

The death of the server room is upon us

 By [Alexander Mehlhorn](#)

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From SMEs to large multinationals, businesses need to adapt to changing global market conditions to remain competitive. Because opportunities can't be predicted or planned for, it is becoming imperative to be able to revise processes and deliver new products and services without delay.

Unfortunately, many organisations are still being held back by old processes and technology that fail to enable true strategic agility.

For many years, business process automation (BPA) was seen as the panacea that would solve these problems. It brought with it the promise of streamlined processes and business flexibility. But too many BPA solution providers have simply provided workflow solutions, without delving deeper to identify how technology could replace human interaction and improve existing processes.

In addition to the cost of developing a BPA solution, organisations needed to invest a substantial amount of capital into deploying and managing server rooms. IT departments are forced to manage IT infrastructure, instead of researching how technology can be the driver of strategic agility in their business. It's no surprise then that the lustre has worn off of many BPA solutions as they have proven to lack the diverse capabilities required to make BPA really effective.

Enter cloud computing

The advent of cloud computing has changed the way that BPA solutions can be delivered. By marrying BPA, virtualisation and the cloud, automation is now more scalable than ever and things are only getting better. A correctly implemented and managed cloud-based BPA system can offer true cost savings, improve resource allocation, increase efficiency and enable the organisation to adapt to change faster.

Cloud computing provides resources that can conduct end-to-end processes and allows for the rapid change of processes, as well as accelerated system-wide deployment. True strategic agility is being able to change, adapt and scale internal processes as and when needed, without prolonged development and major roll-out timeframes. The nature of cloud computing means that there are already a number of plug-and-play services available for rapid implementation, but if you need a customised solution that exactly matches your business needs, you should choose a solution developer that can walk you through the process of business automation and one that truly understands what the public cloud has to offer.

But cloud computing is a relatively new technology and with so many jumping onto the cloud bandwagon, how do you choose a BPA solution provider? The first step is to choose a partner that takes the time to understand your business

processes and the underlying reasons for them, and then identifies ways to streamline these processes, rather than simply providing a workflow of what you envisaged. This avoids the time-consuming trap of developing workflows for redundant and unnecessary processes, and allows you to utilise the available technology to its greatest capability. It does, however, take true partnership and a solution provider that will hold your hand through the development process.

Make sure that they truly inhabit the cloud

Next, ensure that your solution provider has an inherent understanding of the cloud. The best way to do so is to make sure that they truly inhabit the cloud themselves. It probably isn't a good sign if they have a server room full of mail and database servers. By selecting a partner that has extensive cloud-computing knowledge and expertise, and a proven track record of providing cloud-based solutions, you can guarantee that your BPA system will be deployed using the cloud in a fashion that allows for simple and rapid scalability and offers the true benefits of cloud computing.

Liberation from your server room is a heady feeling, as is being able to predict your IT costs and having them become part of your operational expenditure. Once you've moved into the cloud, you will rapidly realise that you are able to focus time and resources on your core business and increasing business profitability. Developments, such as moving into new markets, can now happen quickly and easily. Geography is no longer a factor.

Not only will cloud-based BPA save you money, it will allow you to respond to market changes rapidly. So no more castles in the sky - a BPA solution deployed in the cloud provides you with the strategic agility necessary to take your business to new heights.

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