstarTech.com
Call us direct: 540-317-1200

HURRY!
**Limited
Time Offer!**

**Available Only To
The First 5 Who
Respond.**



**To Reserve Your Cloud Readiness Analysis,
call 540-317-1200 or visit: www.WindstarTech.com/cloud**

The Top 7 Reasons Why You'll Want To Outsource Your IT Support To Us:

1

We Respond Within 5 Minutes Or Less. The average amount of time it takes for one of our clients to get on the phone with a technician who can start working on resolving your problem is less than 1 minute. We know you're busy and have made a sincere commitment to making sure your computer problems get fixed FAST. And since most repairs can be done remotely using our secure management tools, you don't have to wait around for a technician to show up.

2

No Geek-Speak. You deserve to get answers to your questions in PLAIN ENGLISH, not in confusing technical terms. Our technicians will also not talk down to you or make you feel stupid because you don't understand how all this "technology" works. That's our job!

3

100% No-Small-Print Satisfaction Guarantee. Quite simply, if you are not happy with our work, we'll do whatever it takes to make it right to YOUR standards without charging you for it. And if we can't make it right, the service is free.

4

All Projects Are Completed On Time And On Budget. When you hire us to complete a project for you, we won't nickel-and-dime you with unforeseen or unexpected charges or delays. We guarantee to deliver precisely what we promised to deliver, on time and on budget, with no excuses.

5

Lower Costs, Waste And Complexity With Cloud Solutions. By utilizing cloud computing and other advanced technologies, we can eliminate the cost, complexity and problems of managing your own in-house server while giving you more freedom, lowered costs, tighter security and instant disaster recovery.

6

We Won't Hold You Hostage. Many IT companies do NOT provide their clients with simple and easy-to-understand documentation that outlines key network resources, passwords, licenses, etc. By keeping that to themselves, IT companies hold their clients "hostage" to scare them away from hiring someone else. This is both unethical and unprofessional. As a client of ours, we'll provide you with full, written documentation of your network and all the resources, software licenses, passwords, hardware, etc., in simple terms so YOU can understand it. We keep our clients by delivering exceptional service – not by keeping them in the dark.

7

Peace Of Mind. Because we monitor all of our clients' networks 24/7/365, you never have to worry that a virus has spread, a hacker has broken in or a backup has failed to perform. We watch over your entire network, taking the management and hassle of maintaining it off your hands. This frees you to focus on your customers and running your business, not on your IT systems, security and backups.

Case Studies: What Our Clients Have to Say About Moving To The Cloud

For A Good Night Sleep, You Need More Than A Mattress



"I can focus on my business because I get peaceful sleep at night knowing that Windstar Technologies has our Law firm's data protected and in the event of a catastrophe can restore our data. Dave understands to whom a duty of loyalty is owed and has helped us maneuver touchy terminations, new product roll-outs, ever-morphing security threats, and even training. Windstar always responds promptly, and they offer the "best of the best" personal services."

– **Lois Pearson, Business Owner, Pearson & Pearson Law**

Never Pay The Ransom



"Our Dental office had an experience with ransomware inflecting our software dental program which caused all our files to be lost. With the Data Backup Solution Windstar had put in place they were able to recover our entire program and we were back up and running in less than a day."

– **Denise Robinson, Office Manager, Family Dental Care, PC**

On Cloud 9



"Our Organization struggled with outdated software (Windows 7), file sharing with remote staff, file storage and connectivity issues. Windstar Technologies helped our business integrate the latest technologies in our daily operations by migrating to Microsoft 365. The Windstar Team provided prompt response to our concerns with ongoing communication throughout the project. Moving to Microsoft 365 has allowed remote staff to decrease connection issues for file sharing, standardized our software for all staff members, increased security measures, and resolved file storage issues. We recommend Windstar Technologies to other businesses."

– **Lisa Fettig, Exec VP, Emergency Management Services International, Inc**

Increased Productivity

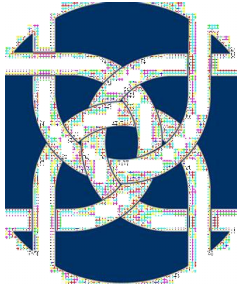


"Windstar continues to be an invaluable guide to the ASWB organization. Moving our SQL Server to Azure has created a centralized management system with better access and improving backups. This allows us access to SQL from multiple locations allowing ASWB to be more productive. Windstar has been critical in helping manage the Azure environment especially with updates, upgrades, security, and disaster recovery."

– **Dan Sheehan, IT Director, Association of Social Workers Board**


Case Studies: What Our Clients Have to Say About Moving To The Cloud

Our Company Is Secure, Productive, And Growing



"A lot of businesses struggled to stay connected during the Covid-19 pandemic. We didn't. What set the pace for us was our relationship with Windstar Technologies. David and the team at Windstar prepared us with Microsoft Teams, and our staff stayed connected no matter where we worked. At our homes, in the office — Windstar taught us how to use all the options available with Teams. Now, our staff has more flexibility than ever before. Everyone at the Windstar team is on top of new security and tech developments; that's been our experience. They take the time to know our organization inside and out. When Windstar shows us new products or services, we trust they will make sense for us. They aren't just knowledgeable; they're also responsive. It's an unbeatable combination that means we can count on them anytime. Windstar is a terrific team that kept our business interconnected during a difficult time and keeps us on track with the latest security trends. Thanks to Windstar, we're confident our company is secure, productive, and growing." — **Dwight Hymans, CEO, Association of Social Workers Board**


Responsive, Trustworthy, and Dependable



"Switching over to Microsoft 365 Cloud and removing our Server during the Covid-19 Pandemic allows Med Spa of Virginia the ability to work from anywhere, including from home. Additionally, moving our Voice to Microsoft Teams means, Number One: cost savings and Number Two: I can change settings at a moment's notice. The Windstar Technologies Team are extremely honest, trustworthy, responsive, and dependable. They explain and help you learn new things and solutions to help manage your business needs."

— **Ginger Somerville-Grant, Business Owner, Med Spa of Virginia Total Wellness Center**


Lower Costs, Increase Knowledge, and Stay Connected



"Communication and high-quality customer service sets Windstar Technologies apart from other IT firms I have worked with in the past. Switching to Microsoft 365 Cloud and Voice helps the Culpeper Chamber of Commerce work remotely and allows us to integrate digital and virtual aspects into our Networking Programs all while Lowering Costs. The Culpeper Chamber uses Microsoft Teams for Town Halls, Meetings, and even Surveys to bring our Membership together during this Pandemic. Working with Windstar means we stay abreast of updates and new platforms we can use to communicate with our community better."

— **Jeff Say, Former President, Culpeper Chamber of Commerce**

Working Whole, Complete and Remotely



"Our company benefits greatly by working with Windstar Technologies, when problems arise, they make sure our entire system communicate together. Migrating our server system to Microsoft 365 Cloud allows us the ability to work from home. Windstar is the best IT company that I have worked with and their customer service is excellent!"

— **Lee Ann Smith, Office Manager, Old Waterloo Equine Clinic**



HURRY!

Limited Time Offer!

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