



Parting the Clouds: Understanding SaaS and Cloud Computing Buzzwords



While cloud computing continues to gain popularity among CPA firms and other businesses, acronyms like ASP, SaaS, S+S, and .NET can obscure the technologies' nuances. Even articles written for non-technical audiences often include an alphabet soup of acronyms and buzzwords, which can make it difficult to make comparisons between products or draw conclusions about ROI.

As the concept of cloud computing has grown and evolved over the past few years, new terminology has also developed. And as more companies offer solutions in the cloud, many have tried to make their own mark by developing new vocabulary to differentiate themselves from the competition.

Cloud computing refers to a collection of technologies that include hosted infrastructure, like virtual servers, network equipment and disk space; hosted operating systems, like Windows Azure and Google App Engine; and application-level services that are commonly referred to as Software as a Service (SaaS). So while SaaS is a form of cloud computing, it is only one piece of the pie.

Still confused? Important terms to learn are on the next page.

Software as a Service (SaaS)

A model for hosting on-demand software. SaaS is an evolution of its predecessor — the application service provider (ASP), which offered application services in a hosted data center style.

Software Plus Services (S+S or SPS)

The idea of combining hosted services with capabilities that are best achieved with locally running software.

Host

An Internet hosting service that runs Internet servers, allowing organizations and individuals to serve content to the Internet. The 'host' is the provider, such as CCH.

On-Premise

Licensed software purchased, installed and maintained by the user on their servers. Also referred to as "in-house" or "enterprise".

Application Service Provider (ASP)

A software program service that is delivered in a hosted data center style. Global *fx*[®] is an ASP whereby ProSystem *fx*[®] Tax software is offered to end users via Citrix from a centralized remote location. In contrast, CCH's new SaaS offering has been built to reside on the web, where it can better serve a more dispersed and mobile customer base with more user-friendly and flexible pricing and packaging.

.NET

A term referring to Microsoft's .NET Framework technology. CCH is using this technology to build, from the ground up, our new ProSystem *fx*[®] Suite of products. This technology gives CCH customers rich user interfaces, increased usability, improved workflow and the option to select the model that best fits them — Software as a Service or traditional On-Premise license.

On-Demand

A type of computing service in which the actual software is presented to the user once a subscription to the service is processed. In a typical "on-demand" model, the software is not actually installed on the user's PC; rather it is accessed via the Internet or centralized access point.

Smart Client

A group of files installed on the user's (client's) workstation, that interact with the hosted application to provide a rich user experience. Smart Clients display several key characteristics:

- a. **Utilizes local resources** — a Smart Client may take advantage of the local machine's memory or disk, CPU or other local software such as Microsoft Office applications.
- b. **Connected** — Smart Clients are always a part of a larger distributed solution to help maintain, deploy and update services.
- c. **Offline capable** — Because the Smart Client runs on the local machine, a key benefit is that it can work when the user is not connected to the internet. For traveling or remote workers with intermittent connectivity, this is essential, and CCH will incorporate this functionality in subsequent releases.

Cloud Computing ("the cloud")

Often used as a metaphor for the Internet. Cloud computing is a style of computing in which dynamically scalable resources are provided as a service over the internet. Users need not have knowledge of, expertise in, or control over the technology infrastructure "in the cloud" provides them. Types of cloud computing include SaaS and Web 3.0, for instance.

Silent Install

An installation process that does not display messages or windows while installing the software. "Silent installation" is not a synonym of "unattended installation," though it is often improperly used as such.

Unattended Installation

An installation process that is performed without user interaction, or with no user present at all, except for the initial launch of the process.



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