

MANAGED

# CLOUD SERVICES

COST SAVINGS THAT BUSINESS OWNERS OFTEN OVERLOOK



VIRTUAL IT CONSULTING

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## What are Managed Cloud Services?

Cloud technology has been integrated into nearly every workplace IT solution, and that's great news for small- and medium-sized businesses. Adding just one cloud service is a guaranteed shot in the arm for any organization: cloud desktops, cloud phones, cloud apps, cloud backups... The list goes on and on.

In fact, the number of worthwhile cloud services is so large, an entire industry has sprung up around installing, integrating, and supporting them. Managed services providers (MSPs) offer economical IT support for a broad range of cloud solutions and vendors at a fraction of the costs of in-house specialists.

### Do businesses with 1-2 cloud solutions really need an MSP?

Keep in mind that MSPs handle *everything*. Their support isn't limited to installing solutions and troubleshooting downtime; MSPs also manage cybersecurity configurations, disaster recovery plans, business process customizations, and anything else associated with your cloud solutions. Even if you use only one or two cloud platforms, there are several reasons to hire an MSP:

- Regulatory compliance
- Coping with high user turnover
- Keeping up with rapid growth
- Platform customizations
- Limited in-house IT resources

Support from an MSP like Virtual IT Consulting will increase your cloud efficiencies and result in cost savings that you could never realize with an in-house IT team.

### Cost savings few people consider

When we wrote this eBook, Google returned more than 100 million results for "cloud cost savings." But every article we checked lacked the detail business owners need when weighing their options. Here are 12 ways managed cloud services will save you money that you probably never considered.



## A more productive office

### Simpler Systems - \$

A recent study found that the average small business relies on at least four communications applications (chat, email, etc.). The study claimed that this forces more than six in 10 workers to waste an hour per day navigating between cloud applications. MSPs have a few tricks to help you reclaim that time. Single Sign-On gives your employees one secure login for all their cloud accounts, Unified Communications centralizes messages from different apps in one dashboard, and hosted applications can be integrated in ways that their non-cloud counterparts cannot. Whichever you choose, you get more hours in the day.

### Shorter document turnarounds - \$\$

From business agreements to finished products, every organization relies on employee collaboration to drive sales and growth. Traditionally, collaboration involved either a printed or offline version of a file getting passed around from employee to employee, one set of revisions at a time. With cloud solutions, your entire team can edit documents simultaneously. Even if contributors are out of the office, they can log in from mobile devices to provide suggestions and drastically cut down document turnaround times.

### Faster customer service - \$\$\$

Surveys show that customers expect companies to acknowledge inquiries within an hour to meet service minimums. The only way to maintain such high demands is with cloud communication solutions that are both accessible from mobile devices and guaranteed to work 99.9% of the time. Managed cloud services will enable you to cut down customer service response times, increase client retention rates, and build a customer base that recommends your business to others.



## Economical IT

### Less time spent securing mobile devices - \$

Protecting employee smartphones and tablets from data theft is tedious. Trained technicians need to confirm that every app installed on a device is harmless, that users are prohibited from connecting to unsafe wireless networks, and that dozens of other risk factors are accounted for. Cloud apps include security features that block connections from unsafe devices so you don't need to waste time double- and triple-checking every employee device.

### No more software updates - \$

There has never been an app that didn't need to be updated after its initial release. Between hackers finding ways to exploit them and developers releasing stability patches, apps are never perfect. Updating software takes time, especially if it's installed on several computers -- a 15-minute update results in one working day of disruption for an office with 30 computers! Cloud apps receive patches as soon as an update is released and without any user downtime.

### No more software licenses - \$\$

A lifetime single-user license for Microsoft Office 2019 costs \$400, whereas the cloud version costs between \$7.95 and \$14.95 per user per month. Two years of the cloud subscription is less than half the cost of a lifetime license! True, the total cost of ownership for the cloud version becomes more expensive after a little more than four years, but that's around the time Microsoft releases a new, non- cloud version of Office. Cloud subscriptions eliminate costly upfront licenses and ensure your software is always current.

## Economical IT

### Fewer hardware replacements - \$

You've probably already factored in hardware purchases that will be eliminated by cloud solutions, but those aren't one-time costs. In-house servers and other hardware that can be moved to the cloud need to be replaced every four to five years. So you'll be saving money on short-term hardware costs as well as those four years from now, eight years from now, and so on.

### Lower data backup costs - \$\$

Certain rules must be followed to keep natural and manmade disasters from destroying your company's files and documents. One of those rules is that your data must be stored in multiple locations to eliminate the possibility of a single point of failure. Cloud apps and files always reside on at least three different systems that are constantly monitored by a team of IT technicians, which means you don't need to pay for a backup solution to keep them safe.

### Non-cloud IT issues get more attention - \$\$\$

Some of VITC's clients have a full-time IT technician who just needs a little help. Because we support everything connected to their cloud solutions, their in-house technicians have more time to fix on-site problems such as lagging computers, unprotected mobile devices, and network vulnerabilities. If you have an understaffed IT department, managed cloud services will free up that team's time and boost organizational productivity.



