

FREE REPORT:

“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**

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A Letter From The Author:

Why We Created This Report And Who Should Read It



From The Desk of: Eric W. Janson
President, Parallel Edge, Inc.

Dear Colleague,

If you are considering transitioning your computer network and operations to the cloud, you will likely receive 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.

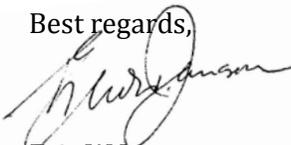
That's why we wrote this report. **We wanted to give CEOs and other decision makers a simple, straightforward guide that not only answers your questions in plain English, but also provides vital experience-based information that most IT companies don't know (or may not tell you) that could turn your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

In truth the "Cloud" has been around for a long time and you are using parts of it daily unless you do not use computers in your daily life.

The simple fact is, cloud computing is NOT a good fit for every company, 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.

Best regards,



Eric W Janson

About The Author

Beyond the Textbook: What you can't learn in college
(reprinted from 2008 "The Un-Newsletter"
Ceo-ThinkTank <http://www.ceothinktank.com>)

Eric Janson learned his core business from a text book he read for pleasure, on his own time, *after* college. Computer-aided design (CAD) was relatively new in the early 1980's, still cutting edge in the pre-Microsoft Windows era. Eric set out to integrate his interests and skills with a hunch about the role of computers in engineering and architectural design.

Today, his company, Parallel Edge, is ten years old and nine employees strong.* Eric created the company to provide CAD and network systems management services to the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) markets. Named for a design term that soon will be obsolete because of CAD, Parallel Edge was built on the uncommon belief that sales and service need not compete.

"We try to do the right things," explains Eric, "while doing things right." To illustrate, Eric recalls the early years of his business, when he advised clients against investing in Y2K initiatives. While other firms made fortunes on Y2K audits, he earned not a penny. And the sole client who encountered a problem on that fateful New Year's Eve had anticipated it, so Eric was able to help mitigate any prospective crisis. Clearly, his concept of service prevailed, as sales wasn't even at the table.

Cultivating Client Trust:

Eric appreciates that his client relationships are rooted in trust. "If a client doesn't trust us, we shouldn't be there. We're essentially in their underwear drawer – we have all the passwords to their servers." And in the post-Enron business environment where attorneys, auditors and legislators preach accountability, Eric still seals his client agreements with a handshake, not a contract.

That practice seems to work for Parallel Edge, which boasts some clients "for life". Eric values long-term relationships. His last employer has been a client since the beginning and another former employer still seeks consulting support, most recently in helping to hire a network manager. Eric trusts that even clients which grow large enough to bring the network management function in-house could soon or eventually return.

"Hiring one person is not the same as having a team," explains Eric. He understands, first-hand, that a significant downside to playing the only internal systems role in a firm staffed by architects or engineers is isolation. Indeed, many design firms hesitate to dedicate a full-time position to network management because of the uniqueness of the role within their culture.

When a client does bring the IT support function inside, Eric's team can augment internal staff by providing depth of knowledge. He fully recognizes the value his company can bring and notes, "Because we're outside, we must stay current... which saves our clients time and money", sparing aggravation and lost opportunity. It's all based on what makes the most sense and creates the most value.

Seeking External Perspectives:

A self-taught IT expert and entrepreneur, Eric developed his business and business model with a little luck, a lot of determination, and a multitude of good instincts. Among them is the inclination to seek perspective from others. He joined a CEO Think Tank® at the suggestion of Doug Diamond, his business advisor, with whom he'd been working for a few years. Having previously explored a roundtable model, he was open to the idea and eager to gain perspective from others.

“Because I’m so self-taught, it’s very good for me to hear how others do business,” reveals Eric. “I gain so much from the interactive nature of the Think Tank, which is vastly different than one-on-one consulting. I like to put disparate things together... that’s my design background.”

Knowing Yourself:

Eric’s entrepreneurial leanings showed up early in his career. After earning a Masters degree in interior design at Drexel, he worked in a design firm, then an architecture firm. His growing interest in the potential of CAD software inspired him to consciously seek specific knowledge at every step. He ultimately became the CAD management expert not only for the firm, but for the building that housed it.

On a whim, he sent a resume to another architecture firm and then turned them down for a job three times knowing that he wanted to be out on his own within two years. When he finally joined the organization, he “ripped their system apart and reinvented it” so well that (he) had little left to do and was bored after only one year.

“Part of the problem,” Eric confesses, “is that I get bored. I can’t think straight when I’m bored.”

