

# ACHIEVING PROLIFIC PRODUCTIVITY WITH SAAS

By taking advantage of the mobility offered by the cloud, organizations can increase the power of their productivity and collaboration tools deployed through Software as a Service.

## Executive Summary

Since its debut in the early 2000s, Software as a Service (SaaS) has spread horizontally, moving across departments and lines of business, and vertically, being adopted by the largest enterprise down to the smallest organization.

SaaS can deliver much more than the features of the applications themselves. Combine the individual applications in business productivity suites, such as Microsoft Office, with the cloud's availability, accessibility and collaboration characteristics – along with mobile computing's anytime, anywhere capabilities – and SaaS deployments become integral to reaching the next level of productivity and collaboration.

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## Cloud Productivity

When the SaaS market first took shape, it was the province of applications specifically designed for a cloud platform. As adoption grew, software providers of all sizes launched cloud versions of their on-premises solutions and developed new products from the ground up. Today, SaaS models run the gamut, from cloud-native solutions to client/server software relocated to a cloud platform.

[The cloud is a flourishing software services delivery vehicle.](#) Forrester predicts that SaaS revenues will hit \$106 billion in 2016, while IDC estimates SaaS public cloud spending will reach \$82.7 billion by 2018. Meanwhile, SaaS enterprise applications will generate \$67 billion in revenues by 2018, according to Apps Run the World, and Cisco's research shows that by 2018, 59 percent of total cloud workloads will be SaaS. Any commercial on-premises application is now available as a service in some form, and an increasing number of new applications are being created in the cloud.

Among SaaS deployments, productivity software is second only to email, according to [CDW's 2015 Cloud 401 report](#). More than 30 percent of the IT professionals CDW surveyed had deployed these business-critical applications (such as those bundled in Microsoft Office 365) in the cloud.

Indeed, productivity is often a driver of SaaS adoption. Because the cloud provider performs support and maintenance as part of the

subscription fee, IT staff members aren't saddled with overseeing SaaS servers, and client access is browser-based. Meanwhile, storage headaches drop, as data is housed in the provider's data center.

IT teams also don't have to worry about lengthy application deployment schedules, and the provider performs all upgrades. Users seamlessly get the most current software versions, with their new features and functionality, and stay productive because the IT team doesn't have to install new versions. This also frees up IT administrators to provide quality training on new feature sets to ensure users get the most from productivity suites.

Further, SaaS pricing is subscription-based, making it an operational rather than a capital expense. Organizations will always have the latest software version, and they can easily pilot new SaaS applications without committing capital resources. As needed, IT teams can turn a positive test run into a strong business case for full deployment.

## The Power of Collaboration

Just as it improves productivity, the cloud can also boost collaboration. And as with productivity software, collaboration software delivered through the cloud can further enhance SaaS deployments.

Needing only a client-side browser, employees — even those perpetually in motion — can use their chosen devices to communicate and collaborate with coworkers and other stakeholders. Teams can function as if they were in the same room, even as members move between main and branch offices, work at customer sites or visit organizational facilities around the world. Though employees may have to travel for these and other business reasons, they don't have to travel to meet with their teams to collaborate on projects, maintaining efficiency while saving money.

SharePoint, Yammer and Skype are popular collaboration tools that are now available as online services in various Office 365 subscription plans.

SharePoint Online boosts the platform's traditional collaboration and document management strengths. For instance, enabling cloud-based file sharing through its document library and team tools eliminates the need for third-party file-sharing products. Virtual teams can work on documents simultaneously, regardless of location, and can securely share documents with external stakeholders, such as partners, suppliers and customers.

Yammer, a private, internal social network, allows project teams and larger business entities to collaborate via instant messaging and file-, document- and video-sharing applications. It offers customized news feeds, and its powerful search tools can identify personnel with specific skill sets, locate relevant documents and track pertinent conversation threads.

Skype for Business, which blends Skype with Microsoft Lync, bolsters Lync's instant messaging, content-sharing and audio-calling capabilities (available in both the on-premises Lync Server version and Office 365's Lync Online) with video call features and a

### GAME ON: SAAS IN EFFECT

GameStop, a global video game retail chain, deployed Microsoft's Office 365 to bolster communications with employees at more than 6,000 locations worldwide. The Software as a Service solution provides information more directly to users than previous methods used by the company and automates the tracking of store-related data. The company estimates that the software is helping it save \$700,000 a year and expects the solution to improve both sales and customer loyalty.

As GameStop sought a solution to improve communications among store managers and other users throughout the company, IT leaders decided that a cloud-based solution would provide a platform for sustainable growth while controlling costs. The company built a retail portal on Microsoft SharePoint Online that provides users in different job roles with information that is relevant to them. GameStop also deployed conferencing capabilities with Microsoft Lync Online, messaging with Exchange Online, and document storage with OneDrive for Business.

"We chose Microsoft Office 365 primarily because of its excellent user experience and superior level of security," says Jaime Flores, director of corporate systems at GameStop. "We wanted to ensure that the confidential reports and other proprietary data that we share with our stores were safeguarded in the cloud."



new, richer graphical interface. A particularly attractive feature in Skype for Business: Employees can now search the entire Skype directory (with more than 300 million users) and connect with anyone. For customers who choose the full-fledged Office 365 suite, Microsoft will upgrade existing Lync Server installations to Skype for Business Server.

## The Mobile Workforce

The cloud's ability to maximize productivity and collaboration relies on a third critical component: mobility.

Workers who access cloud-based productivity and collaboration suites with their mobile devices now get all the features and functionality of on-premises software, regardless of their location. Thanks to browser front ends, these SaaS offerings work on a user's chosen mobile platform, whether that's controlled by the IT group or by the user, as part of a bring-your-own-device program.

