

INTRODUCTION

Put simply, Office 365 is a way to store all your company data safely and securely on Microsoft servers, instead of maintaining your own office systems. It is very cost effective (the basic package is donated to charities totally free of charge), well supported, and gives your company fantastic options around remote working and savings on IT expenditure.

It removes a lot of the typical headaches around data security, backups, server crashes etc. and even comes bundled with other apps like SharePoint, so you can set up a company Intranet, and Skype for Business, for Instant Messaging (chat) and video calls.

This White Paper will explain some of the pros and cons, and share with you Ethical IT's experiences and lessons

learnt deploying Office 365 for other customers. Our goal is to give you a better understanding of what Office 365 is, in non-technical terms, to help you make an informed decision whether or not to pursue it.

MAIN BENEFITS

We find the main benefits fall into three categories;

Cost

- Cost of maintaining and replacing you own servers and backups is removed
- Purchasing and managing Microsoft Office and Windows Server Licenses no longer needed
- A single Per Seat cost that can grow and shrink based on number of staff month by month

Risk

- Risks associated with server crashes, backup failures and system outages removed
- Better data security controls, allowing employees to safely use their own equipment if desired
- Auditors can be simply signposted to the Microsoft Data Protection policies

Productivity

- Staff can work remotely from anywhere and see all their emails and files
- Integrated Instant Messaging and Video Calls between staff for quick interactions
- Future versions of Microsoft Office are included, so staff are always up to date.

HOW WILL IT TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS?

From a business perspective, the simple act of removing on-site servers mitigates a significant risk: the server in your office or basement is far more likely to crash, and will require constant specialist IT skills to maintain and run properly. Furthermore, the data on that server needs to be backed up, and those backups must be stored securely elsewhere. The server itself will need to be upgraded every 3 to 5 years as parts fail, and you will still need to pay for Licenses for things like Windows and Microsoft Office – which in turn must also be upgraded on a 3 – 5 year cycle.

None of these factors apply to Office 365. The servers are run by Microsoft and come with a 99.97% Up Time Guarantee (which Microsoft have adhered to over the last 3 years). It includes all upgrades and updates forever, and the Microsoft Office software is included for up to 5 computers or devices per employee (on its own, this is worth about £350 per computer if you were to have to buy Microsoft Office off the shelf!)

EASE OF USE/STAFF EXPERIENCE

Most of your staff will use a computer outside of work, and will come to expect things like the latest version of Microsoft Office or Skype. Office 365 is exactly this, plus simple little things like the ability to send instant messages to one another, or see within Outlook if a colleague has their Out of Office on, helps save a few minutes trying to get hold of someone who you otherwise would not know is offline, and gives staff confidence in your company IT setup.

These small factors, as well as the major benefits such as the ability to say to your staff they can work from home sometimes and still access all their emails and shared files, gives them a lot more options on how to approach their work. Your company can allow staff to have their work emails and files on personal laptops / iPads / iPhones etc. if they wish (whilst you still maintain control over company data) and the integrated Instant Messaging / Video Conferencing allows staff and external customers or suppliers to meet and work together from multiple locations at no extra cost to you.

WHAT OPTIONS ARE BEST FOR ME?

There are 3 plans available from Microsoft, which give access to various features. All the plans include moving your emails and shared files to Microsoft, and some include the extras such as Instant Messaging / Video Conferencing. Microsoft are now donating the basic plan of Office 365 to charities, so the cost may well be totally free for your organization depending on which plan is required; please contact us for more information.

EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION/MIGRATION

Ethical IT has been through Office 365 implementations many times with our other charity customers and can support the whole process end to end. At the most basic level, the migration involves 4 stages:

1. Setting up your company on Office 365
2. Cleaning up and structuring your existing data ready to move
3. Importing all your data into Microsoft Office 365 servers
4. Re-pointing your computers and devices to collect their data from Office 365

Step 2 should not be underestimated; ensuring your existing data is in an orderly structure is a business process that can take up time within your team, but is essential to ensure a smooth migration. For most small to medium organizations up to 100 staff, the amount of down time required at step 3 can be kept to a weekend, while step 4 usually requires about half an hour per computer - it is a relatively simple process in IT terms.

Consideration should also be given to providing staff with training before the move, and some extra hands on support after the move to help them transition to the latest version of Microsoft Office. Finally, you will need to decommission your old server and data after a grace period of a few months.

OUR CONCLUSIONS

Office 365 has the potential to offer very significant cost savings as well as a big upshift in functionality and collaboration within your organization. This change will require some planning and support to achieve, and is no small undertaking, however the benefits are far reaching and the overall impact will be very positive. Ethical IT have built up the experience and expertise to help you plan and deliver a migration to "the cloud", and we would welcome further discussion and questions.

For more information on all of the above services please call [0845 337 2989](tel:08453372989) or email enquiries@ethicalit.net.