Microsoft

Six Reasons It's Time to Move Your Office Apps to the Cloud
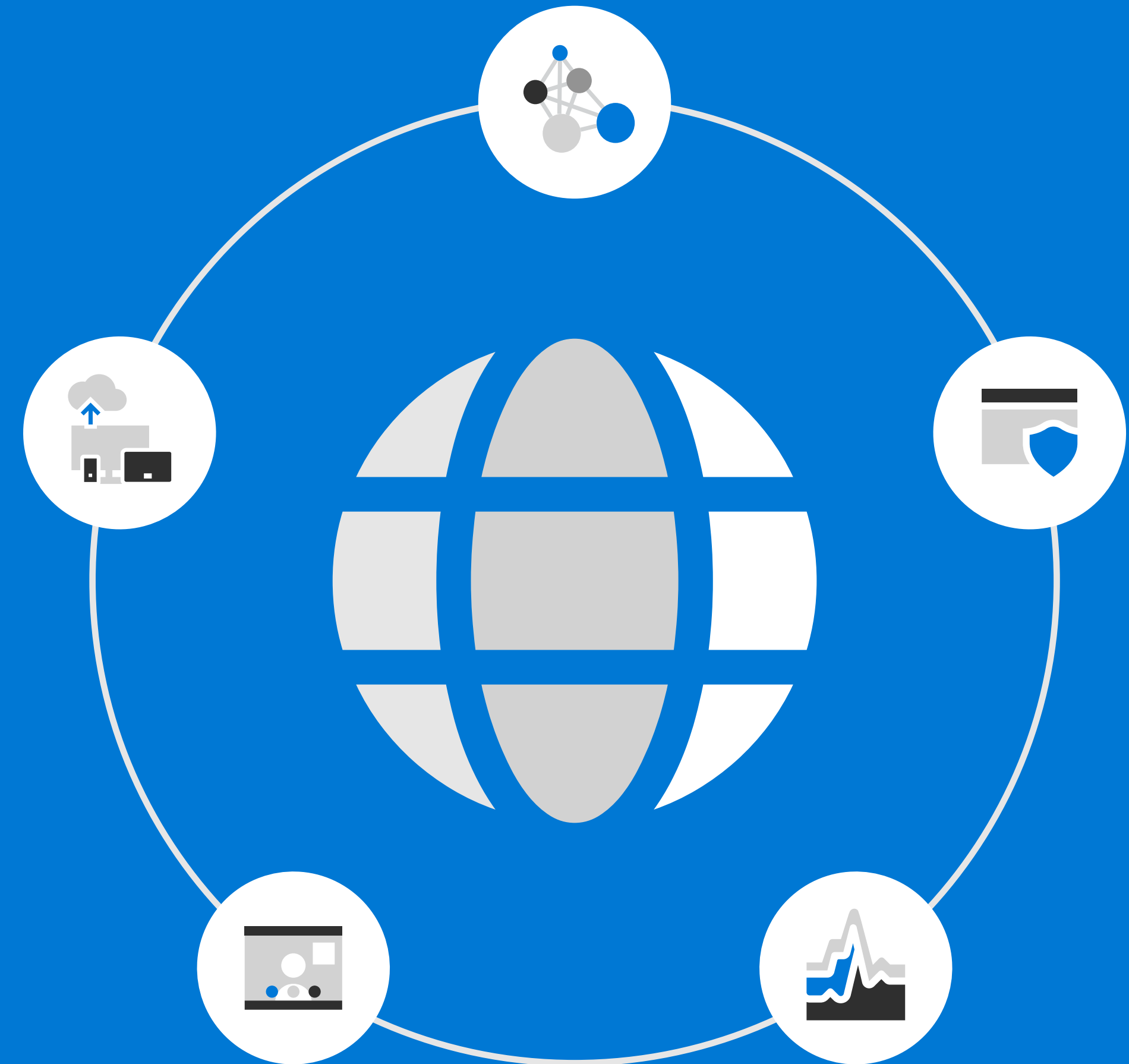
This information will help business leaders who:

• Are thinking about moving productivity software to the cloud but still have questions about the implications and how it will impact business continuity.

