

Want to stick your business head in the clouds?

While there is a lot of hype about ways of putting your information technology online, i.e. in the 'cloud', the question for any small to medium enterprise (SME) is always the same, says Mark Battershill, director of IT services company LANWorx.

“They have to ask whether these new solutions will help their people do their job better and more efficiently. We all get excited about new technology, but this is the fundamental question that any organisation should be confronting when considering their options with the cloud.”

It's hard to find a business where information technology isn't a key part of their operations, and where the question of putting those systems in the cloud isn't being considered, says Mark.

“A recent study by Microsoft of the 9.6 million small to medium businesses in the USA revealed 98% rated technology being important to their success.

“What's important for SMEs is to focus on how technology can be used to make their team as productive as possible and focussed on conducting your core business. The real and opportunity costs of trying to manage technology and assess new options yourself are considerable.”

In that light Microsoft's Office365 is something that is getting more and more attention from his SME clients, says Mark.

“Clients are comfortable and highly productive with their existing suite of Microsoft Office tools, but can see the attraction of being able to access their business data online from anywhere, using their normal PCs as well as devices like smart phone or tablets, and being able to share that information easily online with staff, partners and suppliers.”

At the same time they aren't comfortable with adopting a whole range of new tools, that aren't necessarily available offline and don't give them confidence in terms of the security and stability of the hosting provider.

“As a hosted version of familiar Microsoft tools like Outlook, Word or Excel, Office365 is a good option for many of our clients as they can get the best of both worlds - tools they know and are productive with, available securely online from virtually any device.”

Putting IT systems in the cloud isn't for everyone, and needs to be aligned with an organisation's overall goals, says Mark. “Even if they don't have any particular requirement to access their information from anywhere, and don't want to share data with other people and organisations, what a service like Office365 still offers is a cost-effective disaster recovery option.”

Mark says SMEs who are clear about how cloud-based solutions can improve their productivity, rather than those that get carried away with the trendiest new online apps, will be the ones who find putting their business heads in the cloud a sound move.

To find out LANWorx can help you assess whether Office 365 is a good fit for your organisation, visit www.lanworx.co.nz/products-and-services/cloud-computing/