Top 10 reasons to choose cloud-based archiving

Cloud computing continues to permeate across all aspects of information technology and archiving is no exception. Once considered fraught with risk, high costs, and loss of data control, some may have thought the cloud was a temporary trend—especially as an option to hold and protect sensitive corporate and customer data. Today, cloud solutions for email, security, customer relationship management (CRM), and storage have proven the contrary, and are mainstays in businesses of every kind, with momentum to challenge on-premise solutions as the deployment option of choice.

The shift to cloud computing is not slowing down, as organizations continue to migrate away from software and on-premise archiving to cloud-based information archiving solutions. As mentioned in the 2015 Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Information Archiving, Gartner sees a "60 percent–70 percent of new or replacement email archiving implementations as being cloud-based."[1]

The evolution of the cloud-based information archiving service providers essentially eliminates past concerns, and organizations have developed confidence and a comfort level with market-leading providers, trusting the most confidential data required for regulatory compliance to cloud-based archives.

Driving this move to the cloud, corporations are dealing with challenges that make maintaining information archiving in-house not only complex but also expensive, unreliable, and risky. These challenges include:

• Unprecedented data growth, as well as the need to scale up or down quickly

• Tightening compliance, legal, and business regulations

• Mounting litigation involving data and how it is maintained and how quickly it can be produced

• Demanding user requirements for anytime and anywhere access on any device

Modern cloud-based enterprise information archiving solutions enable organizations to achieve the scalability, security, cost savings, and data accessibility required to manage their dynamic, sensitive, and growing data. These solutions also have the ability to provide access and insight across multiple data types and content repositories to support compliance, mitigate risk, and increase IT efficiency and legal preparedness. This white paper outlines the top 10 reasons why organizations are moving to cloud-based information archiving.

Reason 1: Equal or better security

Many cloud archiving providers are able to provide the same or greater level of security than what the largest companies can feasibly provide on-premise. Because securing client data is the top priority, these cloud providers invest and dedicate significantly more resources into processes, data centers, certifications, and other mechanisms to ensure the maximum possible security.

A variety of cloud deployments, including public, private, and managed service offerings, offer different levels of data and infrastructure segregation or degrees of multi-tenancy, as required by each client. Though there may be a higher degree of multi-tenancy with public clouds, there is still a very high level of security protecting each organization's data. Where corporate or other compliance regulations dictate, customers can utilize a provider with a private cloud infrastructure or managed service offering, to avoid any commingling of data so they can meet compliance obligations.

Offering solid, validated security is key, which means most providers are audited to SOC 2 standards that report on policies, communications, procedures, and monitoring as they relate to security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality, and privacy of a system. Most providers also have robust physical systems in place to prevent unauthorized access, including 24x7 surveillance, biometrically controlled doors, CCTV cameras, audible or silent alarms, as well as other anti-intrusion controls. Unauthorized access to data is also prevented with encryption, virtual private network (VPN) tunnels, and multi-level authentication.

Many organizations find it difficult to meet this level of security independently, and, therefore, many are using a cloud-based information archiving solution to leverage benefits such as certified security. As an added benefit to businesses who choose to offload this major IT challenge to a cloud-based archiving provider, resources such as IT, security, and personnel can be re-focused on projects that have a more direct impact on productivity, profitability, and business objectives.
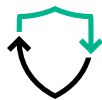
Reason 2: Lower risk

Embracing cloud-based information archiving can help you mitigate the compliance, legal, and business risks that most organizations face each day. Most companies do not have the certified controls and processes in place, or the resources to enable or maintain them. A major cloud provider can secure, monitor, backup, replicate, and store data volumes at the petabyte scale. And with automated, repeatable processes and protocols mandated by security certifications, the potential for risk is further diminished.

In this age of explosive data growth and expanding content sources, it is an uphill battle to keep up with the data within your firewall, but to also do it in a compliant manner adds another layer of complexity and risk. Without automated, tested, and certified policies in communications, procedures, and monitoring, many risks stem from numerous areas—human error, accidental data spoliation, hardware failure, unauthorized data breach, or even a localized natural disaster.

