

# OUT OF THE SERVER CLOSET, INTO THE CLOUD

Brian Sheehan, Vice President, DelCor Technology Solutions

## CLOUD CONNECTION HELPS THE ENTERPRISE WIRELESS ALLIANCE SHIFT ITS IT FOCUS FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION

Every day in the crowded server rooms of countless associations and nonprofits, precious resources are squandered, and nobody takes notice. After all, this is how it's always been. IT departments operate in reactive mode. IT staffs spend most of their days managing and maintaining networks – rebooting servers, fighting malware, applying patches. The list goes on.

But it doesn't have to be like this. What if your IT staff could use their time, talent, and energy to help your organization meet the needs of your members and constituents? How much more could you accomplish if you had more of their time? More focus on mission, and less on maintenance?

It's time for IT to be seen not only as the department that fixes printers and finds lost files, but also as the department that provides technological solutions to organizational challenges.

It's time for IT to come out from under a workstation, and take a seat at the strategic planning table.

It's time for IT to get out of reactive mode, and instead be a proactive, forward-thinking, and innovative department that helps your organization meet its goals and live its mission.

It's time for IT to take the first steps toward making this new role possible. Now is the time to educate your

leadership about cloud solutions that will improve your organization's technological and strategic potential, and set you on a path toward progress.

### MAKE A BUSINESS CASE FOR THE CLOUD

Amidst the buzz about the cloud from large public hosts like Amazon, Google, and Apple, and increasingly from traditional telecommunication players like Verizon and AT&T, how do you decide if a hosted private cloud solution is right for your organization?

Enterprise Wireless Alliance (EWA), the national association for business enterprise wireless users and manufacturers, started their decision process with a network assessment.

Eric Hill, senior vice president of EWA's corporate operations, said, "DelCor evaluated our human and physical IT resources, one piece of which dealt with hosted and non-hosted environments. Having an assessment and outside perspective on what to do was a start in the right direction."

Three major issues drove EWA's eventual decision to migrate to the cloud. "We knew we had a problem," said Eric. "Our first critical decision was to either replace our infrastructure with new equipment and manage it ourselves, or move to the cloud for a much lower capital expenditure."

EWA's aging infrastructure, workstations, and phone system didn't



Eric Hill, Senior VP, Corporate Operations, Enterprise Wireless Alliance (photo: Eric Hill)

allow them to fully deliver on their mission. When the network failed, staff had to tolerate downtime, which on one occasion lasted four hours. “They were getting annoyed,” said Eric. EWA needed an upgraded network to deliver better performance, provide data protection, and ensure business continuity.

The server room – a climate-controlled environment – was responsible for a hefty portion of their monthly utility bill. It housed 11 servers, each dedicated to a single function. Eric knew it was time to either redesign or replace their server farm.

“Secondly, to decide whether a hosted service would be more advantageous for our situation, we had to consider how we were structured in terms of staffing.” Two employees worked remotely, yet EWA wished to provide that option to more. The remainder of EWA’s staff was evenly split between two offices, so IT assets, like software, were duplicated.

“Internal IT support was the third critical issue we had to think about in terms of our decision.” EWA’s sole IT staffer was stretched thin going back and forth between two offices, while handling multiple responsibilities. Reactive mode was the norm for him, which meant he couldn’t spend sufficient time on the work that most impacted members – developing EWA’s proprietary software.

“Before making any decisions about the cloud,” Eric advised, “fully understand your current state, including inefficiencies and the expenses incurred because of them.” Eric reiterated what I always tell organizations: “Build your business requirements first, and then find out what the cloud can do for you.”

### **ADVANTAGES OF PRIVATE CLOUD HOSTING**

EWA researched cloud solutions for several months before deciding to migrate their network to DelCor’s

Cloud Connection. “DelCor helped us gather requirements for a hosted cloud solution, and then we shopped around,” said Eric. “Since DelCor already provided help desk support for us, we had a good relationship with them. We valued that proven relationship and support more than any savings the lowest bid provided.”

Since 2008, DelCor has provided a private cloud solution custom-tailored for associations and nonprofits, yet packed with features fit for a Fortune 100 company. The Cloud Connection

**SYSTEMS AND DATA HOSTED IN THE CLOUD ARE NOT ONLY SAFE FROM HACKERS, BUT ALSO FROM EQUIPMENT FAILURES, BECAUSE REDUNDANCY IS BUILT INTO OPERATIONS.**

promise is seamless failover – automatic switching to a redundant environment – for your applications and a 99.99 percent uptime. DelCor manages your hardware stack, operating system patching, security, connectivity, storage, backup, and replication. Our cloud gives you time to focus on the big picture – your members and your mission.

