

SharePoint Cloud Hosting: IaaS for your PaaS

By Matt Duchek, Fpweb.net, 2012

A Cloud by any other name...

Sure, in one sense Microsoft SharePoint is an application: the SharePoint software package is installed and deployed directly on a server (*or cluster of multiple servers*). But SharePoint is **so much more** than just another enterprise-level application. Fundamentally, **SharePoint is also a platform**. Beyond its 'off-the-shelf' capabilities for online collaboration and workflow management, SharePoint also serves as the backbone to enable specialized apps and solutions from third-party vendors.



With a SharePoint environment, you get a fully-featured platform upon which other business-critical applications can be installed. And under the broad umbrella of the SharePoint platform, there is a rich tapestry of business applications to choose from: Business Intelligence (BI) apps, content and document management apps and extensions, search software 'bolt-ons' including [FAST Search Server](#), extensible code libraries, reusable web parts, security and compliance solutions and list goes on and on. *While maybe*

SharePoint was originally conceived as a standalone program, it has evolved to become a premier applications platform for developers to customize and build upon.

SharePoint: Platform as a Service (PaaS)

Be aware- even if you're currently hosting SharePoint on in-house servers- SharePoint is essentially packaged as a service since Microsoft's licensing terms closely mimic subscription pricing models. SharePoint Foundation edition is included with- and licensed alongside- Microsoft Windows Server. The various editions (*Standard or Enterprise*) of SharePoint Server 2010 are priced a little differently with an upfront license for the SharePoint software product. However, most SharePoint Server deployments also require Microsoft Client Access License (CAL) agreements. The CAL program calls for annual licensing terms on a per-user basis, meaning it's effectively a subscription model too.

Why choose this type of a platform for your enterprise? Well, [according to Wikipedia](#),

"PaaS offerings facilitate the deployment of applications without the cost and complexity of buying and managing the underlying hardware and software and provisioning hosting capabilities".

That way, once the platform is provisioned, your IT department has a single interface for application hosting, development, testing and versioning. **Plus, the SharePoint platform is considerably more flexible than other PaaS services.** Some cloud computing platforms, like Force.com or Heroku, maintain pretty tight control over the underlying infrastructure- effectively limiting the types of software that can operate on the platform. Luckily, SharePoint doesn't have those limitations; the platform is wide open for deep customization and for building complex custom solutions.

Subscription-based pricing can also save your company a lot of money compared with more familiar, traditional models. *Rather than a one-size-fits-all solution, your organization can custom-tailor its purchase terms based on the number of users.* Plus there's no long term commitment. Instead of committing capital to a large software purchase intended to last over a multi-year period, your firm can evaluate its needs each year and allocate the appropriate budget given dynamic economic conditions and evolving scenarios. That typically results in lower costs while simultaneously insuring against obsolescence *(because software developers are motivated to keep producing updates to entice users to extend their subscription into the next year).*

Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)



Every computing platform relies on computer hardware and computer network infrastructure. The SharePoint platform is no different. In order to run the SharePoint platform in your company, you need servers- physical or virtual machines- configured in a SharePoint farm. The server hardware behind your platform is critical: this is the underlying infrastructure used for content storage, database storage, firewalls, load balancers and network connectivity. Without a solid infrastructure foundation in place, the performance of your platform might suffer. Or in the worst-case scenario, the platform you've invested in might fail altogether.

But in today's cloud computing landscape, the infrastructure component can also be outsourced to **specialist providers** under a subscription pricing model. Rather than allocating significant capital to invest in servers and networking devices, Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) offerings require little or no upfront investment. To trim costs, your company can "lease" servers and other crucial network connectivity infrastructure on month-to-month terms. That way your infrastructure remains flexible: you can scale your computer network quickly and easily, plus updates and maintenance are performed by contract providers who focus specifically on networking and infrastructure-related issues.

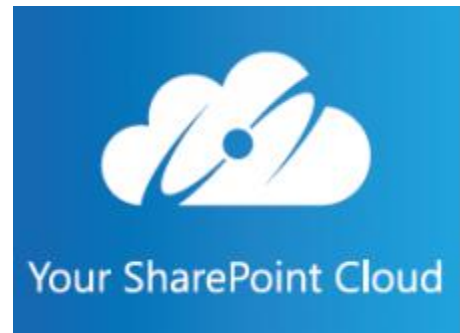
Cloud Hosting: Combining PaaS with IaaS

Is your firm already capitalizing on the benefits of the SharePoint platform? **Awesome.** But keep in mind that means you've also already adopted Microsoft's PaaS model. As a result, your company is likely saving a lot of money compared to building its own custom stack for building and deploying new

business applications. Yet there are still tremendous opportunities for additional cost savings when you move that platform to the cloud.

Let's face it: the computer and network infrastructure required for SharePoint is complicated and somewhat specialized. **And even when your SharePoint farm is configured correctly, the upfront investment can be costly.** Hosting SharePoint On Premise demands the acquisition of computer hardware like server machines, firewalls, routers, switches, hubs and load balancers. And after all those purchases have been made, you need staff to setup and maintain the infrastructure supporting your SharePoint installation. Then you still need to make sure that hardware is properly connected and established within the network to function together.

Private cloud hosting from Fpweb.net helps alleviate those burdens. **We focus specifically on [SharePoint hosting](#), so our knowledgeable team can provide faster and better SharePoint network support than traditional datacenter deployments.** Eliminating these hardware and networking headaches can dramatically reduce SharePoint's total cost of ownership (TCO) – *in some cases lowering infrastructure costs by 60% or more.* **For many companies, that means saving thousands or tens of thousands of dollars every month.**



SharePoint isn't your core business, but it IS our core business. Let our experienced SharePoint infrastructure experts handle the "heavy lifting" so your company can focus on its primary competencies while still gaining all the inherent benefits of the SharePoint platform. [Please contact us to speak with a Microsoft-certified SharePoint architect and learn how much your company might save from moving its SharePoint environment to the cloud!](#)