Cloud Computing

Martin De Saulles

Cloud Computing in the News

Research from three major consulting firms makes up the key news items for this issue's column:

- Gartner predicts that more than half of global IT expenditure will be on cloud computing services and infrastructure by 2016, with nearly half of large enterprises deploying hybrid cloud solutions (combining in-house private and external public cloud services) by 2017 (http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/2613015);

- McKinsey list cloud computing as one of the key 12 technologies that will disrupt working practices over the coming decade. They point out that the economics of cloud computing are a key driver of adoption, with the management of in-house servers costing enterprises three times as much as outsourced ones (http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/business_technology/disruptive_technologies);

- KPMG's survey of over 650 senior executives from 16 countries supports the McKinsey research, and finds that cost saving is the single largest factor driving cloud adoption

([http://www.kpmg.com/global/en/issuesandinsights/articlespublicat](http://www.kpmg.com/global/en/issuesandinsights/articlespublications/cloud-service-providers-survey/Pages/default.aspx) [ions/cloud-service-providers-survey/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.kpmg.com/global/en/issuesandinsights/articlespublications/cloud-service-providers-survey/Pages/default.aspx)).

I suspect that if and when the cost savings have been realised, the focus of users will switch to using their cloud services to help with innovation and product/service development. Whether this will happen on the scale predicted by enthusiastic consultants remains to be seen. I wonder whether the 1987 comments of the economist, Robert Solow, will again be pertinent when he said of the massive investments in IT by US organisations during the 1970s and 80s, *"You see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics."*

Keep in Sync

While I use Evernote (see my September 2013 column) for keeping track of ideas and files related to work and home life, I also still have a lot of electronic files that I like to keep in a more traditional folder system on my PC. Many of these are PowerPoint and Word files I need for lectures and course outlines. Synching these between my work and home PCs was originally done with memory sticks and then a remote access server managed by my employer. However, for the last several years I have used SugarSync, which seamlessly mirrors my folders across both devices. I've tried other solutions, such as Dropbox and Box, but SugarSync has been the most reliable. As well as keeping files synched on the two PCs it also allows me access to them via any web browser, which has got me out of trouble on several occasions when giving talks at other institutions. Using SugarSync requires the installation of their software on each of the machine you wish to sync. Once the software is installed you can specify which folders or files you wish to sync. The initial uploading of those files to the SugarSync cloud may take a while depending on the speed of your connection and the size of the files but once done, only incremental changes to files are uploaded. My experience is that the software runs quietly in the background and is not a noticeable drain on my PC. SugarSync is free if you have less than 5GB of files to sync, and paid-for packages start at $7.49 a month for 60 GB. I think I must be on a legacy

package as I pay $3.49 a month for 30GB and the company don't seem to list that tariff any more. The 60GB package is $75 if you pay for a year in advance. It may not seem particularly cheap, but it is competitive with Dropbox and offers similar functionality, in that you can make specific files publicly shareable, which is useful to avoid emailing out large attachments. You can use your account across multiple computers, and the company also offers business packages for larger enterprises with multiple users. I cannot comment on the business packages, but from a personal-use perspective it is a great way to be able to access files from any PC as well as having the security of knowing you have off-site backup.

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