## Operational efficiencies

### Cloud phones automatically generate insight - \$

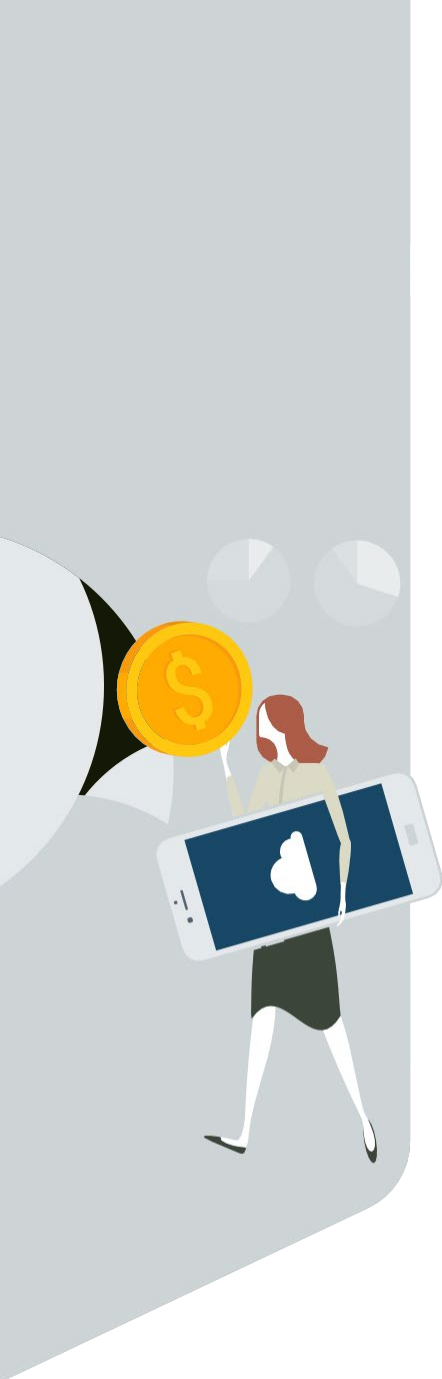
There's no easy way to collect valuable data from phone calls when you use analog landlines because any information you want compiled will need to be logged manually. Cloud phones automate this process by syncing call data to customer relationship management software that helps businesses uncover sales opportunities and customer trends. Your employees will generate valuable business intelligence simply by making and receiving calls.

### Lower compliance costs - \$\$

From the EU's far reaching GDPR to the US's HIPAA, most businesses are now subject to one or more compliance frameworks. These lengthy documents outline highly technical requirements, which means small organizations usually need outside legal and IT help. But with most cloud solutions, compliance is already taken care of. For example, every compliance framework requires data encryption; you could set that up in-house, or store your data in a cloud solution that already has it installed. Anything more complicated than that will be handled by your managed cloud services provider!

### Slow seasons don't cost as much - \$\$\$

No one wants to think about scaling back their company, but slow periods are part of any healthy business cycle. If you base on-site IT investments on what you need during the busy season, you're paying for a lot more than you need most of the year. Most cloud pricing plans are based on what you use in a given month, which means operational expenses go way down during slow months.





## Creating one cohesive cloud solution

Unfortunately, there's no cloud platform that truly does it all. Office 365 includes storage, email, and productivity apps, but it lacks the telephony and accounting features most small- and medium-sized businesses need. More than one cloud platform is usually the smart answer, but you'll need a specialist to keep everything running smoothly and cost-efficiently.

If you're thinking about hiring a managed services provider to simplify your cloud solutions and maximize cost savings, your top three priorities should be:

**High-end security** - Cloud solutions are far safer than they get credit for, but they still require a lot of customization to prevent a security breach. And it's especially difficult to keep data safe when working with multiple cloud platforms. Ask prospective MSPs to walk you through how their solutions will keep your data safe.

**User-friendly interfaces** - Increasing cloud-based cost savings is about simplicity. An MSP that creates extra steps for your employees to navigate your IT investments isn't worth the money. Users should be able to quickly and easily hop between cloud platforms so they can be as productive as possible.

**Flexible solutions** - Cloud technology is integral to growing your business, so you need solutions that are just as convenient in the future as they are in the short term. Virtual IT Consulting ensures that onboarding new users, expanding a platform's scope, and updating its security protocols is all possible within a day or two, even across multiple platforms.

You can enjoy all these cost reductions as long as you have an IT partner that's invested in your success. Managed services providers charge a flat monthly fee for unlimited support, so you know they care about preventing labor-intensive IT problems. You'll have all the benefits of an on-call repairman without the hourly rates.





## Better IT than you currently have, with less upkeep

### Managed cloud services pay for themselves

You need a full-time specialist to enjoy all the cost savings that cloud solutions have to offer. If you can't afford that, you can partner with Virtual IT Consulting for access to a team of technicians for a low monthly fee.

Our services are more than cloud support or IT consulting. The Virtual IT Consulting team will handle everything an in-house employee would as well as off-hours monitoring and protection. Your cloud solutions will come with uptime guarantees and round-the-clock support so you never need to worry about the accessibility of your solutions.

Everyone on your team will be connected to their apps and files 24/7 so you can deliver remarkable customer experiences and grow your business.

With one of our free consultations, we'll assess everything from compliance risks to unnecessary backups to create a cloud solution that is simple, secure, scalable, and saves you money.

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**Want to see how our Managed Cloud Services will save you money?**

**SCHEDULE A FREE CONSULTATION TODAY!**

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