PUT ME IN THE CLOUD

If ‘IT’ and ‘Strategy’ are two words that historically have not been combined in the future planning of your business, NOW is the time to start, before it is too late.

MYTECH PARTNERS®

IT should just work when you need IT.

The Strategic IT Roadmap for your business should include some, or all of the ‘as a Service’ options covered in this eBook. If ‘IT’ and ‘Strategy’ are two words that historically have not been combined in the future planning of your business, NOW is the time to start – before it is too late.

The two biggest mistakes we see organizations make relative to technology are:

1) The business/leadership team keeps technology at arm’s length either because they don’t understand IT, or because it makes them feel like they aren’t the smartest people in the room.

2) The organization has relegated IT strategy to the IT department. Small Businesses (really all businesses) must make the transition from IT as a cost center, to IT as a Strategic Asset and competitive advantage.

"Ultimately the CEO is accountable for driving growth and profitability in the business, and technology is the single greatest productivity enabler available to any organization to accomplish growth and profitability objectives."
- Nathan Austin, Mytech Partners

Our Goal

The goal of this eBook is to help gain competence and understanding of these key technology ‘as a Service’ models, so executives and IT professionals alike can improve the dialog, or merely start the dialog as to how these tools can be leveraged.

Here is what we are going to cover...

What are we REALLY talking about when it comes to 'aaS'

You are already leveraging solutions today that are delivered ‘as a Service’ but they are not called out as such – the utilities we all use: Electricity, Gas, and yes Internet. The alternative to subscribing to these services would be to generate your own electricity, mine for your own natural gas, or build your own Internet.

Can we all agree that it is easier (or EaaSier) to merely subscribe to these services and rely on the utility organizations we pay to figure all of that out and deliver the services we expect? None of those services are perfect, and they all have occasional outages. When those service disruptions happen, our world is not the same until service is restored.

Businesses today rely on technology to an extent that when IT service is disrupted, our operational world is not the same until those IT services are restored. Technology as an enabler of business productivity is no longer a nice to have, and if IT is not working, business productivity grinds to a halt. The ‘as a Service’ model is designed to deliver IT as a service that we may rely on with the same level (or more) of service delivery as we expect from our other utilities.

as a Service enables change.

This eBook focuses on three categories that cover the six ‘as a Service’ models that we believe have the biggest impact on small business today.

There is a good chance that one or more of these ‘as a Service’ models apply to how you operate today. The more you can enable IT to function like a utility in your business, the better prepared you will be to adapt to the constant change in the business community.

“Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable.”

