Business Technology

Clouds In The Forecast: Good News For Small Businesses

(NAPSA)—Anyone who's ever started a business—or even just thought about it—knows that success often hinges on taking risks. That's part of what makes running a small business so challenging, yet exciting.
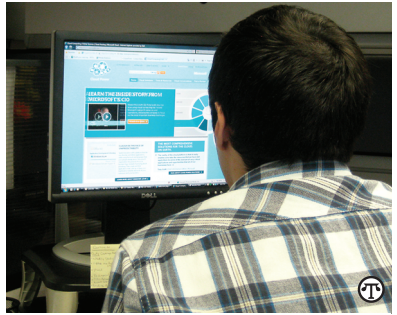
Some small and medium-sized businesses are reducing risk by pursuing a new trend in computing, one that can significantly improve the way smaller companies operate. This trend is called "cloud computing," and, according to recent Microsoft research, 12 percent of SMBs have used cloud services to help start their businesses.

Though the term "cloud" may seem a little confusing, it's simply a way of accessing technology via the Internet. Think of all the benefits the Internet has brought to modern life—you can book movie tickets online; manage your bank account from anywhere; connect with friends through e-mail, phone calls and video chats; and do much more.

Similarly, the cloud has ushered in a host of benefits for SMBs, creating a technology revolution that provides access to enterprise-class software at a price tag most SMBs can afford. If you've ever wondered if cloud computing makes sense for your business, there are five key benefits you may care to consider:

• **Reliability**: With cloud services, you no longer have to worry about losing or accidentally erasing important files. Any document you work on in the cloud gets saved there, too, so you'll always have access to that file.

• **Mobility**: The cloud "understands" that today's business world is 24/7, global and mobile. That means when you use a business application in the cloud, you can access it from any computer and

Cloud computing can help a small company reach for the sky.

possibly from your mobile device, as well. By allowing remote access, the cloud helps businesses mobilize their employees and thus reduce operating costs.

• **Flexibility**: You can pay for cloud services in whichever way makes the most sense for your business, whether through a subscription or by purchasing a license for a suite of Web services.

• **Efficiency**: In many cases, using a cloud service can increase efficiency—videoconferencing can reduce time spent traveling, collaboration software can help employees share documents and communicate with one another, and simplified document storage options streamline administrative work.

• **Integration**: Some cloud services even work well alongside the software you're already using and can provide enhanced capabilities to businesses that have already invested in on-premises software.

When the cloud has your small business covered, you're more likely to weather a stormy economy successfully and brighten your company's bottom line.

For more information on the cloud and business success, visit www.Microsoft.com/cloud.