Cloud providers remove some of this risk by relying on predefined archiving processes, data center-class security, and redundant write once, read many (WORM) storage technology that preserves data in multiple locations. Regardless of almost any risk factor, data should always be preserved, defensibly disposed, and accessible for litigation, compliance, and end-user search.

Reason 3: Cost savings

Organizations continue to look for ways to lower total cost of ownership (TCO) and decrease CAPEX, and the cloud is helping to achieve these priorities. Cloud archiving enables companies to lower up-front costs and in many cases eliminate the initial CAPEX. Rather than investing in hardware, storage, infrastructure, and software based on worst-case scenario capacities (which lead to low utilization and limited ROI), organizations typically pay a predictable monthly fee based either on the number of users or volume of data.

Cloud information archiving offers the added benefit of enabling you to scale services up or down to meet specific business usage on an on-demand basis, and only pay for services used. You can also save by eliminating the many indirect costs affiliated with on-premise archiving solutions such as power, cooling, floor space, storage and network infrastructure, and IT personnel needed for management and administration. Beyond cost savings, you can gain business agility to respond more effectively to data demands and maintain a competitive advantage.

Reason 4: Greater data access

To meet today's demands of anytime and anywhere data access, archiving in the cloud enables end users to connect to their data on demand, from virtually any device, 24x7. Unless you are directly connected to the company network, access to data within an on-premise solution is non-existent or very limited at best. This can cause users to place a further undue burden on IT resources to assist in searching and collecting data for litigation or business use. Slow or labor-intensive processes for data access can present a potential business impact in the form of time, cost, and user experience.

As end users become increasingly mobile, the expectation is that all of their data should be readily available via an intuitive interface regardless of device. Rather than being walled off inside the enterprise, data consolidated in the cloud can streamline a user's ability to access, search, identify, and gain business value from virtually all information. You can also exchange data efficiently and securely between internal and external teams, to mitigate spoliation risk and eliminate the need for the physical delivery of data.

Reason 5: Reliable service availability and data protection

Most organizations do not have the means or resources to build and manage data centers that rival the high availability, data protection, high-speed access, and redundant storage capabilities of dedicated cloud archiving service providers. When business-critical data including email, files, and other content are archived, it is imperative that this data remain available to support daily business operations, litigation readiness, internal investigations, or urgent requests from outside regulators.

Lacking the infrastructure and high-availability systems, few companies can support the near 100 percent uptime offered by most providers. On-premise solutions are more likely to encounter downtime, making them more costly to maintain with the need for additional time and IT resources to rectify issues and restore data access. In many cases, providers actually stipulate a guaranteed uptime and provide credits back to the customer should the average uptime fall below the guarantee over a given period.

With data center-class backup, replication, redundant storage, and disaster recovery systems organizations can be rest assured that they would not suffer the loss of irreplaceable data that could potentially lead to fines, sanctions, or a tarnished corporate reputation.
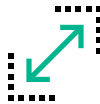
Reason 6: Achieve business agility and scalability

Data growth continues to be a major concern for most organizations today, and unfortunately is a challenge that will continue to persist in the future. Not only are more users creating data across multiple devices but also the volume of data required to be preserved and accessed now extends well beyond email to include files, SharePoint, IM, text, voice, video, and structured data. While adding more storage is one route, tremendous data growth rates make this option neither economical nor efficient as a method for coping with the problem.

Cloud archiving can enable almost limitless scalability on demand, to help you avoid the expense and low return on investment (ROI) of investing in additional infrastructure. By taking advantage of economies of scale inherent with cloud information archiving providers, the costs of increasing the number of users or volume of data is relatively consistent, and the per unit cost can actually decrease as you scale out.

Business needs can also be very dynamic, such as in the case of an acquisition or becoming involved in a large litigation. These events may require the immediate scale out of storage to migrate data from the acquired company, or require significant, yet temporary capabilities to search, process, and review large volumes of data. It would be difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to build out the infrastructure and systems quickly to support these dynamic business needs.