This anytime, anywhere access to both applications and colleagues makes employees infinitely more flexible and capable of meeting their obligations to coworkers, customers and the business — even if they are traveling or working offsite. Meanwhile, staff are not consuming costly in-house computing resources or forcing network administrators to continuously fine-tune high-availability networks to deliver application services.

SaaS also addresses some of the security issues that mobile devices introduce by virtue of their portability. Applications run

offsite, and their data is stored in the cloud rather than on the tablet or smartphone. Theft or loss of a device isn't the "code blue" situation it might be in a traditional IT environment.

Further, cloud providers that offer SaaS applications typically operate highly secure data centers staffed by experienced security professionals. In general, these providers can offer a higher level of security than many enterprises can achieve on their own. By accessing these applications via a mobile browser, users won't introduce malware, viruses and other cyberthreats to their internal networks.

Along with offloading various support tasks, IT organizations also reduce related management activities for those applications they send to the cloud. The cloud provider analyzes performance against metrics; handles support, upgrades and patches; and accepts accountability via service-level agreements.

## SaaS Challenges

SaaS has numerous benefits, but it brings some challenges as well. These are among the most common.

**Security:** Some enterprises operate under compliance regulations that constrain them. Others are concerned about the security of any data not under their control.

Still, security concerns are easing somewhat as cloud computing matures. Providers are continuously improving SaaS security and can earn certifications to prove they're compliant with specific regulations. Customers are becoming more savvy to exploring and vetting security protocols with their SaaS providers. And security-sensitive organizations also have the option of deploying private or hybrid clouds to serve specific needs.

In a [2015 global survey of enterprise IT leaders conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit](#), 72 percent of respondents said their overall IT infrastructure was more secure as a result of using cloud services. The same percentage said their infrastructure was less prone to data breaches.

**Migration:** While providers tout the ease of deploying SaaS, much depends on integration requirements, whether applications are new deployments or migrations, and other factors.

In a [2014 survey conducted by Enterprise Management Associates](#), respondents cited data migration (38 percent) and application migration (31 percent) as among the top challenges they encounter when relocating production applications to the public cloud.

That's why newer applications, such as mobile device management or analytics, are more attractive SaaS options than existing enterprise applications. Case in point: In a [2015 QuinStreet survey](#), 52 percent of respondents using MDM were running it in the cloud, while just 22 percent had migrated finance applications to a SaaS model.

**User Training:** While launching a SaaS application can be much easier than deploying it on-premises, user training is equally critical. More than 80 percent of respondents to the QuinStreet survey cited end-user ease of use as the most important feature of a SaaS solution.

### SECURITY AS A SERVICE

In the SaaS realm, security as a service is among the healthiest segments, and for good reason: With the number of cyberthreats continuously multiplying, handling security in-house is increasingly difficult. When security is delivered as a service, offerings that protect the spectrum of infrastructure subsegments are available at predictable, reasonable prices, and experts oversee their management.

Depending on needs and budget, IT organizations can opt for SaaS offered by a security technology provider in a public cloud, or have a managed services provider handle end-to-end security services for every type of infrastructure segment. Security as a service is particularly appealing for small and medium-sized enterprises that don't have the resources to hire and retain a team of security administrators.

In 2015, according to Gartner, more than 30 percent of the security controls deployed by SMBs will be a cloud service. [Gartner](#) also predicts that spending on cloud-based security services will reach \$3.1 billion in 2015, up from \$2.1 billion in 2013.

In the near term, the leading cloud-based security segments will continue to be email security, web security, and identity and access management. Meanwhile, there's strong growth in cloud services for encryption (such as those available through Azure), information and event management, and vulnerability assessment.



SaaS introduces a different training paradigm because applications are upgraded more frequently than on-premises solutions. More providers are including onboarding and training features within their offerings, but IT teams are responsible for fully training employees and addressing their specific job requirements.

**Network Requirements:** Network availability and performance are always critical IT concerns, but SaaS introduces some new twists. Accessing applications in the cloud puts a lot of pressure on wide area networks (WANs), which must shoulder bigger workloads while meeting accessibility and availability requirements.

Meeting these demands can be difficult, depending on the location of the customer's and provider's data centers, number and location of SaaS users, and an application's appetite for bandwidth. If the organization is highly distributed, a traditional WAN architecture will struggle to deliver the high-speed access users expect. Couple this with a SaaS application accessed by a large number of employees, and traffic can slow to a crawl.

The IT team needs a network design that can fully leverage SaaS, which WAN optimization techniques and application delivery controllers can help provide. In [CDW's 2014 Surveying Your Network study](#), 17 percent of respondents said they'd spend more on WAN optimization in 2015 than in 2014. Moreover, because of the importance of getting such network initiatives right, 38 percent of the survey's respondents said they'd leverage professional services in 2015.

## CDW: A Cloud Partner That Gets IT

CDW's end-to-end cloud services are designed to help businesses navigate every stage of a cloud deployment. Our engineers and security specialists, armed with the latest certifications, can handle all of an organization's SaaS needs.

CDW can assist with cost analysis, solution and subscription comparison, migration strategy, infrastructure upgrades and security solutions, in addition to providing risk management methodologies to secure data and develop disaster recovery plans.

We help customers at every phase to ensure they get the SaaS technologies they need. To accomplish this, CDW adheres to the following process:

- Hold an initial discovery session to understand the customer's goals, requirements and budget.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of the existing systems to identify opportunities for improvement and define project requirements.
- Identify the solutions that will help customers achieve their specific goals, while aligning with the budget and project timelines.
- Procure, configure and deploy the final solution and ensure it seamlessly integrates with existing systems.
- Provide full solution lifecycle support and, if desired, manage day-to-day operations.



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