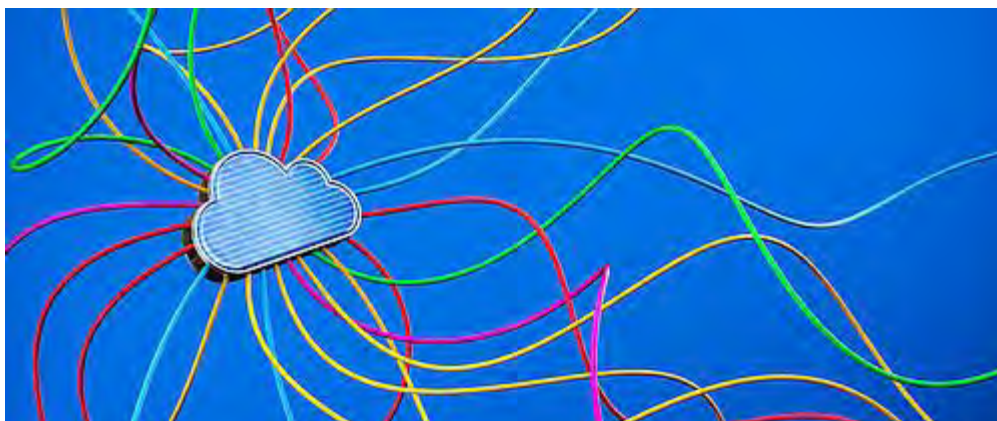




What's a Cloud App, and Why Would I Want it?



When you're buying food, there is no definition for the word natural. Anyone selling processed food can use the word natural to mean anything they like. Or nothing. Similarly, cloud app is a term whose meaning is still vague and in many ways not a reliable description of what kind of app, product, or service you are buying.

What's an App?

It's another word for a program. It usually refers to a program that runs on a phone or tablet but it basically means the same thing as software or program. The program can run locally, either as a program installed on a computer or device, or it can run in a browser using a scripting language like JavaScript, or it can run on a remote web server and display results in your browser.

What's a Cloud?

In scientific computing, cloud computing refers to using programs on a scalable computing platform, so that many computers can be used simultaneously for pieces of the same task. This has been used for radio signal analysis, and for calculating how protein structures will fold in three dimensions, which is very useful for creating new drugs. So cloud programs, in science, can use dozens or thousands of computers simultaneously, all to work on one problem.

The way that the term “cloud app” is being used now for commercial software is less precise. A true cloud app is a software-as-a-service product that runs on multiple computers for redundancy but usually not for computing power. It might be scalable, if needed for that application.

Software As A Service

When a program has been built to run on a web server, it's usually called SaaS, or “software as a service.” The advantages of SaaS are that these programs do not need to be installed on a local computer, and are mostly platform-independent; so they will run in the browser of a Windows computer, or Mac, or mobile—any device with a browser, basically. Data can be stored either locally or remotely. When data is stored remotely, it is easy to lock it away from former employees, and local requirements for backup and big servers are greatly reduced.

Consumer alert: much of what is being sold as a cloud product is software-as-a-service with online storage, or in some cases it is just the same software installed on the local computer in the traditional way, connected to a server that manages subscriptions for the product. There is no cloud benefit to the user of such products except the ability for business managers to remotely disable software subscriptions and access for former employees.

For the publisher, the advantage is that the product can be sold as a subscription service, keeps all users on the same product version, and effectively eliminates piracy.

When you are buying a program that will run on the Internet, even a small program that will be used by one person can be cloud enabled, with redundancy, running on multiple servers. All the developer has to do to make that happen is to buy cloud hosting from an online Web server company that provides that service. There are various levels of hosting cloud servers, and the servers are redundant either geographically to provide faster service to users in different locations or simply to provide more reliability. In case of failure of one server, such a program will continue to run on another server. So redundancy is one part of cloud computing; it increases the reliability of the online service. Generally, those servers will not be at the same location.

When does all this matter? If you are signing up for a service, like Google Docs, which is a cloud service for writing documents, saving them, and sharing them with other people, then your Docs and storage are running on multiple servers to protect you from server failures in real time. It doesn't actually change how things work in the program, but increases the reliability of the online system.

So at the low-end, Saas is an online software product accessed in a web page, or

locally installed desktop program that is controlled by a web server. And a cloud product runs as a service, online, on at least two servers, planned for redundancy, scalability, and access control, usually for multiple users.

Windows 7 Ends in January



Reminder: The last set of security patches for Windows 7 will be on January 14th, 2020. Windows 8 support is already gone, and Windows 8.1 extended support (security fixes) lasts until January 10th, 2023. After extended support ends, most security bugs won't be patched, and anyone subject to security audits, including FINRA and HIPPA, can no longer use it. Upgrades are still possible, call for help.

Windows 10 support: Version 1803, from March of last year, is no longer supported, so all systems should be running version 1809 or higher. From the start menu of Windows, run 'winver' to identify your version of Windows.

Here's my version of the calendar, which shows mostly Windows and Office dates.
<https://www.pc410.com/calendar/>