

# Cloud Computing

**Martin De Saulles**

## Cloud Computing Round-Up

The increasing importance of cloud computing to businesses was highlighted recently with a number of large deals. In early June, IBM spent \$2 billion buying SoftLayer, a US firm, which it will use to create a new Cloud Computing division. According to Bloomberg this will put IBM in competition with Amazon in the market for "public clouds" whereby organisations outsource much of their computing processing and storage requirements to third parties. At about the same time, Salesforce.com, a cloud provider of CRM services, announced a \$2.5 billion takeover of ExactTarget, a provider of digital marketing and social media services. While takeovers are relatively common in the technology sector, it is the amounts paid for relatively small and, in the case of ExactTarget, unprofitable companies that has caught the attention of analysts. The bets seem to be that future growth in the enterprise IT market will mainly come from cloud-computing services even if the picture of how fast and in exactly what ways the sector will evolve is still not clear.

One fact that is becoming clear is the declining importance of desktop computing to information providers. I know that most of us still use a laptop

or desktop for much of our work but a couple of presentations released over the last couple of weeks show how this is changing. Analyst and venture capitalist Mary Meeker launched her annual Internet trends report (<http://www.slideshare.net/kleinerperkins/kpcb-Internet-trends-2013>), which showed how more Chinese Internet users now access the web via a phone than a desktop. This is a global trend and has implications for anyone delivering information services over the Internet. My experience in digital marketing and spending time going through the web analytics for a number of organisations is a constant reminder that creating mobile-friendly websites is no longer a nice-to-have option but is becoming essential. This is particularly true if you have a significant number of younger users where the smart phone is often the main or sometimes only device used for Internet access. Enders Analysis consultant Benedict Evans's presentation, *Mobile is Eating the World*, (<http://www.slideshare.net/bge20/2013-05-bea>) drives this home with some simple but powerful statistics. While global corporate PC sales have stagnated and sales of consumer PCs are falling, there has been a massive growth in tablet sales which are now over 120 million units a year. As I've written in a previous column, these tablets have far less storage capacities than traditional PCs and users are trusting much of their content

storage to the cloud. The impact of this on the king of the PC software market, Microsoft, is staggering. Slide 10 of Benedict's presentation shows that Microsoft's share of connected device unit sales (i.e. the percentage of Internet-connected devices which run a Microsoft operating system) has fallen from 90% in early 2009 to about 25% in March 2013. Remember these are unit sales and not the installed base of which Microsoft will have a larger share due to legacy machines. However, it clearly shows how the popularity of iPhones, iPads and Android devices are having a significant impact on how we access and use the Internet.

## Managing Tasks in the Cloud

In my last column I talked about the value of Insightly as a combined CRM and project management solution for independents and small businesses. However, for many people who just want a simple task manager it is overkill. In this case I can recommend Toodledo ([www.toodledo.com](http://www.toodledo.com)) which, despite a silly name, offers a robust and efficient way to keep track of tasks. I've been using it for several years and despite trying a number of alternatives still find it the most effective. What I like most about Toodledo are the following:

- It works in the browser so can be used anywhere with a web connection;
- There are a number of mobile apps which integrate well with Toodledo. (I use Ultimate To Do List on my Android phone and tablet but I am aware of sev-

eral others including a native app for Apple devices);

- It allows you to forward emails to your account which will automatically create a task. Unlike some competitors, Toodledo will also accept any attachments that come with the email and add them to the task. I find this particularly useful as many tasks are the result of an email that requires me to take action. (This requires a Pro Plus subscription at \$29.95 per year);
- Tasks can be grouped in folders or by context and can have due dates and priority settings applied to them. You can then choose how Toodledo or a mobile app presents your tasks based on various filters.

If you find it difficult keeping on top of what you need to do, whether at work or home, I recommend giving it a try. The main discipline is making sure you get into the habit of checking it on a daily basis but the satisfaction of ticking tasks off helps with this. And on that note, I can now tick off my task, "Write eLucidate copy for Michael Upshall".

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