

Business processes in the cloud – look before you leap

Although the economic downturn has slowed the growth in software investment, SaaS (Software as a Service) is more resistant to budget constraints. In a 2010 report titled *Techtonics: Unstoppable shift to SaaS continues* investment bank Goldman Sachs observed that the downturn has likely accelerated software-as-a-service adoption by companies. In the report, 40% of survey respondents indicated that they would be more likely to use SaaS solutions in a weak economy due to perceived cost benefits.

SaaS is a key element of another concept that has come to the forefront in recent years: cloud computing. In this model, shared servers provide resources, software and data to other computers and devices via the Internet. Cloud computing services enable companies to outsource the majority of IT requirements – including software, data storage, hardware, networking components and operating systems – and access them on-demand. Instead of adding additional hard drives to their own data centres, for example, companies can ‘rent’ the required disk space online, reducing the cost for operating a solution.

The greatest growth in cloud computing applications for supply chain operations is in areas that are critical to competitiveness but which can be standardised, e.g. carrier selection including generation of carrier-specific labels and electronic notification messages or electronic customs declarations including automated import/export filing and status message exchanges with the respective authorities.

But we’ve seen repeatedly that the Internet is difficult to control; so is the cloud – where data and software reside in huge computer centres – really the ideal IT operating system for global business processes? Like any business decision, the transfer of local processes into the cloud holds both risks and opportunities. The opportunities get enough press, so let’s take a look at the risks.

Claire Umney

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IT security

First, IT security: this is an area where many SMEs could actually benefit from a move to the cloud. Many SMEs run IT systems and computer centres that have grown organically and often fail to comply with standards, such as the proven ITIL process model or ISO27001 certification.

Reputable cloud providers offer all that, plus a higher security standard than what has been available to companies in the past. The most important piece of advice is to be very careful in choosing a cloud solution provider to ensure compliance with existing ERP systems as well as security policies. Caution also prevents surprises in the next ‘risk’ area, i.e. privacy – the security of sensitive data and its protection against unauthorised access.

Data privacy

WikiLeaks. The word alone is enough to trigger a major debate. But the disclosure of confidential information is almost never a technical failure. Simply put, it is individuals who ‘leak’ secrets. The greatest threat to confidential data remains misuse – and that is typically perpetrated by people with legitimate access to the data. So here, too, the cloud doesn’t necessarily pose a greater threat. Once again, it’s important to choose a reputable provider who seamlessly documents access of IT administrators to your systems and has a method of dual control in place for sensitive data.

Availability

Availability remains a risk. It is under threat from anything that can cause an outage, be it a fire or a construction worker who cuts through wires. Of course all these things can also happen if you have your own computer centre.

But reputable cloud providers have a system of redundancy which tends to yield benefits. They can take advantage of the much-talked-about ‘economies of scale’ and therefore have much more affordable options for incorporating a multi-layered safety net than in-house IT departments.

In addition to unforeseen outages, computer centres also have planned downtimes. Their duration is simply a question of money. The often promised 99.9% availability is twice as expensive as the 99% availability that, in most cases, would be perfectly sufficient. In any event, the cloud is generally superior to ‘private’ computer centres on this front as well, since it is designed for flexibility in acquiring processing capacity and storage space, even during service windows.

So, in a nutshell, the cloud is safe for those who follow some key recommendations from the British Standards Institution (BSI) or the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and check first with their own IT department and then with the potential cloud solution provider. No provider can offer 100% security, but some come very close. The decision on whether to move critical transactions or process steps into the cloud will always remain a business decision, and for those there are no easy solutions.

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FREIGHT
Industry Times

It’s show time again at the NEC Birmingham as the Commercial Vehicle Show and Multimodal are back in town. Both events attract large numbers of visitors and act as essential hubs for the freight and logistics sector.

From 24th to 26th April the Commercial Vehicle Show, and its associated Workshop exhibition, takes centre stage as more than 350 exhibitors attempt to ensure that the event lives up to its billing as the UK’s largest and most successful road transport gathering. Besides an array of vehicles of all sizes, visitors can access a multitude of products designed to make their operation more efficient. As usual, *Freight Industry Times* is at the show on **Stand 3A35**.

