

How the cloud helps SMEs tidy up the IT mess

 By [Steven Cohen](#)

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Cloud back-up provider IronTree estimates that one in five South African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) experience some form of data loss once a year, most commonly as a result of accidents and natural disasters, data corruption, or theft of computing devices.

Most of them would be able to curtail these losses by moving their applications and the associated applications into the cloud, according to Steven Cohen, MD of Sage Pastel. He said that the cloud offers an opportunity for SMEs to neaten up their IT environments and thereby eliminate many of the traditional risks that lead to data loss and systems outages.

"Many SMEs are uncomfortable about the idea of moving their data into the cloud because it means thinking about applications and information in a new way," Cohen said. "But using the cloud for accounting and other applications means keeping their information stored in a secure data centre where the professionals look after it."

Illusion of control

Cohen said that despite the illusion of control that SMEs get from managing their own PCs with their applications and data on a hard drive, this is often the most risky way to manage their information. Without the right skills at their disposal, many SMEs find it difficult to keep their data backed up, their applications patched, and their hardware physically safe from theft and fire.

If you have your information stored on a hard drive, it's vulnerable to fires, theft or loss. It's also all too easy for someone to back up your data on a flash drive and to walk out of your office with your valuable information in his pocket.

What's more, with devices such as smartphones, tablets, and PCs proliferating, the risks are growing. Each device with locally stored data is another vulnerable point for the business - another place where data can be lost or stolen.

"An automated system that allows you to back your data up every day to a secure, remote location is the best way to safeguard your data," Cohen said. "And the easiest and most affordable way to get that is to use cloud-based solutions. It's an easy way to tidy up the IT mess."

Cohen said that the cloud offers the following benefits when it comes to security and business continuity:

- A good cloud provider invests in the best hardware and software, including the best information security solutions. That means it's better equipped to handle malware, hackers, DDOS attacks, and all the common cybercrime threats and

nuisances of the information age;

- A robust cloud application will keep your data backed up to the latest minute without the need for any special action from your side. Not only does this reduce your risk of losing valuable data in a crisis (such as fire or the theft of a computer), it also means your team is always sharing and working off the latest data;
- Unlike a small business, a cloud provider can afford to double up on servers, storage, power and telecoms infrastructure, and so on. That means it can provide far higher uptime for your application than you could yourself. And if there's a power outage or internet failure at your office, you can simply move to a coffee shop, log in and carry on working; and
- Keeping your software up to date with the latest version and downloading the latest patches is a nuisance. In the cloud, someone else takes care of it for you, saving you time and money.

ABOUT STEVEN COHEN

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