

Cloud Computing, Why Didn't I Think of It?

Cloud computing is a style of computing in which dynamically scalable and often virtual resources are provided as a service over the Internet. Users need not have knowledge of, expertise in, or control over the technology infrastructure "in the cloud" that supports them.

At first, it sounds like a brand new concept. But 40 years ago we were doing "time sharing". Big in-house computers were reserved for the likes of payroll. Personal computers were not invented yet. We could do all sorts of exotic things on time sharing like a growth rate formula or a graph. We could even do a stone age version of EDI by sending data transmissions from paper tape to paper tape! The transmission errors were affectionately referred to as "birds on the wire".) After a while, we did studies and concluded that it would be more efficient to run everything in-house. My simple conclusion is that cloud computing is time sharing after 40 years of innovation.

Five years ago, cloud computing discussion was still a baby. Big companies would not consider using cloud services. Amazon.com's cloud was still in development. Salesforce.com was far away from its cloud-based application development platform. Now days, big corporations utilize the cloud for everything but their very sensitive jobs. Amazon and Salesforce are only among many offering services. Where will we be in five years? Probably getting better at managing the cloud resources. Better standards will come about to let cloud services communicate more readily with each other. We will have more security, portability and accessibility. We will see individual business units contracting for cloud services (and CIO's fighting them like they did Web browsers and PC's).

The biggest benefit for EDI will be when cloud-to-cloud communications becomes commonplace. A group of clouds will work like one cloud does now.

Imagine that a company will not have to invest in a large scale EDI translator, software, etc. What is to prevent disconnected business units in a company from just contracting separately for their own EDI services?

This could spell the end of the VAN as we know it. Everything combined, cloud-to-cloud could revolutionize the whole industry – except for companies who insist on amortizing their huge investments in software, hardware and big, bureaucratic EDI departments.

As Yogi Berra once reputedly said: *"EDI ain't over till the fat lady sings"*