

INNOVATION:

Embrace the Promise of Cloud Technology for Small Business

By Wayne Hult, Chief Technologist at Cedar Mountain Connex

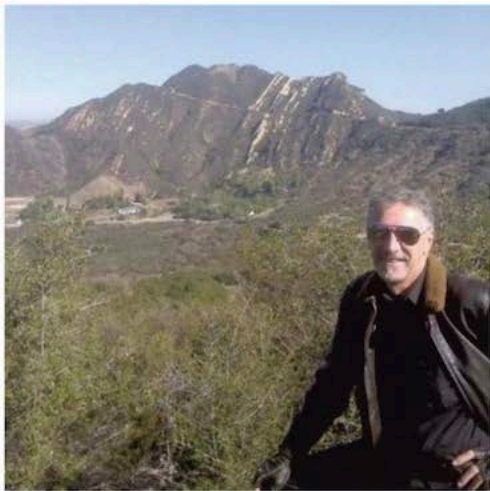
In Alvin Toffler's 1980 book "The Third Wave," he predicted that the mass movement of information would encourage innovation and create hundreds of thousands of what he called "cottage industries," or home-based small businesses. In 1980, such a concept was considered "pie in the sky" - too futuristic to be possible. But 50 years of innovation in the movement of information has led to a profound change in the way we think, interact globally, and do business. With the establishment of the Internet, small businesses would ultimately leverage information technology and innovate further to provide *convenience* for their customers, an equally profound concept. That "pie in the sky" has become a reality with the ultimate innovation -- the Cloud.

For small businesses, *convenience* and *jump-start* are the major benefits of using Cloud services. Business applications have moved to the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model. They allow owners to get their products or services to market faster and provide a near immediate revenue stream, thereby keeping costs down.

Microsoft, a staple for business applications, has moved its Office 365 bundle to the SaaS model. Microsoft's 365© Business provides Cloud-based secure access to essential business tools such as email, and collaborative office applications such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Sharepoint. A small business start-up can project a more polished image immediately by using SaaS services and raise its brand up a notch or two.

McAvinney Employee Benefit Services of Fredericksburg has worked with employers for 37 years, helping them attract and retain their employees through customized benefit plans. According to Derrick Metsler of McAvinney, "Our company

started when everything was done by hand on paper and physical files were kept for everything. There's been a large shift in our industry from paper-based to Cloud-based. For us, it started with wanting computer backup and a way to communicate personal information in a safe manner. In 2019, we started using Microsoft 365 to help make our office more virtual so we could travel and work remotely, which made the switch to telework much easier."



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Scalability is another important benefit of Cloud services for small businesses that are seasonal, mobile, or temporary. Cloud-based broadband is a great way to scale up and down. Small businesses or nonprofits that are sales or donation driven and need phone coverage or more broadband during a buying season or donation event can greatly benefit from on-demand Cloud-based broadband. When the event is over, the services are terminated. In-home health care, store-in-store businesses, point-of-sale machines, or any type of pop-up all benefit from temporary and mobile Cloud-based broadband. GlobalGig is a Cloud company that provides on-demand broadband for temporary or short-term

connections, and managed services that scale as the small business takes its next growth step.

The worries of a start-up or a growing small business are endless, and innovative is the key to its success. Ultimately, business owners want to focus on innovative ways to reach those customers and grow their business. The true promise of Cloud's convenience, flexibility, and cost effectiveness is relief from the burden of worrying about infrastructure needed to run the business. By embracing the Cloud, there is a release of enormous amounts of creative energy that is best spent focused squarely and strategically on business innovation.



Gordon Duncan of CTP Marketing in Fredericksburg, whose strategic market consulting helps businesses reach their audiences, uses the Cloud to service his clients. "Cloud-based storage is essential to everything we do at CTP Marketing," he said. "Through the Cloud, we constantly share ideas, drafts, and updates with our team members. Especially now amid the Covid-19 crisis, Cloud-based storage enables us to communicate quicker and serve our clients at our highest level possible."

Conserving cash is another priority for all small businesses, particularly in the start-up phase. SaaS business applications coupled with on-demand broadband are a great way to get the business off the ground and project a professional image for a small monthly spend. Even as businesses grow, Cloud services can easily scale for incremental spending, easing the burden on cash flow.

Cedar Mountain Connex helps other businesses embrace the Cloud and realize its promise by connecting them to cost-effective online applications using Cloud technologies in addition to providing education, professional services and complete solutions including Software-as-a-Service such as Microsoft Office 365, hosted voice from BroadVoice and RingCentral, or collaborative tools such as Zoom and 8x8. By coupling SaaS with Cloud-based broadband services from

GlobalGig, Verizon, Cox, Comcast and others, short- or long-term Internet needs are no longer a challenge for any business.

The Cloud is an asset to small business. Small businesses everywhere have embraced the concept of the Cloud and the promise that it simplifies business operations, and becomes truly the most inexpensive and convenient way to reach millions of potential customers. Convenience and simplification give them more time to focus on their business and innovation needed to sustain it. The convenience of the Cloud is the innovation of the 21st century. Embracing the Cloud eliminates the worry for small businesses and will make owners happy enough so that every time they look up at a cloud, they will want to reach up and kiss the sky.

Wayne Hulit's career spans 42 years. He worked in high technology fields of communications and networks, getting his start from US Army's Signal Corps where he spent three years on active duty. Hulit worked in many disciplines including field service, technical support, product marketing, sales, and sales management. Hulit has a Bachelors of Science in Electronics Engineering from Wentworth Institute of Technology, and a Masters in Business Administration from Suffolk University's Sawyer School of Management -- both of Boston, Massachusetts.