- William Pollard

Security as a Service

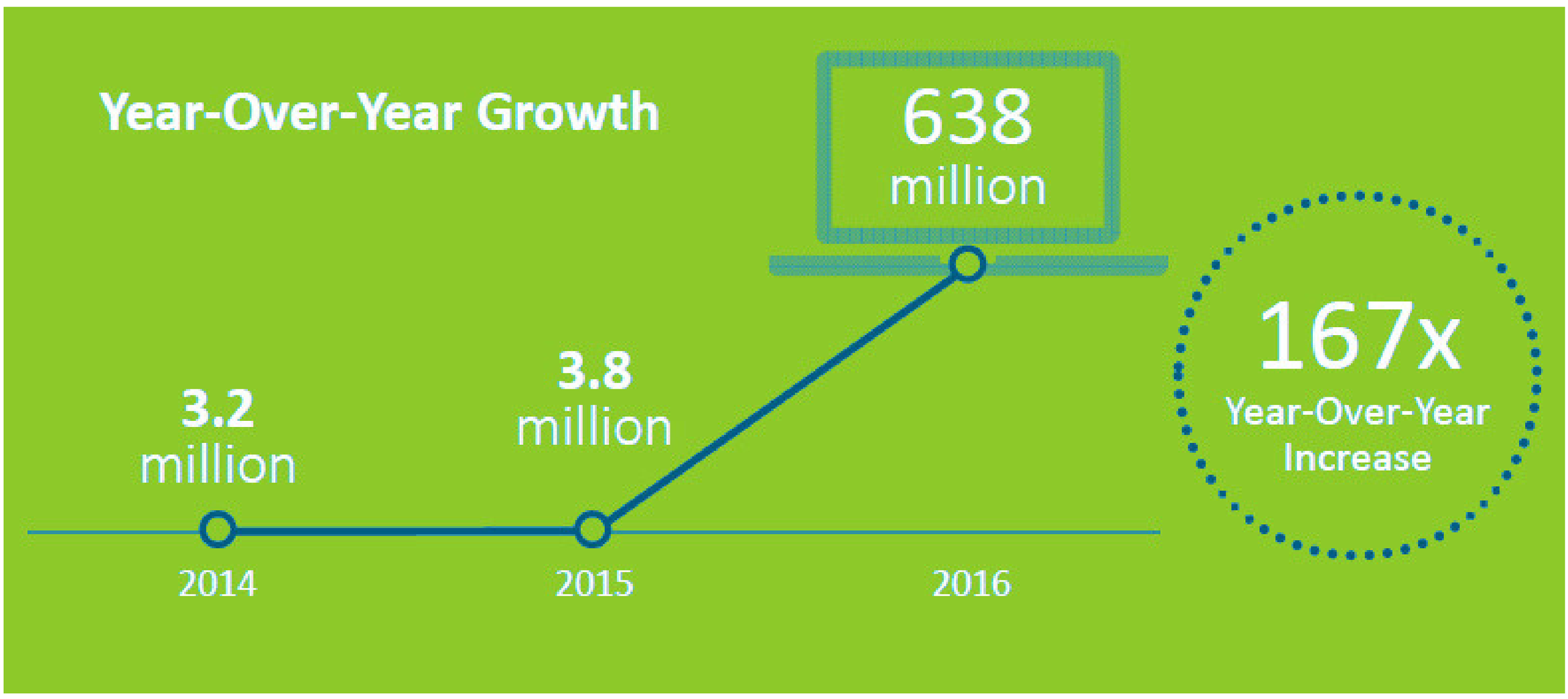
At this point, you are probably tired of hearing about security... but there IS a reason why it's the biggest buzz word in the IT industry. Security has always been a dynamic, evolving challenge as new technology presents new threat opportunities. But now, more than ever, the goal is to stay at least one step ahead of the bad actors, have multiple layers of protection, and make sure your fence is higher than your neighbor.

Luckily the security aaS (as a Service) models that most benefit small businesses are two of the most widely adopted Cloud services. Most businesses already have an implementation plan in place, if they haven't already deployed these services. Which two are we talking about?

Security as a Service (SECaaS) - With SECaaS, one technology service provider implements your SPAM filtering, antivirus, and other security tools on your corporate network. You maintain one vendor relationship and gain all necessary security tools, and management to keep you secure.

Disaster Recovery (DRaaS) - DRaaS is a data and system backup model that places the responsibility of ensuring the backups are successful and stored for proper recovery – typically off-site.

Growth in Ransomware Attacks



Ransomware is the payload of choice for malicious email campaigns and exploit kits
- SonicWall 2017 Annual Threat Report

Most disasters never make the news – a pipe bursts and leaves 3 inches of standing water in your office, a server hard drive fails, an employee accidentally downloads a ransomware virus. These little disasters are becoming more frequent, and companies must make sure their security and disaster recovery solution meets their objectives for staying open after a disaster.

Presume breach

In the future it will be a matter of WHEN not IF you are affected by a security incident. This does not mean that security practices can be relaxed. In fact, it means they should be strengthened to make incidents less frequent and minimize their impact. What is considered “advanced security” now will become standard in a few years. The best way to recover from a security incident or other disaster is to have a reliable, unaffected copy of your network data (including configurations, settings, and files) you can revert back to as part of your incident response.

So why are these 'aaS' models such a benefit to organizations, especially small businesses?

SECaaS's economy of scale reduces the price per license. Service providers, who are purchasing thousands of licenses for small businesses, have the same purchasing power as an enterprise. They also have staff dedicated to ensuring the security measures are patched, updated, installed, and working. You can off-load the responsibility of keeping up with security trends and requirements to this service provider.

According to FEMA, 40% of businesses never reopen after a disaster. Of the 60% that do, only 29% are still operating two years later.

DRaaS trusted providers have a proven solution that will protect your network information from disasters large and small. You can off-load the responsibility of ensuring the backups are successful, and will have a partner to help you recover after an incident. This is significant for small businesses who typically have employees performing numerous roles.

Platform and Software as a Service

The days of physically buying software or a program and installing it on your computer from a CD, USB drive or any other portable storage device are becoming ancient history.

