

Over the past few years, cloud computing has moved into the mainstream for healthcare providers. As hospitals and health systems look to maximize efficiency and meet the demands of value-based care, outsourcing data management to a cloud services company allows providers to focus on their core competency of patient care.

The benefits of cloud computing are many. Cloud computing makes it far easier to archive and access patient records and medical images. The cloud makes it easier for healthcare providers to collaborate and deliver care. It also saves money by minimizing the need for in-house infrastructure and IT support.

IS OUR DATA SAFE IN THE CLOUD?

Benefits aside, many healthcare organizations still have trepidation over moving to the cloud due to concerns about data accessibility, uptime and, most importantly, security. In the early days, as the cloud was evolving, some of those concerns may have been valid.

Today, cloud-based solutions are, by and large, more secure than locally deployed solutions. Large financial institutions, huge retailers and even the federal government are using cloud services. With the ubiquity of smartphones, most of us have seen our own lives transformed by the cloud.

SECURITY

Cloud providers ensure that customer data is encrypted, backed up, easily recoverable, and secured with strict access controls. Health systems are beginning to discover that cloud-based applications and services are subject to far more scrutiny and operational process rigor than most on-premises solutions. Many cloud providers, such as Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services (Halo's cloud partner), offer healthcare-specific services that comply with HIPAA and HITECH regulations. Security vulnerability scanning and 24/7 monitoring for unwanted network access are now standard offerings of cloud providers.

With deep infrastructure – multiple data centers, redundant high bandwidth links, multiple connections to the power grid, and more – cloud providers offer a level of redundancy and security that most organizations can't match with on-premise solutions.

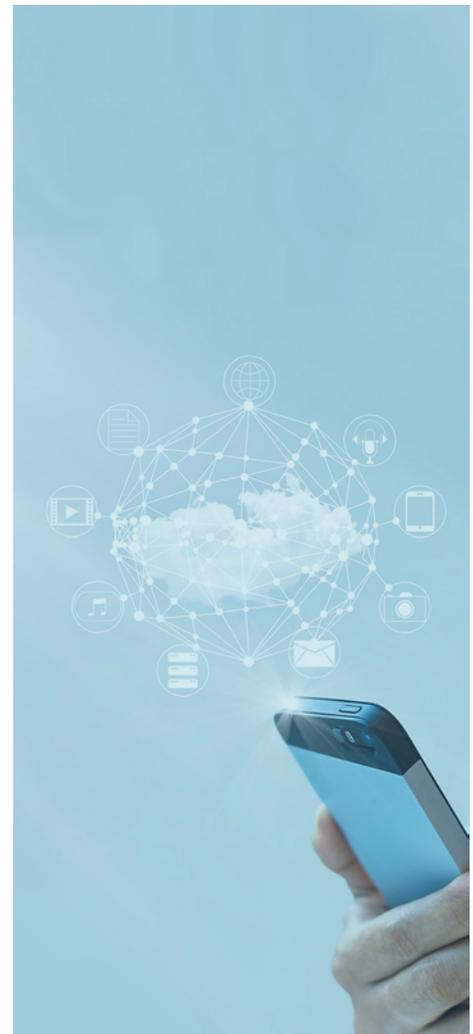
DATA AVAILABILITY

As more and more patient information is exchanged electronically and stored virtually, data availability is just as important as data security. Cloud-based offerings provide high availability and recovery capabilities, eliminating the chances of data loss during unexpected events, such as natural disasters or malware attacks. Here at Halo Communications, for example, our system uptime is 99.99 percent – a level of availability that would be nearly impossible for most health systems to achieve with an on-premises solution.

COST

On-site solutions require significant capital investment, whereas cloud-based solutions typically operate on a subscription model. Cloud-based software as a service solutions take advantage of economies of scale, directly translating to increased business efficiencies, and lower capital equipment and staffing costs for hospitals and health systems.

As a cloud-based system, Halo's platform eliminates the infrastructure and operational costs associated with on-premises solutions. By eliminating the need for time- and labor-intensive on-site installations, health systems reap the benefits of faster implementation and deployment. This enables organizations to focus on their primary goal of delivering high-quality care to patients.



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As DevOps Manager, Matt works with new technologies to continually improve the Halo platform. He integrates security into every step of the process from planning, to product development, to service delivery. He is working at Halo because of its impact on the healthcare industry.