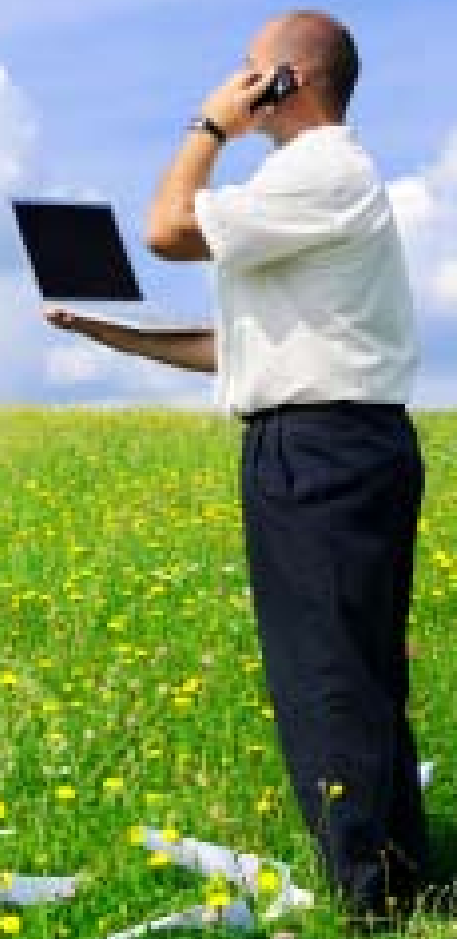


'Cloud working'

**Is it the latest fad
or a genuine business boost?**

An information guide
by Online Practice, developer of docSAFE
www.doc-safe.co.uk



‘Cloud working’ isn’t such a lofty idea. In fact, working in a different manner to the way we’re used to can provide some very serious business benefits...

HOW SECURE IS YOUR CLIENTS’ INFORMATION?

Security is a hot topic. Since the red top newspaper hacking scandals we are more than aware of how easy it is to obtain information we shouldn’t have access to. Imagine a world where your client information is laid bare for all to see? If you’re using email to send and receive information, it most probably is. And if you exchange information via fax or post, it definitely is.

Legislation introduced on 6th April 2010 gave the Information Commissioner’s Office the power to issue fines of up to £500,000 for breaching the Data Protection Act. Guidelines also now stipulate the use of encryption when transferring personally identifiable information electronically.

Clearly, the penalties for data breaches are fierce but the biggest blow to your business would be the loss of confidence of your client who would naturally go elsewhere where his affairs would be safer.

“We developed a product specifically for accountants to address the thorny issues of data protection and client information security and added some other sought-after functionality too” explained Mike Couzens, MD of docSAFE. “We have added layers and layers of security to our product so any data is fully and repeatedly encrypted.”

Email is an excellent way of communicating at a basic level for sure but it simply isn’t secure. By utilising docSAFE, a system that links seamlessly with your website, you can upload and download files via the Internet. The Internet alone isn’t secure either of course but the way the system has been developed by the team at docSAFE means it is safe from anyone trying to get information (and this can happen intentionally or randomly in case you’re thinking your client information wouldn’t be targeted). Whatever your views, it just isn’t something you can afford to risk.

WHAT’S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT DATA PROTECTION?

Hand in hand with data security goes the issue of data protection. This applies to any information you hold on behalf of a client or employee, right down to their address and phone number.

docSAFE has been designed to make sure nothing goes astray and that the information you hold can’t be interrogated by an external source.

SO WHAT DOES CLOUD WORKING MEAN?

Cloud working is just an expression for a way of working that isn’t fixed to your desk. Working in the cloud is a concept that means you can pull down information via the Internet wherever you are, even from a mobile phone app.

Imagine you are travelling by train. You have wifi access and decide to work on a new client project but the information is back at the office. If you had stored it in

docSAFE before your journey, you could easily and quickly work on it there and then. You can give others secure access to it or even collaborate remotely on the same piece of work with someone else.

To give another example - say you are in a meeting and you need some facts and figures that are on your computer



at the office. You can simply dial in to your ‘cloud’ and download them to your laptop in the meeting. One docSAFE client organised client access to files while he was playing golf - immediate support, no admin and the ultimate in client care - all without impacting on his score!

SO HOW DOES WORKING IN THE CLOUD HELP?

Working in the cloud means your data is totally secure. Your client’s details, from phone number to income, is protected from external hacking or even accidental discovery. It’s convenient - forget disks, memory sticks and external hard drives - place your files in the cloud and you’re sorted.

There are many other functions that cloud working can provide. It cuts down on unnecessary meetings so saves time, money and the environment all at the same time. Being able to sign off on tax

returns and other vital documents also cuts down huge amounts of admin time. Face to face time with clients is very important but sometimes it can just be a nuisance if a meeting is required just for signing off forms.

docSAFE sends timely reminders to clients to alert them to deadlines, signatures required and other useful automated tasks.

Storage and backup is another function of holding information in the cloud. Should your systems fail, you can access the stored information from another computer or even your phone.

One of the features that is popular is the ability to customise the look and feel of the 'cloud' so it fits seamlessly with your own brand. It doesn't appear to be anything other than another part to your

website and that is comforting to clients, especially when they get secure access from you and are able to go to files and documents that you have specified. "docSAFE is extremely impressive, it shows your firm to be progressive, organised and security conscious" explained Mike Couzens. "There are similar products but nothing with its own mobile app together with the functionality and audit trail we have built in which is why hundreds of firms use it every day."



Most importantly, working in the cloud strengthens a firm's reputation. Just one instance of compromised information could really damage an accountant's reputation and relationship with its clients.

Taking steps to make sure your firm can't fall foul of legislation in any way is surely a topic for the next partners' meeting?



- electronic signatures
- file exchange
- data protection
- file collaboration
- 24 hour access
- mobile app available

work smarter, not harder

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