However, with a cloud archiving provider, you have access to immediate support and you can easily, quickly, and cost-effectively scale on demand. Once you address your temporary priorities, you can scale back to accommodate standard business practice requirements. Increased business agility and scalability are unique benefits of archiving in the cloud.

Reason 7: Outsource compliance requirements

Meeting corporate, industry, and regulatory compliance obligations are paramount with many organizations, particularly in highly regulated industries such as finance or healthcare. Though it may appear that maintaining data within a company's firewall would best support compliance requirements, most organizations do not have the requisite security certifications, which report on a business's controls as they relate to security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality, and privacy of a system. Without certification or audit of a company's compliance procedures, the responsibility is on the company to prove they are achieving the prescribed compliance.

In terms of functionality, on-premise compliance archiving tends to be less automated and requires human interaction, which increases the risk of human error. There is also a significant expense for any size company to set up internal infrastructure, policies, communications, procedures, and monitoring to achieve and maintain certification. For this reason, many organizations have turned to cloud archiving providers who are certified and they can demonstrate consistent, repeatable, and defensible processes to maintain compliance.

Reason 8: Ease of implementation and ongoing support

On-premise archiving solutions typically require significant hardware, software, storage, professional services, and dedicated IT resources for setup and continual maintenance. The costs of the professional services specific to the implementation of an archiving solution can be as much as the software alone and require weeks or months to complete. Throughout the product lifecycle, dedicated IT resources are required to manage everything from software updates, server maintenance, storage management, performance tuning, and helpdesk requests.

Companies are trying to reign in IT budgets and utilize solutions with lower TCO and higher ROI. So the time, resources, and costs affiliated with the implementation and ongoing support for on-premise archiving become less attractive from a financial, business, and logistical perspective. Cloud-based information archiving solutions remove and simplify a significant part of the implementation process as the infrastructure is already set up with the provider. Hence, much of the configuration can be done remotely and IT resources avoid spending time with installation, patching, configuration, and testing software.

A cloud provider handles most of the ongoing support and maintenance, leaving IT teams to concentrate on more valuable business priorities. With guaranteed uptime available from many providers, there's little to no downtime vs. the issues caused by onsite server maintenance, upgrades, or other outages.

Reason 9: Meet geographic data requirements

A wide array of country and industry-specific regulations dictate where data can reside geographically. For global companies that have operations and customers in many countries, it becomes crucial to ensure that data is managed in strict accordance with local regulations. The level of effort and cost required to deploy, manage, and support a discrete on-premise archiving solution at each location quickly becomes infeasible.

Rather than deploying multiple onsite solutions, many cloud archiving providers have data centers based across various geographic regions to specifically support this scenario. Leveraging the local infrastructure of the provider, organizations can manage and control where data can be transmitted and stored based on location.

Reason 10: Leverage a service provider's expertise

Leading service providers have focused experience, expertise, and dedicated archiving resources well beyond most organizations. Their experience comes not from working with one specific customer but from a wide range of customers across many different verticals.

With this experience comes the expertise to provide the most advanced, secure, scalable, and cost-effective archiving solutions. Given that their business depends on meeting or exceeding their customers' requirements, client organizations can feel confident that their data will be archived as promised.

By leveraging the latest technology, infrastructure, security, and scalability, organizations can gain a competitive advantage while lowering risk, reducing costs, and improving IT efficiency. And because a cloud information archiving solution allows IT resources to be utilized for other business priorities, you can avoid incurring the opportunity costs of additional productivity and innovation.

Summary

It's becoming increasingly harder to ignore the advantages and benefits delivered by cloud information archiving providers, and as a result, there continues to be consistent annual growth by organizations migrating to these beneficial cloud services.

In many cases, sometimes without realizing, companies have actually passed the tipping point where there is more risk, less security, limited scalability, and increased cost by keeping archiving in-house. Those that have made the move to the cloud, including small businesses to large global enterprises, continue to prove the positive business impact of cloud archiving.

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