

XaaS - using cloud to provide added value



Nathan Pearce, 2014-26-03

The idea of hype in the technology industry is something we've talked about on these blogs a few times before. We've talked about it with software-defined networking (SDN), for example, and now I want to touch on the same idea with cloud computing.

The point I've made about SDN is that, despite its relative infancy, it's already a term that has lost a lot of its meaning, because there is no clear, universally agreed definition and there are so many different use cases. You can read [more on that here](#).

And so to cloud computing. There is no one single thing that is known as cloud computing. It is a huge variety of services and applications and platforms provided by a huge variety of different companies. The decision to embrace cloud computing is not an all inclusive decision; there are so many different types of cloud computing that one could argue the phrase has lost a lot of its meaning.

That is particularly true when looking at the X-as-a-Service (XaaS) industry. Just look at some of the options for the XaaS industry: Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) from the likes of salesforce.com, Google's Drive platform, Microsoft Office 365; Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) from Microsoft Azure and Google and Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) from Amazon, Rackspace and Google (again). That's just a fraction of the companies offering the services, and in many cases there is very little to differentiate them.

And we can even dive down further; within the Software-as-a-Service space there is productivity, CRM, email, HR, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and loads more.

As I told [CBR](#) earlier this year we have already started to see more sub-categorisations within the SaaS market, such as Disaster Recovery (DRaaS), Security (SECaaS), Management (MaaS), all of which have a clear definition. I expect that over the next year or so we will see much of this sub-categorisation settle down, with most sections having clear definitions.

This will certainly help with the understanding of exactly what cloud computing is and whether it is right for their business (over on-premise solutions, for example). That, in turn, should help with adoption, which is a good thing because, despite what I've said here, cloud computing can be beneficial to many businesses. It can reduce costs, make IT much more flexible and agile and improve access and reliability.

Some may be seduced by the hype around cloud computing but it should be approached in the same way as any IT project. A clear business case must be made - what exactly does your business need from the project? Is taking your needs to the cloud really the best solution? If so, which aspect of cloud computing do you really need to embrace? That last point is key, because in the vast majority of cases it'll just be one or two areas of cloud computing that you'll need to explore.

Essentially, what I am saying is there are clearly benefits to this technology, but the key is to ignore as much of the marketing noise as possible and focus on the business use cases to establish exactly what your business needs from this technology.

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