• Are tired of maintaining expensive on-premises environments.

• Want to empower employees to work from anywhere.

**Estimated reading time: about 12 minutes**

The compelling promise of the cloud

To run a successful business, you need the right technology. For a long time, this meant large investments in on-premises hardware, software, and servers. This made it complicated and burdensome to change platforms, update technology, or even let employees work remotely.

Cloud-based solutions address many of these challenges. With your applications in the cloud, employees can work from almost anywhere and still access the information they need to be productive.

However, in spite of the clear benefits of working in the cloud, many businesses put off migrating to the cloud. We get it. It is a big undertaking, but there's a lot of misinformation about what it means to work in the cloud, and moving to a cloud-based productivity solution is easier and more beneficial than you might expect.

In this e-book, we'll look at some of the most compelling reasons your business can benefit from moving to the cloud.

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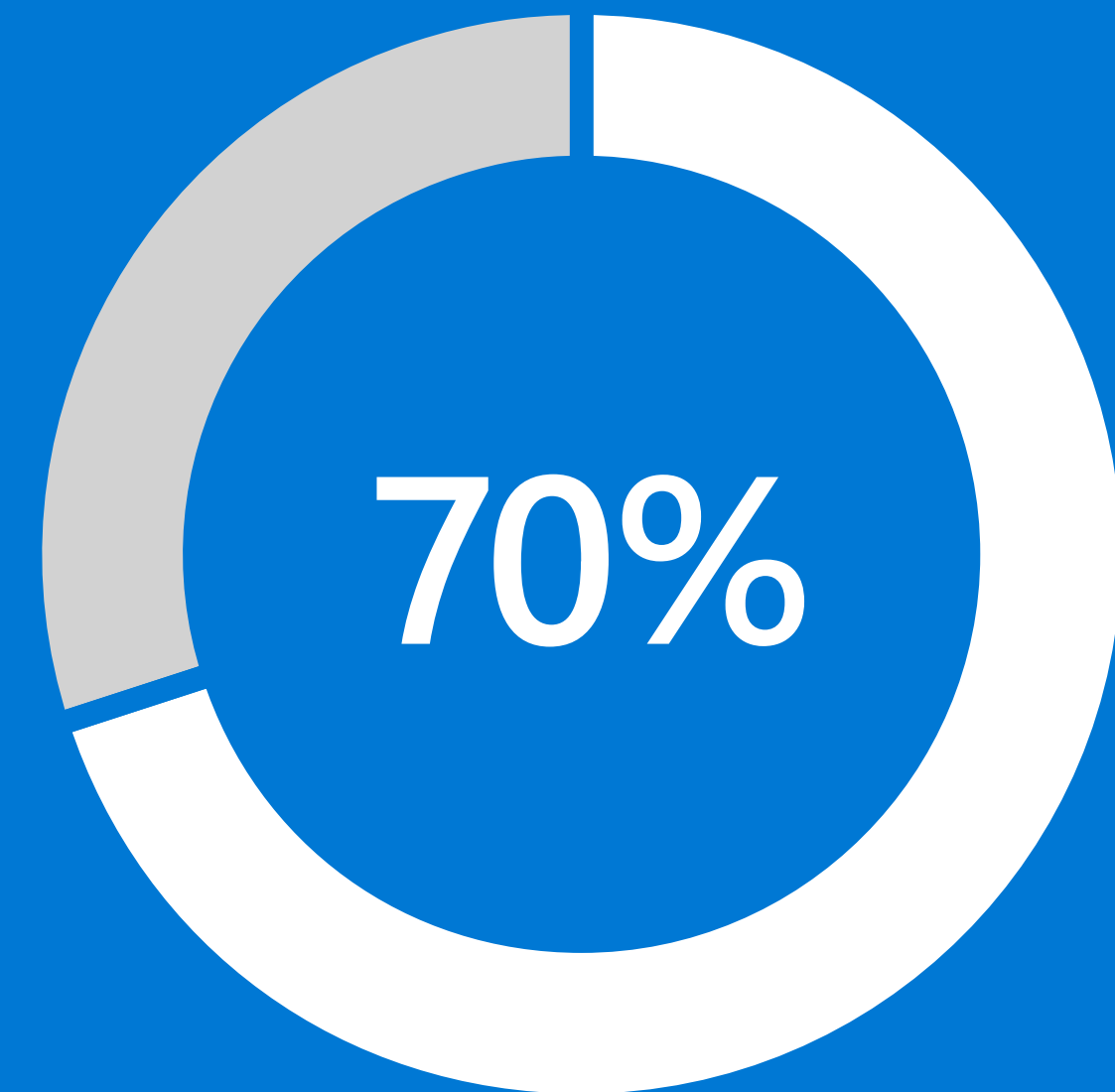
of Millennial business leaders believe it's very important to work for a company or organization that keeps up with software and application trends.[1]

