

Cutting all that physical expense means cloud computing is also energy efficient. According to *The New York Times*, “Cloud computing ... is projected to help large U.S. companies save \$12.3 billion on energy costs and cut out 85.7 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually by 2020.” Not bad.

However, many remain wary of the cloud. Kathy Johnson, owner and founder of Pyramid of Potential (PoP) in Burnt Hills, is among them. PoP is a company that helps educators and families learn to cope with and overcome learning disabilities. She has concerns about moving all her documents to the cloud. “I don’t trust it,” she says.

Instead, Johnson uses the cloud selectively. She refrains from sharing client data with other professionals in the cloud, and instead uses it for other tasks. Her introduction to the concept came about a year and a half ago, when a client started a treatment diary for her child in a Google document, which could be shared and collaborated on by her and other therapists who were hours away. Johnson also uses Google calendars and allows her administrative assistant access so that her schedule always syncs up with her home and work commitments. She describes the process as “seamless.”

“It’s really, really nice,” Johnson says. “We can communicate agendas and things for our meetings just using the calendars.” Still, though, she says she’d rather not risk sharing medical information on the Web.

She’s not alone. A LinkedIn survey found 54 percent of business owners were skeptical of data security in the cloud. That concern may not be well founded, however, as many cloud providers meet all kinds of security regulations — HIPAA, ISO 27001, PCI DSS. In part as a result, hospitals, police stations and other municipalities have all begun to jump in.

According to Crystal Allyn, a desktop network engineer at Rockit, an Albany-based cloud-service provider and facilitator, Rockit’s cloud service is monitored 24/7. “We eliminate security threats and viruses and prevent spam,” Allyn says. “We’re very proactive with our monitoring. Usually we know about a problem before a client is even aware of it.”

Rockit’s clients include local police departments, town halls, doctors’ and law offices, among many others. They house their own servers, which bank their clients’ data, and have routine redundancy backups, in case of catastrophe. “There is a lot of redundancy and precautions we take to make sure our data is restorable from multiple locations,” says Allyn.

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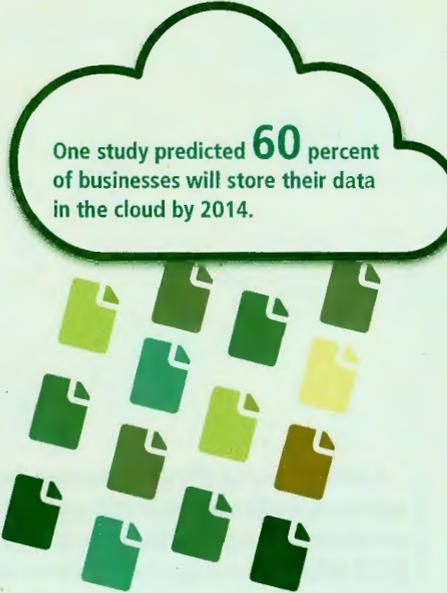
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A LinkedIn survey found **54** percent of business owners were skeptical of data security in the cloud.



Studies done by Gartner and Merrill Lynch found that cloud computing will be a \$150- to \$160-billion industry by 2013



One study predicted **60** percent of businesses will store their data in the cloud by 2014.

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Cliff Rohde, owner of GoatCloud in Niskayuna, helps people with their websites, social media and cloud services. "Cloud technologies make (a client's) business more efficient or saves them money," Rohde says. "You name it, there's a service for everything."

The services can include data storage, data management, file sharing, calendars and event planning, webinar services, phone services, e-mail and voicemail. A business owner could theoretically run an entire company without ever buying a ream of paper or paying for a landline.

While many of the services are free, others charge money, some for more space or other premium perks or some just for the service in general. Here's a breakdown of some of the best—free and service-fee—data-storage cloud services.

Google Drive

If you have a Gmail account, it's likely you've wandered into Google Documents or Google Calendar at least once or twice. Google Drive is the newly packaged Google Documents, and is downloadable to your desktop. Drag and drop files (documents, spreadsheets, pictures) from your local hard drive into Google Drive, at which point they're available in the cloud to be accessed and collaborated on with peers and colleagues. The share function in Google Drive allows users to instant message with other viewers of the document, leave comments and notes, and revert to previous drafts.

Worried that sounds too cluttered? Don't. Files can be organized into separate folders, and the search function is as good as ... well, Google.

Available for: Mac and PC, Android phones and tablets, with iPhone and iPad apps on the way. Free for up to 5 GB storage, \$2.49 a month for 25 GB, \$5 a month for 100 GB; \$10 a month for 200 GB, \$20 a month for 400 GB, and, for big-data users, you can keep buying more from there if you need it.

Also check out: **Microsoft SkyDrive**—up to 7 GB free (which is enough to accommodate 99.94 percent of users, according to Microsoft) for many of the same features offered in Google Drive. But the big perk of Microsoft's cloud—according to Rokit's Crystal Allyn—is that it's compatible with all Microsoft Office files. (Google converts Microsoft files to Google files.)

DropBox

DropBox is great for file storage and sharing, as well as for its easy image- and video-upload feature. Users get 2 GB free. It's handy for days when you keep getting reminder e-mails about how full your inbox is because it's crammed with 8-MB PDFs. This is a better way!

Available for: Windows, Mac, Linux, iPhones, iPads, BlackBerry and Droid tablets and phones. But it gets a little costly: \$10 a month for 50 GB, \$20 a month for 100 GB.

Also check out: **SugarSync**, which gives users 5 GB for free; and Amazon Cloud Drive, which can only be accessed through the Web, but still works pretty well.

EventBrite

Cliff Rohde, owner of GoatCloud, likes EventBrite for meeting and event planning. He says the program "makes organizing an event with any number of attendees a beautifully intuitive process." The service is actually a place for public event listings, and there's a built-in ticket-sales feature along with its event-planning and organizing capabilities. Its interface is clean and easy to use and search. Events pages can be as ornate or sparse as you like: add pictures, price information, times, places, attendees, what to bring, what not to bring, etc. The site includes social-media features and Google integration so if you're trying to promote your event on a larger scale, it'll show up high in the search rankings.

Available for: desktop use, iPhones, Androids and tablets.

Also check out: **Doodle**, which lets all your invitees present their schedules/available times at once, revealing the best dates and times for everyone; Google Calendar syncs up with your Gmail and lets you choose the number of reminders and alerts for all your events. Google Calendar also lets you share calendars for collaboration. **W**

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Generational Gaps

Managing across the ages

Going Up?

The art of the great elevator speech

Work Buddies

Good or bad idea?

Cloud Computing

Can it save your business time and money?

Tracy Metzger
TL Metzger & Associates

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“Don't let yesterday use up too much of today.”

— CHEROKEE PROVERB, and Tracy Metzger's favorite quote. Read the story on pg. 16.

► **ON THE COVER:** Tracy Metzger of TL Metzger and Associates.
Photo by Suzanne Kawola.

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