

# Cloud Services

## Moving documents & information to a new level

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Are you embracing the reality that document workflow solutions and business process tools are moving to the cloud? If not, perhaps it is time for you to take a closer look at cloud services opportunities that could take your dealership to new heights. Certainly, your clients would welcome your continued advancements as a services-led provider.

Many dealers are already moving in that direction. A December 2014 channel survey conducted by InfoTrends, a market research and consulting firm, revealed that, at the time, 41 percent of dealers responding were already providing cloud solutions and services. Another 30 percent were considering doing so, 22 percent had no plans and the remainder indicated they did not yet know the cloud's role in their future plans. Of the 41 percent already providing cloud solutions and services, 91 percent projected that those sales would increase in the next five years, with the remainder seeing sales staying the same.

Where is the rise of the cloud headed? "For the SMB market, one day, the only remaining on-premise IT infrastructure will be related to Internet connectivity to be used for accessing cloud services," says Brendan Morse, a research analyst at InfoTrends. "This might be a long way off, but, in many ways, it is the most logical endpoint for many businesses. This idea of the paperless office has been batted around for decades, though we never seem to get there, so it might be that the MFP is among the last hardware standing."

The reality, of course, is that cloud usage is already prevalent across all facets of the office technology industry. Following is a quick look at several channel-focused companies that are leveraging the cloud. The comments shared serve as a reminder of just how significant a role the cloud plays in the industry today. Perhaps they will also provide some welcome insight as you consider your cloud strategy.



### ConnectWise

At ConnectWise, the focus is on providing the customers of office technology dealerships (and other partners) end-to-end software support that allows dealerships to provide IT support via ongoing remote monitoring and remediation. While the company was established in 1997 with server-based software, today, approximately 66 percent of the company's partners utilize the cloud-based version of ConnectWise Business Suite.

"We're pretty proud of ConnectWise Cloud and the uptime it affords our partners who provide IT service," says Mark Sokol, director of marketing for the company. "In the past, our partners might have been able to build it out on their own, but at different times and in different periods — even with redundancies and a platform behind it — they would have a failure at some point."

With ConnectWise, dealers can rest assured they have a partner with "a dedicated cloud team," Sokol says, noting that, in October, the leader of the cloud team — "someone who lives and breathes the cloud and is passionate about it" — was among the presenters at an Amazon.com Inc. conference. "So, even for 100- or 500-person organizations, with ConnectWise they have a team of resources behind the scenes to make sure they have the optimum level of uptime. That's really what it is all about."

Initially, the launch of ConnectWise Cloud "allowed the smaller VARs and dealerships to move into this space more quickly," Sokol says. "However, over time, even the larger VARs and dealerships are picking it up because they see the benefits of having, essentially, a huge team behind their infrastructure."

No matter the size of their dealerships, ConnectWise Cloud allows dealers to move into managed IT services and address the growing requirement among end users to have a single technology provider. "Today, businesses are looking for one technology company to solve all of their business

workflow problems,” Sokol says. “The days of having six or seven different companies providing a variety of solutions are gone.”

### **Intellinetics Inc.**

The cloud is at center stage with IntelliCloud, the flagship product of Intellinetics Inc., a provider of document workflow management systems for SMBs. Delivered to the market via channel partners, the turnkey solution is designed to capture paper or digital documents and connect them to business processes to reduce costs while increasing accessibility, security and compliance.

Established in 1994 and initially targeting the law enforcement and public safety markets exclusively with an on-premise, server-based solution, company leadership ultimately “looked to the cloud as the way to bring our solution to the masses,” says Matt Chretien, president and CEO at Intellinetics. “As part of our transformation, we have moved to the BTA Channel, bringing dealers the ability to offer our solution’s capabilities.”

