**CONNECT WORKERS AND TEAMS WITH CLOUD-BASED PRODUCTIVITY**

Productivity is often considered the most popular business function for cloud migration for companies new to cloud computing. A *Channel Insider* article points to a July 2010 Gartner report projecting that cloud-based email and collaboration services will see 10% penetration of the enterprise email and messaging market by 2012 and will near 65% penetration by 2020.4 This growth is predicted for several reasons:

* **Lower cost.** Companies can save significantly. Users of public cloud email will eliminate messaging server sprawl, with associated decreases in data center facilities costs. Companies like Barry-Wehmiller have garnered six-figure savings by moving to cloud-based email systems.5 But even private clouds offer collaboration cost savings, including decreased hardware expense and simplified failover and data recovery options.
* **Service maturity.** Because the concept of hosted email has been around for so long, many CIOs feel that cloud-based email may be the most mature cloud service available today. That means more reliability on the cloud provider’s side, more deployment and access options, and an easier time negotiating your SLA.
* **Flexibility.** Where traditional hosted email simply hosts *n* number of mailboxes for your organization, cloud-based email enables full integration with the rest of your infrastructure – even if that infrastructure is still located on your premises in a hybrid cloud infrastructure. Your IT staffers manage local and cloud-based mailboxes with the same set of tools. This not only makes rote management tasks easier, but also enables more responsiveness to new requirements.
* **Better user experience.** Workers in other countries often find that distance can make connections to in-house resources unreliable. With cloud communication and messaging, you can provide more reliable global user connectivity. A high degree of reliability is especially crucial for helping users accept and work with collaboration tools.

Email and collaboration tools are hugely important for meeting today’s business productivity requirements. Cloud computing makes these resources easier for your IT staff to manage and easier and more reliable for your users to access. Those using public cloud resources can investigate Software as a Service (SaaS) offerings such as email integrated with Voice over IP (VoIP) phone services, content sharing and management, and electronic meeting software. Public cloud service providers can offer these capabilities as a service – no deployment headaches required. Along with providing users the ability to connect globally and across a variety of target devices, cloud computing eliminates the cost of buying servers and infrastructure for lots of branch and remote offices. If you’re looking for a first workload with which to try cloud computing, email and collaboration services provide a great place to start.

Even as you’re evaluating moving your email, messaging and team collaboration platforms to the cloud, however, you should be using lessons learned to evaluate whether other business functions should live there as well. One example might be your line of business (LOB) applications. LOB applications are often the last to be considered for cloud migration because their deployment, management, and use represent the core of IT competitive advantage for many companies. But with the new agility the cloud can offer, smart CIOs are looking at LOB cloud migrations much sooner, seeking new competitive capabilities and an easier time reaching new markets.

And consider the concept of moving parts or all of your IT infrastructure into the cloud. Because of its customizability, many CIOs are looking to save significant dollars this way using combination of the following models:

* Physical server and network infrastructure, called *Infrastructure as a Service* (IaaS)
* Server platforms and management, called *Platform as a Service* (PaaS)
* Specific application workloads, called *Software as a Service* (SaaS)

Collectively, these models can be viewed as *IT as a Service* (ITaaS), which not only represents the essence of cloud computing, but also encapsulates the paradigm shift cloud computing will have on traditional datacenter and IT management.

**Getting started.** Audit your email and messaging usage for the last several years to forecast where this service is going in your company. Factor in areas of functionality you’d like to add – voice, document sharing, etc. Then talk to your cloud provider about options, deployment, and pricing.

4 Nathan Eddy, “Majority of Enterprises to Use Cloud-Based E-Mail by 2020, Report Says,” *Channel Insider*, September 2, 2010, http://www.channelinsider.com/c/a/Cloud-Computing/Majority-of-Enterprises-to-Use-CloudBased-Email-by-2020-Report-Says-102790/

5 Microsoft Case Study, *Manufacturer Saves $300,000 by Moving to Scalable, Hosted Online Services*, http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/Microsoft-Business-Productivity-Online-Standard-Suite/Barry-Wehmiller-Companies-Inc/Manufacturer-Saves-300-000-by-Moving-to-Scalable-Hosted-Online-Services/4000005569 (November 2, 2009)