Boredom seems unlikely to impact Eric’s future. Last March, he opened his first satellite office in Boston. Ten years from now, he intends to have ten locations across the country. That’s possible – and perhaps unusual -- because Eric operates his business without a brick-and-mortar site. Parallel Edge relies on intranet-based software that enables employees to stay connected and work via cell phones and laptops – his entire organization runs “virtually”.

Investing in Business through People:

The time Eric once devoted to hands-on CAD management he now invests in growing his company. While he continues to provide some direct service to clients in order to stay current, he has stepped out of operations to concentrate on providing opportunities to develop the potential of his employees. He recognizes they “can’t (personally) grow without (company) growth.” He also challenges employees to develop themselves. He posts recommended books on their intranet system and notices those who take initiative. “I want them to ‘convince me’, not just do because I say so,” explains Eric.

So far, the internal structure of Parallel Edge remains flat, but Eric is developing a program to help employees “earn rank” in the company. While increased levels won’t necessarily wield power, they will bring internal recognition to those who aspire to reach beyond their technical expertise.

Given the virtual nature of the company, Eric takes the hiring process very seriously and “tests” prospects over weekends. By employing candidates first as consultants at work sites, he can

assess their skills and temperament. He considers work style and seeks self-starters. “Those who jump in get hired, since waiting to be told what to do won’t work.”

An inspiring presentation by Alan Burkhard this summer at a CEO Think Tank un-Networking meeting resonated with Eric. “I make it hard to get into my company (for employees), but easy to get out... if they’re not interested in what they’re doing here, they should pursue interests elsewhere.”

Eric created a company, a niche market, his own management style, and a way of life for himself, his employees and his family. No matter how well-read he might remain, his gifts are the stuff he couldn’t learn from a text book.

*Today Parallel Edge has 12 employees, and is 20 years old.

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 Assessment** 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
- DropBox, OneDrive, GoogleDrive
- NetSuite, Salesforce
- Constant Contact, Exact Target, AWeber or other e-mail broadcasting services
- Zoomerang, SurveyMonkey and other survey tools
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- All things Google (search, AdWords, 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 Office 365 And Google Apps?

Office 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 may not need an expensive desktop with lots of power to use them – just a simple Internet connection will do on a laptop, desktop or tablet.

Possibly the most important thing to remember in considering which way to go is the fact that with Office365 users can work as they always have and adopt the Cloud based benefits over time. Google Apps will take more administration and training in most cases in the

near term and in our opinion will not give you substantial productivity gains when compared with Office365 in the long term.

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. So if you hate constantly writing cash-flow-draining checks for IT upgrades, you’ll really want to look into cloud computing.
 - *Of note however is the fact that the software vendors are now changing their licensing models to capture as much of your businesses as possible. You will pay less, but you will pay forever.*
 - *Interestingly the move to the cloud is something of a return to the days for “dumb terminals” and mainframes where the computing was done in a central location and the end user had not much more than a keyboard, mouse and monitor on their desk. The challenge is to right size the solution based on the application needs.*
- **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.
- **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 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.

Plus, like a public utility, cloud platforms are far more robust and secure than your average business network because they can utilize economies of scale to invest heavily into security, redundancy and failover systems, making them far less likely

to go down.

- **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 can make it infinitely faster. This is, of course, highly dependent on your specific needs, but one example is provisioning of email and office applications.
- **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.
 - **The best example of this is VOIP phone systems.** In the past a 25-person firm might spend \$10,000 on the system and \$10,000 on phones for an on premise phone system. A VOIP system may eliminate both these charges and charge a low monthly fee. Upgrades are built in and moving to another provider is relatively painless.
- **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.

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. BUT, instead of being tied to your office location you do have the option to move elsewhere to work. Ideally, the Internet does not go down and everything works all the time, but when there is a hiccup in internet service you have options. It is also important to note that not everything will stop working if the Internet is down if you are setup with a flexible system. For example, if you are using Office365 and your Internet is down, email will stop working, but your applications and Outlook will continue to work. Once you are over the anxiety of not having instant email access, you may find that you can get a lot done without the Internet in the short term.
- **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, graphics programs, AutoCAD, Revit, Adobe Applications, etc. Unless these applications are on a hosted server it can be difficult to web enable them. The software vendors are working on it, so it may not be long.
- **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 SAS 70 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 Office 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.

3rd-Party Applications. If your organization has plug-ins to 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. If a particular application will not work, it is often the case that there is an alternative that will work just as well if not better.

Different Types Of Cloud Solutions Explained:

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.