The two 'aaS' models that will most transform your small business are the following:

Platform as a Service (PaaS) – PaaS is an application or server that gives users the base starting point for building custom software, applications, websites, etc. Think Sharepoint or SalesForce.com.

Software as a Service (SaaS) – SaaS is a software licensing service where software is provided to users on a subscription basis. It is sometimes referred to as "on-demand software". SaaS is typically accessed by users using a thin client via a web browser.

Examples of PaaS

SharePoint

salesforce

SQUARESPACE

Examples of SaaS

Office 365

Dropbox

Cisco webex

Historically, companies were required to buy, build, and maintain their various programs, software, and tools, at a exponential upfront cost, time commitment, and with little opportunity for customization. Unless you were lucky enough to have a developer on staff. However, the PaaS and SaaS models have completely transformed how we look at these tools today.

The Internet has turned many people toward do-it-yourself and make it custom for me. Platforms 'aaS' come in varied states of complete with different levels of customization available and different skill levels needed to reach the desired end product. It could be as simple as choosing which modules to include in your ERP, or asdifficult as using an application programming interface (API) to program a new module.

By 2019, the cloud software model will account for $1 of every $4.59 spent on software.

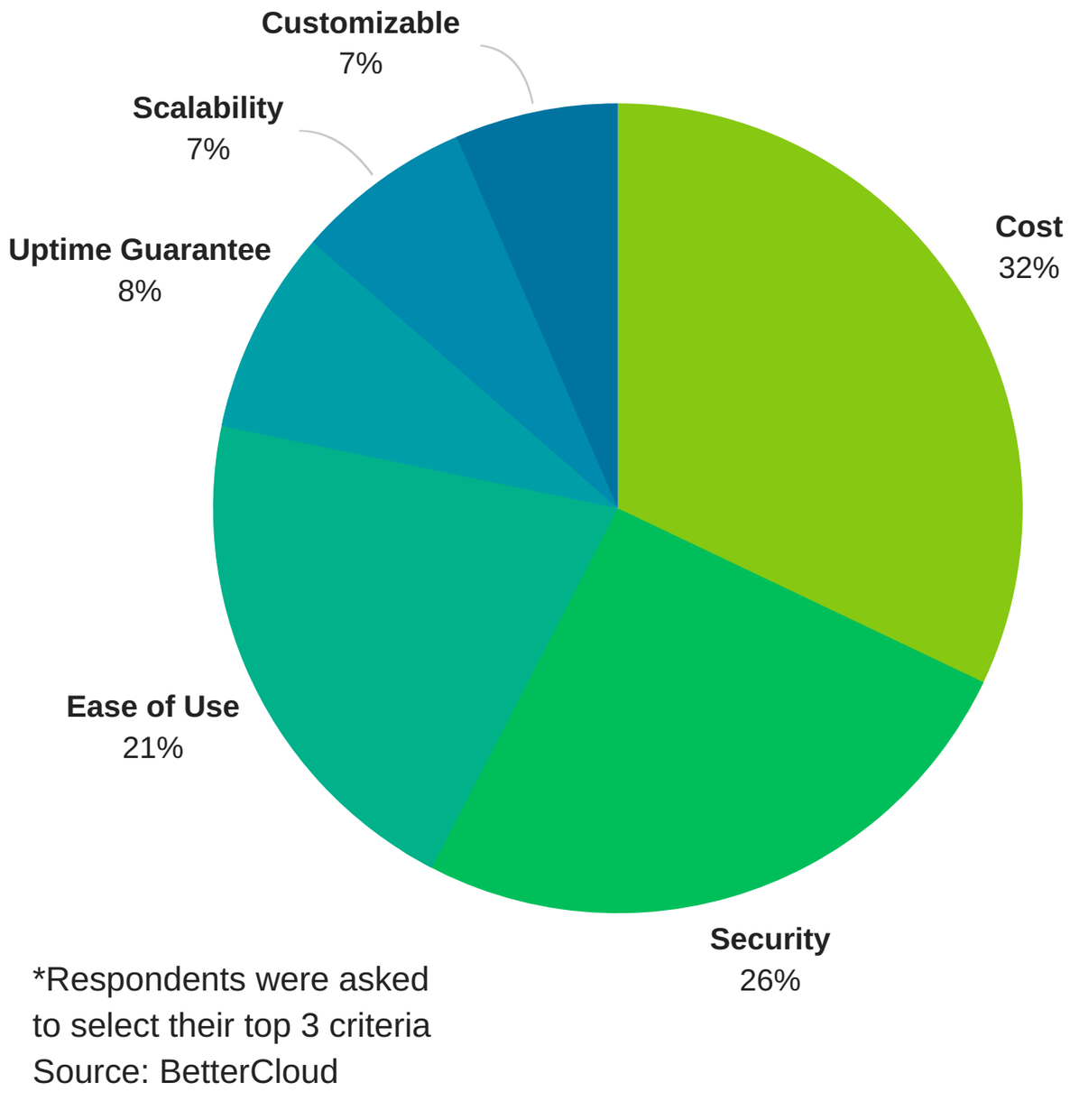
- IDC

Additionally software publishers are jumping on the band wagon with the SaaS model, because it enables them to push updates and features to users, while freeing up their time from supporting old versions. Frankly, in today's market, if a software publisher does not have a plan in place to move to this model, they are behind.

So where is the future of PaaS and Saas headed?

It is the future! PaaS and SaaS will soon be the only option available to a home user all the way up to Enterprise. It is also more cost-effective for small and medium businesses, allowing them to have enterprise-level software at an attainable cost.

When IT professionals purchase SaaS applicatons and software, these are the things they care most about



*Respondents were asked to select their top 3 criteria
Source: BetterCloud

With PaaS, you get exactly (or as close as possible) to what you need, without having to pay for an expert to create something from scratch for you. Or, you can significantly reduce the cost of the expert customization to take the platform to what you need.

SaaS yields a more secure software. There are fewer compatibility issues among users within the business. Plus your business can benefit from lower upfront costs, and limited sunk costs if you choose to drop a user.

Infrastructure and Hardware as a Service

Infrastructure as a Service and Hardware as a Service enables organizations to "rent" IT infrastructure and technology devices from a service provider rather than purchasing the technology and managing it internally. Ultimately this drastically affects a business' overall technology investment strategy.

Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) - This is what most people think of when they hear “Cloud”. This is the hardware such as servers, UPS's, and other network components typically found in a business' network closet or data center that you "rent" or subscribe to.

Hardware as a Service (HaaS) – This up and coming subscription service allows you to have or use a physical “thing”, such as a laptop, desktop computer, monitor, etc., that is owned by someone else who is responsible for the usability. Think iPhone Forever or car2go.

Making the switch

There are many reasons that it makes sense for organizations to turn their infrastructure over to the cloud or inquire about Hardware as a Service; however, finding the right service provider is a big part of the success of moving to this model. Costs for IaaS are now realistic for small and medium businesses, allowing them to take advantage of these services in larger numbers.

Key takeaways of Infrastructure as a Service

Lower cost, increased flexibility, and boosted business continuity

Small businesses reap significant benefits including capability for rapid innovation

Significantly reduces your need of storage space and maintenance time

The future of IaaS and HaaS

For the immediate future, businesses are still just getting used to the idea of HaaS. While it is becoming more common in consumer items, it will still be a few years before the majority of small and medium businesses are comfortable with this service model. However, IaaS is really starting to take its place in the small business marketplace. Especially start ups and companies who are rapidly expanding. These services are not going anywhere, and before long they too, just like SaaS or SECaaS, will become the "new norm".

In 2016, global spending on Infrastructure as a Service was

$22.4 BILLION

...and it is expected to increase by 38% in 2017.

Source: Digital Reality

What is the biggest benefit of these two 'as a service' models?

For IaaS.... Redundancy. Your data will always be in several places at once reducing the chance that a hosted server hard drive failure will have any impact on your company. It is also easier to set your employees up to work from anywhere at anytime.

With HaaS, your refresh cycles will be more regular, keeping your employees on newer, more efficient hardware. You also reduce inconsistencies and compatibility issues by keeping equipment in a smaller version band.

Top 10 Business Triggers

With the current maturity of ‘as a Service’ IT models, and their ability to enable business productivity, here are some of the key business triggers where ‘as a Service’ options should be considered. Every business is at a different point of depreciation of their current IT investments, and we do not recommend moving to an ‘as a Service’ model unless there is a business justification to do so.

We are often asked when is the right time to consider ‘cloud’ or ‘as a Service’ models. The list below includes many of the business situations you might find yourself in that would warrant starting the "Cloud" dialog. There is no one-size-fits-all to the models below and we recommend working with a trusted IT partner to help you evaluate which options you feel will fit your business best.