¹ Tech Intensity Quantitative Research, Microsoft, 2019.

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Reason 1:

Transitioning to the cloud can be simple

Move to the cloud at your own pace or use a hybrid approach.

Cloud migration doesn't need to happen all at once. You can pick a workload or system that makes sense and feels like a good first step, such as infrastructure services, system backups, or productivity applications. All of these should move to the cloud eventually, but they can move one at a time. Most implementations start with a hybrid approach—moving a single workload, such as email. Then you can add other elements as you get comfortable.

Starting with a hybrid environment, where you have some of your processes and platforms on-premises and some in the cloud, lets you and your employees adjust to the change gradually.

As noted, starting with email as a cloud application is a logical first step, and usually an easy transition for most employees. And when email is hosted in the cloud, it's accessible where and when they need it—on their phone, or tablet, a laptop, or desktop, from virtually anywhere.

As working in the cloud becomes more comfortable and familiar, you can decide when it's time to take the next step to make it easier to be productive across your whole business, rather than with just one workload. Being able to access documents, apps, and coworkers from anywhere, on any device, has a definite advantage.

How to transition productivity software to the cloud

- Identify the top on-premises productivity platforms in use across your organization.

- Choose just one or two applications to shift from an on-premises version to a cloud version. Email or calendaring are both good first picks.

- Investigate the features that will come with your new cloud service so you can communicate them to the employees who will be making the transition.

- Recruit the app service to support you in deploying the cloud service across your users, ensuring security and compliance regulations are met.

- Set a target date for the transition and make sure people across your organization know it's coming and what to expect, as well as how this will help them be more productive.

- Create a quick-start guide that helps everyone understand how to use the new app service.

- As you roll out the new cloud service, be ready to support employees who are learning how to navigate the new system.

Reason 2:

Moving to the cloud saves money

Simplify IT, security, and billing while optimizing collaboration, remote work, and file storage and sharing.

In recent years, there's been an explosion of productivity applications for the workplace. Everything from video conferencing, chat, scheduling, and project management to presentations, spreadsheets, and word processing. If your organization is suffering from a complicated, disjointed array of applications that don't work together, it's time to take a step back and analyze your office ecosystem.

The first thing to look at is whether on-premises applications are helping or hurting productivity. If a video conferencing solution is only available in the office, and most people are working remotely, then it's not helping anyone while it continues to cost money. An on-premises version of presentation software means that coworkers can't collaborate in real time as they edit and make notes on the document. This causes delays, frustration, and reduced productivity.

With any or all services in the cloud (including system backups, infrastructure services, and productivity software), productivity improves as people are able to access what they need when they need it. They can also connect to each other in the context of their work, which improves collaboration.

How moving to the cloud saves money

- Simplify IT deployment and support. Moving apps to the cloud eliminates hours of work for IT. This is because deployment for multiple people at the same time can be done online rather than in person for each device. IT can provide support virtually in less time than in person and can deliver it anywhere it's needed.

- Simplify security. Close security loopholes when you move apps to the cloud. This alone saves IT hours, but it's also easier and faster to monitor, analyze, and respond to breaches in the cloud.

- Simplify billing. If you're using disparate apps on-premises, consolidating apps in the cloud will simplify billing while ensuring you're not paying twice for the same solution.

- Optimize collaboration. Collaboration becomes seamless when all the apps are in one platform in the cloud, and coworkers can easily connect with each other, their projects, chats, and meetings.