With the DelCor pay-for-use model, organizations pay only for the amount of compute power they need (unlike some subscription models), yet retain the ability to scale up or down as needs change. Compute power is acquired in units comprised of vCPU, vRAM, storage/backup, and connectivity. You get all the power you need, with anytime/anywhere access, and the security and redundancy you’d expect from a premier solution.

### **TRANSFORM IT FROM A COST CENTER INTO A MISSION-ENABLER**

With a cloud solution, IT staff can shift their focus from the server room to the more strategic and mission-oriented work that helps an organization meet its goals. Instead of wrestling with

hardware and software purchases, installations, maintenance, repairs, warranties, licenses, updates, and security, their time can be dedicated to moving your organization forward.

“Now that DelCor is our hosted service, it’s easier for our IT guy to be a developer,” said Eric. “We hired him especially for his development skills, not network management skills. It’s better to have staff use their unique skill set on member-oriented work, rather than devoting talent and time to tasks we can outsource to experts.

“We have a few less things to worry about now, at a cost that’s justifiable for freeing up that worry. Our size and resources don’t warrant having all that equipment in house,” he continued. “Our infrastructure belongs in the hands of someone like DelCor who has the training and expertise to do a much better job than we ever could.”

### **GOOD FINANCIAL SENSE**

Although Eric knew off-site hosting by DelCor was the way to go in principle, he had to make sure it made sense financially. He provided his board a financial model depicting why they should migrate from an internally managed environment to an externally hosted environment.

“Every organization considering the cloud needs to do an economic analysis, as we did. There are costs that are hard to put a figure on – like convenience, ease of use, productivity, and potential – but at some point you have to assign a value to them.”

For EWA, off-site hosting would be slightly more expensive, yet that small figure was worth the additional savings

in comfort, security, backup, business continuity, ease, and outsourcing of expertise. “We would no longer have to worry about all those tasks. We could focus on new member services instead of maintaining and purchasing systems. It was a no-brainer for us to go this route, but we had to educate the board that, cost-wise and convenience-wise, it made sense for us to do it.

“There’s quite a difference in the level of services we get from external experts compared to internal resources,” Eric observed. “DelCor and the data centers have dozens of employees who grow their expertise every day. I prefer to have experts like them taking care of our critical systems. You’ve got to pay for that, and we’re happy to do it.”

### **STAY MORE SECURE IN THE CLOUD THAN ON YOUR OWN**

The cloud also provides better security than you could affordably provide yourself, along with a dedicated full-time team of security professionals. Cloud Connection’s high level of premise-based security includes 24/7 monitored and manned network security, man traps, biometric scanning equipment, and surveillance. It’s impossible to replicate that on a nonprofit budget.

Eric added, “The services that our software development yield provide some of our key non-dues revenue. We like knowing that those resources are stored securely in the same data center that some of D.C.’s top multinational corporations also use. If the degree of security, reliability, backup, and

safeguards are good enough for them, then it’s certainly good enough for us.”

### **MORE ROBUST AND RELIABLE IT INFRASTRUCTURE**

Thanks to the DelCor Cloud Connection’s state-of-the-art technology, EWA has better uptime and connectivity. DelCor uses the second generation of cloud technology



*DelCor’s tier-4, SSAE16-certified data centers (photo: Equinix)*

– bigger, faster, and better than what we had in 2008 when we first started providing cloud services to associations and nonprofits.

By joining our cloud, EWA eliminated their server room challenges (outages and climate control worries) while also improving functionality. “If we hosted our resources in-house, we

wouldn’t be doing it as well,” said Eric. “Now we have faster systems, better integration – and less hardware, software, and warranty maintenance and management.”

Systems and data hosted in the cloud are not only safe from hackers, but also from equipment failures, because redundancy is built into operations. Data is backed up and replicated

between two geographically dispersed data centers in constant communication. If by chance something does fail, client operations continue uninterrupted.

The SSAE16 certification of DelCor’s data centers is proof of the effectiveness of strong internal controls. This certification is only given to service providers that have undergone an audit of their security and control objectives and activities.

### **INSTANT GRATIFICATION OF YOUR IT NEEDS**

An undervalued benefit of cloud hosting is that it is scalable. You have the ability to increase or reduce your computing power, based on your needs at a specific time – for example, during trade show season.

If your board approves a new program requiring a new server or more disk space or memory, you won’t have to wait months to make your staff’s wishes come true. The IT department will be known as a solution provider, not a dream killer.

