In the Clouds

As the cloud achieves mainstream status, proven business benefits are speaking volumes. Low total cost of ownership is the obvious reward, with companies buying in at rock-bottom levels and paying as they grow—not to mention cutting operational budgets. More important to some companies, though, is the strong performance of cloud models, which deliver high availability, great scalability, and speed and flexibility in deployment.

The Cloud Delivers Proven Benefits for Disaster Recovery and Global Expansion

Yet, respondents in a recent poll by IDG Research Services of Framingham, Mass. continue to voice concerns over data protection (65 percent) and security (62 percent), and to a lesser degree, compliance, availability, and hidden costs. However, with early successes, many of the obstacles that once hindered cloud adoption have been alleviated as vendors mature, building new levels of security and availability into seasoned solutions.

"Today's cloud offers flexibility, ubiquity and speed in meeting business needs without the risks associated with early market solutions," says Ellen Shor, senior director of product management for NTT America Inc., a wholly owned U.S. subsidiary of NTT Communications Corporation.

Disaster Recovery in the Cloud

Many applications seem made for the cloud. Testing, quality assurance and training have all been proven in preliminary implementations. Now, riding those successes, higher-profile applications are also being shifted off-premises. Disaster recovery, for example, is particularly well suited for the cloud.

Indeed, many companies have lost ground in disaster planning due to the pressures of a struggling economy. In fact, 58 percent of those surveyed by IDG Research Services say their disaster recovery plans are incomplete or nonexistent. "It's painful for companies to pay for a large disaster recovery solution footprint and not use it," Shor says.

But as catastrophic events, such as the swine flu pandemic and natural disasters, continue to wreak havoc on business continuity, companies are stepping up efforts to get their plans in order. Some believe the cloud is the best way to re-engage disaster recovery, seeing it as an opportunity to put a plan in place without an exorbitant up-front investment. Specifically, survey respondents indicate that various components of disaster recovery are conducive to

cloud delivery, including testing (61 percent), data replication (57 percent), automation (53 percent), creating mirror images (52 percent) and data storage (48 percent).

And they say it's not just about cost savings, with 88 percent pointing to high availability and 87 percent indicating speed of deployment. Others cite ubiquitous access and reduced IT complexity.

Leveraging the Cloud to To Go Global

The cloud appeals to many different types of companies. Small companies can facilitate growth with access to applications otherwise out of reach due to budget or staffing limitations. Midsize companies can compete more effectively by focusing on core strengths instead of IT infrastructure.

And not surprisingly, multinational companies or those planning global expansion are also gravitating to cloud models. "There's a high cost of entry to going global," Shor explains, and the cloud is a cost-effective way to get there.

These companies tout a number of compelling reasons to make cloud computing an integral part of their global expansion plans. Most cite the ability to quickly adapt and scale to new business needs and reduced IT complexity. For some, it's improved ease of access to information and increased storage capacity. Interestingly, mitigating risk of business disruption and aiding in disaster recovery make the list as well.

In the end, no matter the size of the company—or the application in question—cloud service delivery is a solution with mainstream appeal and proven success. For most businesses, shifting to the cloud is simply a matter of embracing the innovation and tallying the return.

High solution availability and *cost savings* are rated as the most important potential benefits of leveraging public cloud-based solutions to aid in DR strategy

Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
56%	32%	7%	4%
51%	32%	10%	7%
48%	39%	7%	6%
48%	32%	15%	4%
41%	41%	13%	6%
41%	38%	17%	4%
18%	44%	13%	6%
23%	41%	31%	6%

■ Very important ■ Not very important
■ Somewhat important ■ Not at all important