Your physical server infrastructure is approaching 4 or 5 years old.

When your hardware reaches this age, maintenance costs increase and productivity goes down, as old servers do not perform as well as current technology. Now is a good time to assess buying CapEx vs. ‘as a Service’ (aaS) OpEx to determine which option is the best fit for your organization.

Consider IaaS, SaaS, PaaS

Your going through geographic expansion, either through acquisition or organic growth.

A growing business requires technology to grow with it. Solutions must be robust enough to cover all staff and mobility needs in a multi-location environment. This type of expansion also takes cash, and an OpEx aaS solution allows you to pay-as-you-need, preserving cash for other investments.

Consider any 'aaS'

You are launching a new line of business or starting a new business

Capital expenses, especially for technology can be prohibitive for a new business. Since this is a new venture, the ability to scale resources up or down quickly might be important as you navigate requirements and mitigate investment risk associated with a new business.

Consider any aaS; especially SaaS or PaaS

You are switching to a new Line of Business application

Most applications and software products have an aaS option, not all have the same feature set in the on premise vs. aaS version, which is why that is not ALWAYS the right fit.

Consider SaaS, PaaS, and IaaS

Upgrading server applications such as Exchange (email) orSQL (database)

When you are facing additional investments in upgrades that is a good time to look at aaS alternatives.

Consider SaaS, IaaS, and PaaS

You are going to start software development projects in-house

Computing requirements can be large for these types of projects, and can also be cyclical. Avoiding CapEx investments for non-production processes can enable faster more nimble response to development needs. Additionally, being able to scale up or down based on the project's requirements might be the most cost-effective choice.

Consider IaaS or PaaS

Your work force is going to become more mobile

Maybe you are going to start having representatives in the field or allowing employees to work from home. Nearly all aaS solutions are built for mobility, and could be an EaaSy answer to enable the functionality your business requires.

Consider SaaS, PaaS, IaaS, and SECaaS

You developed a disaster plan that revealed that you cannot tolerate downtime

Redundancy in critical systems is key to reducing downtime. By the very nature of aaS solutions, they have more redundancy in the service delivery model than would be cost-effective to build on your own.

Consider any aaS, especially DRaaS

Changing security practices due to regulations governing your industry

Most aaS solutions serve regulated industries and thus meeting or exceeding the compliance requirements are often built into the core offering. Because security and compliance are critical to delivering the aaS solution, the typical aaS provider invests significantly more dollars than any given small business could afford.

Consider SECaaS, DRaaS, SaaS, and PaaS

You have a large IT infrastructure project you are in the process of planning

There are many forces that demand cash from a business, aaS models enable you to pay for only what you need today vs. spending cash buying capacity for tomorrow. For more information on what other organizations choose to spend their extra cash on, check out our survey results.

Consider HaaS, IaaS, DRaaS, and SECaaS

Conclusion - How Can Mytech Help?

The writing is on the proverbial wall with regard to ‘as a Service’ models dominating the future of IT in the same way we subscribe to our utilities today. The exact answer, and the specific path that any given organization takes to get there will be their own, based on the respective business triggers and requirements.

When your organization identifies with one of the key triggers above, or some other event that provides a catalyst to consider one or more of the as a Service models, how do you know which model, and provider are the right fit for your business? It is at this juncture that we recommend finding a trusted IT partner to help navigate the myriad of options that can meet your requirements.

When you are evaluating potential IT partners, we believe your top criteria should be that the partner seeks first to understand your business requirements and the problems you are trying to solve. Only then are they in a position to help map YOUR business needs to the right ‘aaS’ solution (or not if 'as a Service' is not the answer…yet).

MYTECH PARTNERS

Mytech Partners desires to work with organizations who are ready to make IT a Strategic Asset, and want to enable employee productivity to the point where IT is a competitive advantage in their business. If you want to make that change, or improvement, we would be honored to learn about your organization, the problems you are working to solve, and the goals you are striving to achieve. We would love for you to get to know us too, and while we are not the right fit for everyone (which is ok), if we are the right fit for you, we look forward to the journey with you, and serving your organization for years to come.

Mytech Partners, Inc. | Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN | Denver, CO
www.mytech.com | www.makeiteaasy.com | marketing@mytech.com