Now in its fifth year, Multimodal has seen year on year growth and the event’s organisers report that around 250 companies, associations and educational establishments will be there to answer your questions and offer innovative solutions. The event, which takes place from 1st to 3rd May, again features an extensive, free-to-attend seminar programme during the three days. *Freight Industry Times* is at Multimodal 2012 on **Stand 904** – so why not come and meet the team.

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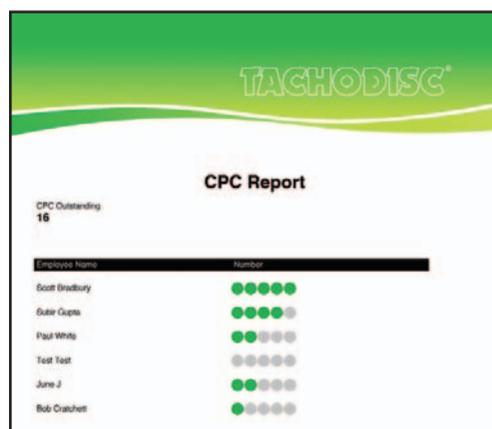
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Get on board the Tachotrain at the CV Show

The 2012 Commercial Vehicle Show (CV Show) will see Tachodisc launch Tachotrain, a revolutionary new training management system which will enable companies to test and periodically assess drivers’ knowledge on key legislative subjects. It can also automatically track, manage and report on all staff training



Tachotrain tracks and reports on how many CPC hours each driver has done and when, and visibly flags up what needs to be achieved to meet the deadline

requirements by employee, job type, depot, location and reporting line for Driver CPC as well as wider HSE requirements.

Created by Tachodisc, Tachotrain serves to modernise the way assessment training can be delivered in the road transport industry. The virtual training area contains a series of online multiple choice tests, which have been devised by Tachodisc’s legislative training experts; subjects include Drivers’ Hours Law, Road Transport Directive and Road Worthiness. These provide companies with the unique ability to periodically test and assess drivers’ knowledge on key legislative subjects.

Karen Crispe, Tachodisc’s Managing Director said: “With VOSA stating that Drivers’ Hours abuse is still the most common reason for prosecutions, continuously testing drivers’ knowledge and assessing their training needs is imperative – and not only in terms of reducing fines, protecting OCRS scores, but in making sure your drivers are safe on the road.

“Tachotrain gives companies the flexibility to schedule testing around work schedules from any location – a PC and internet connection is all that is required. The tests are also a great

tool for hiring managers, allowing candidates knowledge to be quickly assessed during the recruitment process.”

Significantly, Tachotrain has also been designed to securely hold a complete record of staff qualifications and ongoing training requirements. The system automatically tracks, identifies and notifies line managers of re-validations and training needs by employee, job type, depot, location and reporting line.

“This is a valuable management tool, especially for managing Driver CPC,” added Karen. “The system tracks and reports on how many CPC hours each driver has done and when, and visibly flags up what needs to be achieved to meet the deadline.”

Tachotrain’s detailed reporting functions also allows companies to plan, track trends and identify areas of improvement, thus enabling Driver CPC and general training budgets to be deployed more cost-effectively.

At the CV Show, Tachodisc will also be showcasing the innovative new DigiDL remote downloading system after becoming the first company to successfully implement the

technology commercially in a live environment last year with Woodland Logistics.

The DigiDL, which sets a new standard for remote tachograph download technology, is being offered by Tachodisc as one all-encompassing package, from point of order through to fitment and management of data.

“This simple process provides customers with all the benefits of remote downloading with relatively little financial investment or IT infrastructure required,” said Karen.

Tachodisc’s legal and IT experts will be on hand at the CV Show to demonstrate the company’s new legislative technology solutions, and will be providing advice and information on the company’s full range of compliance services; from analysis software solutions, digital and analogue products, fleet management services and Operator and Driver CPC training.

• You can meet Tachodisc at the Commercial Vehicle Show on **Stand 3E30**. For further information contact Tachodisc on Tel: 01925 283328, E-mail sales@tachodisc.co.uk or visit: www.tachodisc.co.uk