- Optimize remote working. Apps in the cloud liberate workers to be productive from anywhere. Removing these barriers to productivity saves money.

- Optimize file storage and sharing. Moving apps to the cloud makes it easier to access files in the context of your work, such as while viewing your calendar, during a video conference, or writing an email.

Reason 3:

Working in the cloud is straightforward

Make the transition to working in a cloud-based environment as easy as possible.

While it might sound like a big change, on the employee side, working in the cloud is not that different from how they already work. Except that it can be a lot easier. They'll have more freedom to work from anywhere, and be able to collaborate more easily. Software is updated automatically, so everyone has the latest improvements and security features.

Once you're in the cloud, it's easier to connect applications that need to interact with each other or integrate them into important platforms.

On the technical side, getting things up and running is obviously more involved. But cloud platform providers are there to help, with information and tips on firewall configurations, reverse proxy requirements, identity options, and a phased approach for your hybrid environments.
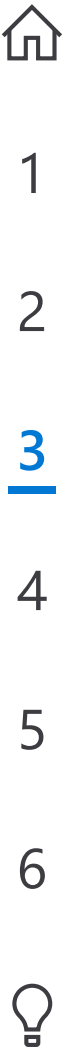
What's possible in the cloud

• Automatic security updates. Stay up to date with the latest patches and protections, as well as key international, regional, and industry-specific compliance standards and terms, with privacy controls you can adjust.

• Maximum uptime of your systems, with support and deployment from the cloud provider. Maintain productivity and business continuity, with a more reliable experience for your employees and customers.

• Web and mobile versions of applications. This is one of the main ways a cloud environment can help improve productivity. Not only can you configure, deploy, and provide support from anywhere, but employees can also work and collaborate remotely.

• Seamless productivity. If balancing cybersecurity and productivity has been a challenge, cloud-based services can help you address that. A unified system hosted in the cloud makes it easier to deploy features like single sign-on across all apps, so employees can use the same password to access the tools and resources they use every day.

• Unlimited file storage and sharing. No need to invest in more servers and the infrastructure to support them. In the cloud, there are no limits on available space for data, or who can access it (unless you implement those limits for security reasons, of course).

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Reason 4:

Access everything from anywhere, anytime—even when offline

Access files stored in the cloud whether you're online or not.

Another advantage of the cloud is that it makes your applications and files available anytime. If you were offline when you revised a document, changes are saved locally to your hard drive. The next time you go online, the updated document is automatically saved to the cloud, ensuring that the files stored there are up to date.

True mobility is only possible if your applications and services are in the cloud, and employees can use them wherever they are. With teammates, customers, and vendors spanning the globe, having the information and resources you need at your fingertips is essential. Cloud environments make this possible.

How the cloud enables anywhere access

- High-speed internet access. With widespread availability of fast internet service, it's now possible to access video meetings and share large amounts of data as conveniently on a phone using a cellular network as on a computer using a wired network.

- Continuous productivity. Whether you're working online or offline, a cloud-based environment means you can pick up where you left off, sometimes even on a different device, and automatically update your files in the cloud when you're back online.

- Dedicated cloud providers with the capacity to scale compute power, storage, database, and network services as needed. Large cloud providers like Microsoft Azure have the infrastructure to support millions of applications on their platforms and the data that goes with them.

- Global datacenters. This is how to get "access from anywhere." Cloud providers have built infrastructure around the world that makes it possible for people to access their information no matter where they are. Someone who primarily accesses email in the cloud from a laptop in Dayton, Ohio, and finds themselves in Djibouti, Djibouti, can still easily access their email because there is a datacenter serving that region.

Reason 5:

The cloud gives you more ways to collaborate

The cloud makes it easier to collaborate in real time from anywhere using video, chat, and document sharing.

If you've collaborated remotely on a document, then you understand the benefits of coauthoring and version control that the cloud makes possible. Of course, collaboration also includes video conferencing and chat, two essential and efficient ways to connect. Coworkers can exchange ideas and information, share their screen, and even record the session.

Working together in the cloud makes it easier for individuals on a team to share their input in the context of the project. It also makes it easier to follow who contributed what, what the edit was, and who needs to review next. Fewer things fall through the cracks. More projects move forward quickly.

