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What is “the cloud”? What does “the cloud” mean for your business? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Most importantly, how do you assess if “the cloud” is right for your business? This is the first of 3 articles to help every small business owner answer these questions.

To put some basic parameters around “the cloud”, you need to realize that cloud computing is not a particular technology, but it is a computing model. The model is significantly different than how many of us are used to thinking about technology today. In today’s model, businesses are run by computers and software that we buy, license, operate and maintain in our offices - on premise. In the cloud model – we pay a per user fee to access software and hardware via the internet which is managed, maintained and supported off-premise from whomever we purchase the access.

There are three basic types of cloud computing you should understand:

**Software as a Service (SaaS)** – This is by far the easiest cloud concept to understand because many of us today are already leveraging SaaS. According to the Pew Research Center, as many as 69% of America’s internet users are already leveraging SaaS. We just don’t think about it in those terms. If you use Google’s Gmail or Facebook – you’re already in the cloud! Basically, any software application not installed locally at your business and accessed via the web is considered SaaS.

**Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)** – Just as you provision software over the internet, IaaS is the concept of provisioning hardware and the maintenance, operations and support of that hardware over the internet.

**Platform as a Service (PaaS)** – As a business owner you should recognize that there is a shift in the software development world, where it is now possible to develop new software for your business entirely in the cloud, eliminating your need to worry about server hardware and computing capacity to run and maintain an application.

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With these definitions spinning around in your head, my advice for now is to keep your feet firmly on the ground and take a peek into the cloud. Stay tuned for my next edition so you can begin to assess the cloud advantages/disadvantages and determine the right move for your small business.

Or if you’d like information on a complimentary cloud solution assessment for your business, contact us at [info@sseinc.com](mailto:info@sseinc.com) or 314-439-4700.