

CLOUD COVER

Towards the end of 2010 a new technology “buzz” term started to appear in the media....something called “**Cloud computing.**” Most people thought it would only affect large businesses, specifically IT companies. Slowly but surely this technology is starting to enter all our lives whether we realize it or not. What is it anyway – in common, non-technical language?

Imagine your computer – a ponderous box tower atop your desk or a slick, lightweight tablet – being synchronized at all times with your mobile (smart) phone. Imagine being able to organize, retrieve data, share your documents, photos, email, contact information....from any online source, at any time, from anywhere in the world you physically may be. Imagine being at the top of Mt. Everest or having a picnic in the French countryside, and with your mobile phone be able to access your photos saved on your home PC to show your friends, take more photos and manipulate them with your “Photoshop” program installed on your home PC.

The aim of personal “Cloud computing” is to have every piece of data you need for every aspect of your life at your fingertips and ready for use. The thinking behind this is that data must be mobile, transferable and instantly accessible, and the key to achieving this is the ability to synch up all your data among all your devices and whatever you want on the internet. Ultimately your personal cloud would include everything from your address book, music collection, reports, recipes, banks, social networks, documents and more – and would connect to the public cloud as well as other personal clouds, e.g. via Facebook. **Everything connects.** That means every place on the internet and every person you interact with can be connected...The far-reaching effects of this concept are interminable. Like it or not, we’re already there: using “Google Docs” and placing an order at “Amazon” are just 2 examples of what the everyday person now does. It is obvious that privacy and personal security will be huge issues as personal clouds amass.

Meanwhile on the corporate front, businesses of all sizes are slowly finding the advantages of the cloud. Executives can lounge leisurely on their sunny Andalucian terrace and via the company’s cloud, actively and simultaneously participate and input information on any company member’s PC, as though they were sitting right beside

them. One could go wild with the possibilities! So long conference calls!

Eventually, our devices will learn about us and intuit what we are doing, where we are going, and what we intend to do when we get there. Sounds a bit like science fiction, right? But this is our tech future even though we are not quite there yet - we've only started to create our personal clouds and some will get there faster than others. It's a fascinating prospect—once you get past all the jargon. Oh, by the way, the term "cloud" is a metaphor for the internet, based on cloud drawings used in the past to depict telephone networks and later the internet computer network.