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Hiding behind the cloud

When you call an expert to complete a job at your home, you'd want a professional that is well equipped to use the right combination of tools for the job. Yet, in the ongoing debate between advocates of cloud computing and those that favour a more traditional localised solution, some IT suppliers are pushing a one-size fits all approach in preference of their chosen solutions and services.

The challenge for business owners is making informed decisions about what to push into the cloud and what to leave on site. In our experience as consultants, most IT people who make such a decision fall into one of two camps: they're either server-based traditionalists who are very much in favour of the status quo; or they come from a web development background and support the 'everything into the cloud' model.

The traditionalists will worry about losing the hardware, software and installation sales, and tend to argue strongly against the cloud. While cloud computing providers do offer a reseller model where the IT partner can make some ongoing revenue, the amounts

available are so small that they come nowhere near replacing profit lost from kit sales.

Meanwhile, web developers generally lack the skills required to install, manage and support physical network infrastructure and see cloud as a way to compete directly with traditional IT companies. They therefore have a strong desire to push as much as possible into the cloud. And although they'll get the same small amount of profit from such services, for them it's 100 per cent more than they were getting before. But the risk is that the web developers don't necessarily understand what's involved in the process of moving a client to a cloud-based model. There can also be a fair bit of hammering a square peg into a round hole to try and make a completely cloud-based model fit a situation where it's clearly not appropriate.

Cloud computing is complementary to traditional server solutions and a more pragmatic approach is necessary. The most appropriate and natural solution will emerge from the client's requirements. People making decisions around IT in the coming years need to ensure they are given all the options, both traditional and cloud, and not be pushed into going down one path. By picking the best of both worlds, it's possible to design a much stronger, more flexible, and cost effective solution.