How the cloud makes it easier to collaborate

- Whether in person or virtual, collaboration is enhanced if people can work together at the same time while looking at the same information. When a document is hosted in the cloud, it's not locked on one person's hard drive. It's accessible by anyone who has permission and by multiple people at the same time.

- Being able to see coworkers via video or chat with them in real time, improves the ability to collaborate effectively. With video streaming in the cloud, you can join video calls from anywhere, so that work can go on even if people aren't in the office.

- Virtual whiteboarding, a digital canvas that people can sketch on together and simultaneously, makes collaboration immediate and effective.

- Security in the cloud prevents bad actors from infiltrating video calls, chats, or documents. With identity and access management, collaborators can be assured that those making notes in the document are teammates.

- Mobile and web versions of collaboration software make it possible to participate from anywhere.

Reason 6:

There's better security in the cloud

The right cloud platform can deliver better security and protection against hacking than an onsite security team can.

Even if your company has a large and experienced security team, businesses rarely have one that can assess and protect against the hundreds of possible threats that come through each day, as many as 983 in one day according to some research.[2] As cyberattacks become more sophisticated, anticipating and defending against them becomes more complex. Cloud providers have data and analytics about security threats across their entire ecosystem, which they can use to protect all their customers. If your systems are all on-premises, you only have the data that relates to you, making it harder to anticipate or identify new threats.

In the cloud, cybersecurity defenses are both more flexible and harder to defeat. For example, security in the cloud helps you grant access based on user identity, not device/endpoint. You can apply controls based on role and need, no matter how the user connects. This means you're able to protect data regardless of where it's stored, how it's accessed, or with whom it's shared.

Cloud-based security also brings tools to detect and protect against breach, with improved threat protection and information protection. It also gives you features like automatic configuration, policy-setting, improved visibility, and easier management.

With your business processes in the cloud, not only is your data safer, but automated updates to apps and operating systems also safeguard your business, so you always have the most up-to-date protection.

[2] Positive Technologies, "Web application attack statistics: 2017 in review," May 2018.

How the cloud is more secure than on-premises servers

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- On-premises servers are physically located in your office. Cloud servers are hosted by a third party in a dedicated data center. The difference? These data centers are protected by redundant systems, load balancing equipment, failover switches, and backup power to handle disruptive events that might compromise server operation. Very few businesses have facilities that are built with the same level of redundancy and backup systems.

- Datacenters have dedicated security experts to defend against cyberattacks at the server level. It's expensive to hire a security expert to do this with on-premises servers, and the cost is often prohibitive.

- Cloud security providers are held to a high standard of compliance and must stay current on the latest regulations, tools, and techniques. There is typically stricter industry oversight with cloud security than there is within an organization's security team.

- Technology develops at such a rapid pace that it can be hard for an IT team to focus enough on security to keep up, as well as ensure there is budget allocated for constant upgrades to security. With cloud services, all this maintenance is the responsibility of the cloud provider.

- Datacenters have multiple backups of your data. If anything goes wrong, they can restore your files from a backup faster than an on-premises server.

The cloud is there for you whenever you're ready

5 hours per week saved due to collaboration and communication efficiency.[3]

40% reduced risk of a major security breach with Microsoft 365 holistic security features.[2]

Moving to the cloud is an important decision, so it's smart to get the facts before you make it. Microsoft 365 will help your people be more productive and protect your business.

Be more productive wherever you are with:
• Office apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint.
• Email and calendaring with Outlook and Exchange.
• Chats, calls, and meetings in Microsoft Teams.
• Cloud storage with OneDrive.

Protect your employees, data, and customer information:
• Defend against cyberthreats with advanced tools for threat protection.
• Protect and govern data by configuring protection and retention labels.
• Secure your data, even when accessed on employees' personal devices.
• Simplify IT with easy security setup.

Want to see how Microsoft 365 works?
Request a demo for your organization.

Request a demo

[2] Positive Technologies, "Web application attack statistics: 2017 in review," May 2018.

[3] Forrester Research, "The Total Economic Impact of Microsoft 364 E3, Study Modified for Small Enterprise Organizations," July 2019.