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.

Single Point Solutions: 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.

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

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

Answer: *This depends entirely on how much you want (or need) in the cloud. Migrating email is a relatively simple process that can be done with little downtime. Moving all your files to the cloud will likely take some time, and we should have discussions around the benefits and drawbacks. Done properly downtime can be minimized utilizing a test environment to identify the potential problems before they become surprises.*

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

Answer: While this is a valid concern, we overcome this by identifying what the process is when there is an outage. Depending on how cloud centric you are many functions can continue without interruption. If it makes sense operationally and financially redundant

Internet connections can be implemented that will assure you 99.999% uptime. The most important thing to remember is that even without Internet Access is that your data is safe and an outage even when extended does not preclude you from relocating resources to regain access to that data.

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

Answer: There is more than one answer to his question, but one way is 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.

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

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.

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

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).

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

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 may allow you to buy cheaper workstations and laptops because you don't need the expensive computing power required in the past.

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 computer 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 <<X>> 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!)

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

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.

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

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.

Question: 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?

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.

Question: Where will your data be stored?

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.

Question: How will your data be secured and backed up?

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 SAS 70

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.

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

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.

Question: 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"?

Answer: We maintain complete information on your systems when you are under our managed services program. At any time we can give you full documentation without hesitation. Nothing we do will ever lock you in, and you will always have complete control over your network if and when you need it.

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!

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Question: 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"?

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 Assessment 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 Assessment** to show you there IS a better way to upgrade your computer 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 my lead consultants and I will come to your office and 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: 99% 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 Assessments take between four and seven hours to complete (with most of this “behind-the-scenes” diagnostics and research we conduct), I can only extend this offer to the first **Four** firms who respond. After that, we’ll have to withdraw this offer or ask that you pay our customary consulting fee of \$500 for this Assessment (sorry, no exceptions).

To respond, please call our office at 610-293-0101 and ask for myself or Sondra Lorino, we personally want to take your call to answer any questions about this letter, Parallel Edge, and how we might be able to help you. You can also e-mail me direct at ejanson@paralleledge.com.

Awaiting your response,

Eric Janson
www.paralleledge.com
Call us direct: 610-293-0101

The Top 10 Reasons Why You'll Want To Outsource Your IT Support To Us:

1. **NO CONTRACTS:** We do not, and have never, required you to sign a contract to work with us. We never want to be in a position where you are working with us because the contract says you must. We always want to put you in a position where you are working with us because we are doing our best, and right, work for you
2. **YOU MATTER:** As our client you are not a commodity. We have built our business on relationships that exceed the customer to vendor relationship, in fact we can be your trusted resource to help you manage any vendor that touches your technology framework be it SIP, IP, VOIP, IT or any other alphabetical variation that is attached to technology.
3. **TRANSPARENCY:** The recommendations we make will always be based on best practices determined by our experience working with a given solution. Recommendations will never be based on manufacturer incentives or other non-relevant factors. We will never “box you in” with a solution that ties you to us as your sole source.
4. **COLLABORATION:** If you follow our advice you will be happy – GUARANTEED. Let us collaborate with you to define a technology management program that works for you now and into the future.
5. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** If you are not happy we are not happy. You have the right to escalate ANY concern to whatever level you feel necessary. We will hear your concerns and work to be sure your concerns are addressed.
6. **RIGHT FIT:** We don't force you into a predetermined plan. Our plans are starting points and we work with you to craft a plan that best fits your needs from a support and budgetary perspective. You can adjust the support level as needed at any time. This INCLUDES scaling us back. Remember the 2008 recession? Many of our clients scaled back as the economy slowed, and scaled back up as business improved.
7. **LONG TERM:** We have low turnover. Most IT providers see their technical staff come and go. At Parallel Edge we take pride in the fact that our staff has been with us for many years. Our employees stick around and so do our clients, we are proud to say that clients brought on board at our founding in 1996 are still with us today.
8. **SERVICE FIRST:** We are a service FIRST organization. Sales of “stuff” is not what drives us. Sure, we can sell you all the technology components you need, but that is a convenience for you, not a factor in how the decisions are made in determining the best solution for you.
9. **NO BUNDLES:** You know what they are, think Comcast or Verizon. Every service and product we support, sell, or recommend can be uncoupled. You get what you pay for and know what you are getting.
10. **TRUSTWORTHY:** The first point of the Scout Law, and we foster a culture internally that supports this important characteristic. We strive to earn your trust because in the end it makes it easier for us to do our job and easier for you to focus on other things.