In its initial research of the dealer community, Intellinetics quickly found that dealers were seeking easy entry into a document solution offering that would “reclaim and accelerate the eroding margins on their core business,” Chretien says, noting that the company’s cloud-based solution provides the ease of entry dealers are seeking. “It removes the complexity from a sales training perspective so that dealerships can focus on creating a selling advantage and making money.”

Chretien says he is particularly pleased with the interest among dealers in the company’s cloud-based solution. “When I think of the BTA Channel, I think of the trust dealers are good at building with their customers; that, I believe, is a critical ingredient,” he says, emphasizing that the level of trust is especially valuable when working with end users who may remain a bit apprehensive about the cloud. “Dealers are ultimately selling against resistance to change and fear of complexity. In the end, the customer makes a choice to do something good for their business, but wants someone there for the ride who is trusted; that’s what we value most about the BTA Channel.”

### **Intronis LLC**

Providing office technology dealers with a bridge into managed IT services, Intronis LLC offers cloud-based, encrypted backup and data recovery services. Founded in 2003, the company has been “channel-only” since 2009. It currently

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has around 2,000 managed IT services provider partners. (Intronis was acquired in October 2015 by Barracuda Networks to become the company’s dedicated MSP business.)

Built on a recurring revenue model that is very familiar to the dealer community, with its services provided to end users for a monthly fee, “the real advantage for a

dealer is that no one can really say they don’t need data backup,” says Neal Bradbury, senior director of channel development and co-founder of Intronis. “It is basically protecting the customer’s data and their business from fires, floods and theft. Plus, our services are scalable, providing backup and data recovery for one-person companies to companies with hundreds of people, all with the same solution.”

One of the key advantages of a cloud-based backup and data recovery solution is that it is automated and there is nothing on premise. “There is no tape to rotate, no drive to take offsite and no reliance on the office manager to manage this process,” Bradbury says, noting that humans can be the “weakest link” in data backup. “Also, everything is encrypted. Unfortunately, there are a lot of examples of tapes being stolen that were unencrypted. Think about the risk of that data breach.”

Bradbury emphasizes that cloud backup and data recovery services can provide dealers a much-needed additional revenue opportunity while allowing them to move into the cloud services arena and providing a bridge to managed IT services. “People are saving trees now; they are not printing as many pages as in the past,” he says. “So, to keep their businesses and revenues at the level they are accustomed to, dealers need to start offering additional services in their portfolios in order to survive.”

### **Toshiba America Business Solutions Inc.**

Traditional imaging industry manufacturers have entered the cloud services arena as well. In September 2014, Toshiba America Business Solutions Inc. (TABS) unveiled its no-cost e-BRIDGE CloudConnect, a cloud-based application designed to increase the efficiencies of the service operations and technicians of authorized dealerships. CloudConnect (using the Microsoft Azure cloud computing platform) offers continuous remote monitoring, diagnostics and firmware updates to Toshiba e-STUDIO devices.

Today, nearly 30 percent of Toshiba’s fleet of MFPs and printers (that can be linked to e-BRIDGE CloudConnect and

were placed by both dealers and direct operations) is supported by the application, says Louis Ormond, product and services planning director at TABS. "The big advantage of this cloud-based system is that there is no infrastructure that the dealer has to manage or maintain; we do all of that for them," he says. "In fact, since the communication capabilities are built into the devices, there is no on-site server."

Ormond emphasizes the application's simplicity. "On other systems, you have to place some type of gateway within the customer environment in order to collect the data and send it to the cloud," he says. "With e-BRIDGE CloudConnect, our devices handle that individually. So, it works for the mom-and-pop shop where they have only one device, and in the

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enterprise where they may have thousands of devices."

Why was the application unveiled in 2014 and not sooner? Generally, it was a matter of awaiting the development of the capabilities provided by the cloud to make it feasible, Ormond says. "You really needed the cloud and the cost advantages that the cloud brings, the ease of development, the ease of scaling and just the overall

rock-bottom cost of running an application like this in the cloud," he says. "The cloud lends itself so well to this type of application." ■

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