### **SOLUTION TO VIRTUAL WORK AND BYOD CHALLENGES**

One of the reasons EWA chose to host their infrastructure in the cloud was to give their staff the ability to work remotely. With the cloud, you can unchain staff from cubicles and offices, giving them the freedom to

be productive no matter where they're located.

Employees are increasingly mobile, social, and attached to their smartphone or tablet. According to technology research firm Gartner<sup>1</sup>, mobile phones will overtake PCs as the most common web access device worldwide by 2013. This mobility is possible because many of the tools we already use at work and home live in the cloud. In this new era of the personal cloud, organizations must rethink how they'll ensure staff's productivity and satisfaction with the applications needed to do their jobs.

Many IT departments (and their policies) are resisting the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) movement, but won't be able to do so for long. Employees want to use the device within their reach to get work done, and many of them already grab their personal smartphone or tablet to do just that.

The cloud supports this new mobile computing movement by giving employees the tools they need to be productive while also providing IT departments the security and control they require.

**BEFORE YOU SIGN THE CONTRACT...**

Is cloud-washing the new green-washing? From the looks of advertisements, it is. With all the new players in the cloud market, you'll

benefit in the long-term by asking prospective cloud hosting providers these questions.

- How long has the company been in business? Are they solid, with meaningful client references?
- How long have they been cloud providers? Did they jump on the cloud bandwagon in the past year, or have they been providing cloud services for several years?

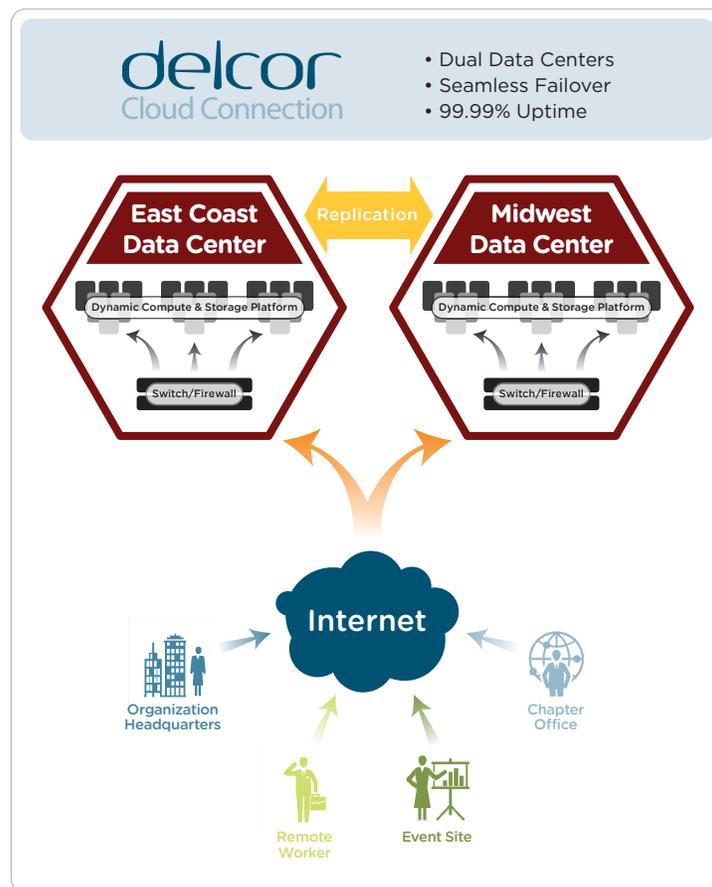
data centers SSAE16 certified? What's their backup strategy?

- Is your data in more than one data center in different parts of the country to ensure your systems never go down?
- How do you get your data back? Is it painlessly portable?
- How comfortable are you with the service level agreement (SLA)? Do you understand all of it? If not, does the provider help you to understand?

Eric said, "If you're like most of us in the association world, you're not a cloud guru. Have an outside consultant assess your existing technology, look at your requirements, and get a proposal for solutions. If you're at the point where you need to replace infrastructure, or if you have a geographically dispersed staff or insufficient internal IT resources, then I suggest you take a serious look at a hosted environment."

A hosted private cloud solution, like the DelCor Cloud Connection, solves

many of the technological and business challenges facing associations and non-profits. Most importantly, it gives organizations the ability to focus their resources on work that makes a difference in the lives of their members and constituents.



- Whom do you call when you have a question or problem? Do you have to wait days for someone to answer your plea in a web forum, or can you pick up the phone and talk to someone you know?
- Where is your data held? How strong, reliable, and secure is the provider's infrastructure? Are their

Get more @ [delcor.com/cloud](http://delcor.com/cloud)