



WHITE PAPER

SharePoint® 2013 in the Cloud

A Winning Combination

Enterprises and IT managers have eagerly awaited the release of SharePoint 2013 and its wealth of tantalizing upgrades and features. The newest version of this popular collaboration-centered platform includes a stronger unified search capability, greater business intelligence, robust social media connectivity, and more app-building functionality than ever before.

Those upgrading to SharePoint 2013 have an ideal opportunity to make another change with measurable business benefits: By moving SharePoint to a cloud hosting environment, they can dramatically reduce the high costs associated with operating on-site data centers.

Making the Move

More and more organizations are finding that a switch to the cloud makes sound business sense. To install, update, and maintain an on-site data center—and provide uptime service levels—drains ever-shrinking financial and human resources.

Migrating SharePoint to the cloud is a simple alternative. But cost and labor savings aren't the only benefits. Managers moving SharePoint to the cloud also realize:

- **Scalability**—The cloud offers increased data storage capacity and processing power. Organizations can easily grow or scale back as needed.
- **Business value**—When IT personnel are freed from the tedious tasks of running a data center, they can devote their talents to transforming the enterprise. They have the time to focus on automating business processes, building revenue-generating apps, and implementing efficiencies tied to strategic goals.
- **Mobility**—Staff members can access critical information stored in the cloud using their own mobile devices without depleting network bandwidth.

Clearing the Air

Cloud hosting is still relatively new, and enterprise IT executives have justified concerns about making the change. Hackers and system vulnerabilities, particularly at “big box” cloud hosting providers, have made headlines in recent months. There are also stories about multi-day outages crippling productivity—prompting questions about reliability and responsiveness.

Fortunately, not all cloud hosting options are created equal. With a privately hosted, business-only cloud storage solution, IT executives can reap the cloud's benefits while minimizing the security and service risks that come with sharing an environment with other “tenants.”

One key difference with the private option is that enterprises keep their data secure behind their own firewalls and maintain full control over data access and transfer protocols. And in the event of a service disruption, private cloud hosts have dedicated teams to respond swiftly, without the delays that can result from working with multiple vendors and owners in a public setting.

Considerable Complexity

Whether hosted in the cloud or in on-site data centers, integrating, optimizing, and maintaining SharePoint 2013 is a complex endeavor. Realizing the application's full business value requires the specialized skills of SharePoint engineers—somewhat of a rare breed in today's tech workforce.

Without an IT department staffed with devoted SharePoint experts, enterprises could face issues associated with:

- **Initial data migration**—At best, data will need reorganization to fit the software's new structure; at worst, it could become corrupted, lost, or useless. In addition, homegrown apps and remnants of prior ad hoc installs can trigger big problems.
- **Security**—Managers must stay vigilant about protecting vital business information during the upgrade.
- **Configuration**—For SharePoint to work, many core technologies must run flawlessly.



- **Bugs and kinks**—Any major upgrade includes hiccups. When IT personnel lack specific SharePoint experience and don't have exposure to the latest version, outages could bring mission-critical work and customer communications to a halt.

The Specialist Option

So how can an enterprise realize the greatest return on its SharePoint investment, along with the many benefits of cloud hosting? By turning to trusted third-party specialists.

SharePoint development specialists have mastered the application's difficulties and know how to quickly configure a solution that meets specific enterprise goals while serving the needs of all users. Similarly, cloud hosting providers familiar with SharePoint intricacies can launch more secure systems and provide the daily maintenance required for lasting optimal results.

Both ICF Ironworks and Rackspace—Microsoft-approved specialists—have been working for years in the Microsoft and SharePoint space and have developed significant resources that allow them to develop and deploy proven solutions more efficiently. The companies work together through the Rackspace Channel Program to offer a unique SharePoint solution on the open cloud.

Specifically, ICF Ironworks helps organizations build award-winning user experiences, automate business processes, improve user productivity, develop SharePoint services, design core components, manage features, and provide governance models over the long term. ICF also offers application-level support, including vital back-up, monitoring, and restoration services.

Meanwhile, Rackspace offers clients private, dedicated, business-only cloud servers via the Infrastructure as a Service model—providing hardware, software, maintenance, and troubleshooting on-demand.

The combined experience, templates, and accelerators from both specialists help organizations moving to the cloud capitalize on many lessons learned that have been incorporated into process-driven solutions.

For example, The ICF Ironworks intranet solution accelerator for SharePoint drastically reduces the time to deploy a highly branded intranet with many "custom" features that greatly enhance overall usability and productivity.

Rackspace has developed standardized architecture guidelines that meet most organizations' goals and integration requirements. By leveraging these architecture templates, Rackspace can maintain performance, enhance security, and reduce the technical design time necessary to integrate with most organizations.





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About ICF Ironworks and Rackspace

ICF Ironworks is a member of the Rackspace Partner Program. ICF Ironworks and Rackspace are Microsoft Gold Certified Providers. ICF Ironworks is one of only 34 U.S. **Microsoft National Systems Integrators** in America. Rackspace was named **Microsoft Hosting Provider** of the Year four times in the past 10 years and employs over 100 Microsoft Certified Professionals. Rackspace is one of only six Application Infrastructure Providers in the world to earn **Microsoft Gold Certified Partner** accreditation.

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About ICF Ironworks

Ironworks Consulting became a part of ICF International on January 1, 2012, combining ICF's strong capabilities of strategic communications and systems integration with Ironworks' expertise in digital and interactive media, mobile technologies, social media, and portal and content management.

ICF Ironworks combines strategy, technology, and design services to assist clients in the development of large-scale, complex technology projects. ICF Ironworks' key service offerings are business and IT alignment, portal and content management, and interactive design. Headquartered in Richmond, VA, ICF Ironworks serves national and global clients from offices in the Washington, DC area; Charlotte and Raleigh, NC; and Minneapolis, MN. For more information, please visit ironworks.com.

About ICF International

Since 1969, ICF International (NASDAQ:ICFI) has been serving government at all levels, major corporations, and multilateral institutions. With more than 60 offices and more than 4,500 employees worldwide, we bring deep domain expertise, problem-solving capabilities, and a results-driven approach to deliver strategic value across the lifecycle of client programs.

At ICF, we partner with clients to conceive and implement solutions and services that protect and improve the quality of life, providing lasting answers to society's most challenging management, technology, and policy issues. As a company and individually, we live this mission, as evidenced by our commitment to sustainability and carbon neutrality, contribution to the global community, and dedication to employee growth.

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