The Essential Guide to Using **Always-On Technologies** in Your Small Business

With cloud, you have an "always-on" business

If you're like a lot of small businesses, you're already using applications that run in the cloud. Maybe you're using Microsoft Office 365 or Google G Suite. Maybe you're using Salesforce or Square. You can use those products no matter where you are. And there's no reason your IT can't work that way too.

With the cloud, you can manage everything whether you're in an office, on the move with your mobile device, or sitting at home with your laptop. Here are several key reasons putting networking and security in the cloud is a good option for small businesses.

Reason 1: You can add or reduce services quickly and easily

Running technology in the cloud gives you the flexibility to add and reduce services as needed. Even if you don't have a huge (or any) IT staff, to remain agile you need to be able to manage your network. Cloud-based networking management:

- Can scale from small sites to campuses, and even distributed networks
- Offers application visibility, real-time web-based diagnostics, monitoring, and reporting
- Makes it possible for devices to self-provision
- Unifies your IT administration so you can view the network from a single dashboard

Reason 2: You can save time and money

Cloud solutions are more resilient than on-site IT and they're easier to install and deploy. The move to cloud-based solutions:

- Lets you decrease or consolidate the number of physical locations and staff you have
- Lowers your real estate, power, and travel expenses
- Reduces cash flow issues because the costs are recurring (versus big upfront costs when buying new equipment)

Reason 3: You can improve productivity

With more people working from home, access to cloud-based business tools can simplify remote work. Cloud-based collaboration tools keep everyone productive with:

- Videoconferencing that has built-in encryption to protect the privacy of both users and data
- One-click sign-on to meetings with high-quality video and simple screen sharing
- Secure exchange of messages and files across devices
- Digital whiteboards for easy team brainstorming and capturing meeting outputs for sharing

Reason 4: You can keep everything current and secure

The always-on nature of cloud means that it's always updated. You get access to the latest application innovations and security, so you don't have to spend your time patching and fixing. Your employees can work from any device, at any time, from any location and access cloud-based security solutions that:

- Offer secure network access on every device
- Protect your sensitive data by verifying the identity of users, devices, and applications
- Detect and block cyberattacks and defend against threats with cloud-delivered security

The state of cloud IT. Where are we now?

Small business owners have a lot to do. The last thing you want is to spend your time dealing with IT problems, so it's easy to see why so many businesses are embracing cloud:

#1 business priority for small businesses[1]
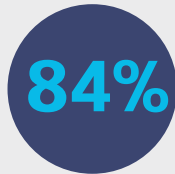
84% Small businesses feel cloud services are essential[2]

4X Companies that use cloud-based technology are up to 4x more productive[3]

# Key questions and considerations for small business decision makers

Can I access everything I need?

Cloud technology is available all day, every day, 365 days a year. Anyone who has ever used a computer or maintained a server knows that they crash, but cloud is generally more resilient than on-premises IT.

Some of our employees are working from home now. Is video conferencing secure?

Cisco® Webex® is built on enterprise-grade security. It's secure by default with encryption to protect the privacy of both the data in use and in transit. It's trusted by governments, hospitals, financial institutions and Fortune 500 companies around the world. With Webex, your employees can enjoy meeting experiences that are almost as good as being in the same room with HD video conferencing and audio. Teams can work in multiple modes (voice, video, messaging), with white boarding, chat, and protected file-sharing all in one place. You can easily record meetings and automatically generate transcripts. After the meeting, your team members can all share the same virtual collaborative workspace to capture all interactions and information about a project.
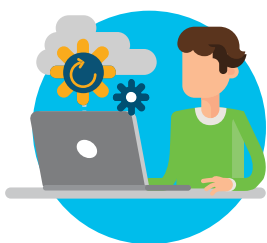
How does cloud-based networking management work?

Cisco Meraki® networking products are designed to be managed from the cloud with application visibility, real-time web-based diagnostics, monitoring, and reporting. Even without training or dedicated staff, it's easy to set up a network that gives you control over devices, users, and applications. Meraki can easily scale from a single site to multiple locations. The Meraki products can be set up and deployed in branches that don't have IT staff. The Meraki Dashboard is the single, browser-based tool for Cisco Meraki networking, security (and camera) products, so you can see/administer/manage your IT from one cloud dashboard.

Can you run security tools in the cloud?

Yes, you can. Small businesses can take advantage of Cisco security technology so teams can work from any device, at any time, from any location.

- **Cisco Umbrella®** provides the first line of defense against threats to protect your users everywhere with flexible, fast, and effective cloud-delivered security.
- **Cisco AMP for Endpoints** detects and blocks malware and viruses across your employee devices.
- **Cisco Duo** helps protect your sensitive data by verifying the identity of users, devices, and applications with secure two-factor authentication.
- **Cisco AnyConnect®** Secure Mobility Client secures endpoint access to the network so your employees can work from any device, at any time, in any location.

What about email security?

Cloud-based email like Microsoft Office 365 isn't immune from hacking, so we've put Cisco security inside Microsoft's cloud, increasing endpoint security by blocking malware in emails before reaching your users. Cisco Cloud Mailbox Defense is a cloud-native email security platform for Office 365 that you can set up in five minutes. It doesn't change email flow or delivery while it's busy spotting spam, phishing, or known malicious attachments.

1. https://techaisle.com/blog/394-2020-top-10-smb-and-midmarket-business-issues-challenges-priorities

2. https://sbecouncil.org/2020/06/17/small-businesses-pivot-to-the-cloud-technology-platforms-and-cloud-services-critical-during-covid-19-according-to-survey/

3. https://www.newgenapps.com/blog/how-small-businesses-use-cloud-computing-for-efficiency-and-profit/

A few final thoughts

Running a small business is always challenging, and the ability to adapt to change is more important than ever. With cloud apps, your employees can work together easily from any location and you can add and remove services as needed. Cisco and our network of partners work with you to help you connect, compute, and collaborate securely, so you can focus on what matters most—growing your business. Let's get started.

For more information on Cisco Always-On Technologies, contact us today.