



Stop Paper Overload: Put the Cloud to Work for Your Business

Paper cuts. Killing trees. Messy piles. Printer jam. Missing files. Who needs it? Your company probably no longer does, thanks to cloud storage data solutions.



HK Bain is the CEO of Digitech Systems, which provides businesses of all sizes with onsite and cloud-based information management systems.

"We recommend that few, if any, business records be kept in a paper format because paper is so vulnerable to theft and disaster," says **HK Bain**, the CEO of Digitech Systems, which offers a comprehensive Enterprise Content Management product suite that enables businesses to more effectively manage information of any kind – from paper documents and electronic files to print streams and email.

"In addition," Bain adds, "most records today are natively electronic, so electronic storage is simpler."

The critical decision then becomes how to decide what is stored on premise (on the company's own network) versus what is entrusted to a cloud provider (which gives you access to any document, anywhere, anytime). Each business has to decide what works better for its unique needs.

"Evaluate if your company can provide the appropriate security required to protect sensitive data and ensure that it is available when you need it," Bain says. "For most organizations, a cloud provider offers better security and reliability because they specialize in it."

If you choose to go with the cloud, Bain suggests the following five considerations to help make your transition seamless:

1. Ensure the provider uses software designed to be a cloud solution.

As cloud has become popular, many software companies have rushed to host their products for customers. However, different architecture is required to keep each customer's information private, to ensure Internet connectivity, and to keep the system up and running on a grand scale when hundreds or thousands of customers begin using it.

2. Choose a cloud service provider that protects your data while it is stored.

This may sound obvious, but you'll want to ask – safeguards to protect data as it is being transmitted in and out of the system (accessed and uploaded) is obviously important, but you also want to be sure it's kept in a digital fortress when stored.

3. Make sure the server you interact with does not have direct access to document storage locations and databases.

Application servers (the ones you work with) should sit on an entirely different secured network and interact with data storage as a separate, secure connection.

4. Ask about the provider's disaster recovery plans – the "worst-case scenarios."

Fully redundant systems should exist on multiple major power grids, so that even in a catastrophic failure, you can still access your information. Your chosen vendor should be synchronizing data between sites, and it should be able to switch to the secondary site within a matter of minutes.

5. Work only with a cloud provider that manages and maintains all of its own systems and structures.

One way to verify that this critical component is in place is to ask for what's called an "SOC 2 Type 2 audit report."

Read that report to better understand the processes your provider uses to build and maintain the cloud service. Ask all questions that come to mind until you are sure you're getting what you need.

"In all cases, make sure your data storage vendor can seamlessly switch you from on-premise to cloud and vice versa as your data storage needs change over time," Bain says. "You shouldn't settle for an either/or scenario that locks you into only one option." ■

– Jill Schildhouse

Where to Start

There are many options in the marketplace for cloud storage data solutions, making it difficult to know which system to trust for your business. The following three come recommended by HK Bain:

Digitech Systems was one of the first companies to take a successful cloud product to the marketplace and was the first to offer Enterprise Content Management as a service. The company's ImageSilo product was launched in 1999. "As the grandfather of this technology model, thousands of organizations around the world trust ImageSilo to securely manage their content and business processes," Bain says. ImageSilo has boasted 99.995 percent uptime over its 15-year history, according to the company.

Athenahealth is a provider of specialty healthcare billing and collections records storage services in the cloud since 2006. "I believe they are a strong cloud storage option because their unique pricing model makes them very attractive to medium to smaller offices and facilities," Bain says. The "pay for performance" pricing structure of Athenahealth takes a portion of the money resulting from the collections activities for which its service is used. In addition, Athenahealth is well-recognized for its service security and uptime for which it guarantees 99 percent availability.

CareCloud is a cloud-based electronic medical records service. "They're a strong cloud storage provider for the healthcare market because their pricing structure is much more affordable than a traditional software EMR model," Bain says. CareCloud also is growing rapidly and gaining market share over larger competitors. In addition, it claims to be highly secure in compliance with HIPAA regulations, and it offers 99 percent uptime.