

## Hosted Desktops or Google Apps?

Does the arrival of Google Apps Premier Edition signal the demise of traditional desktop software like Microsoft Office? Although the idea may sound attractive, the answer is likely to be 'no' – for most companies, at least. There are reasons to welcome the introduction of this hosted office applications suite, but there are just as many reasons to proceed with caution. Beware of the limitations before you choose this option.

### Google Apps

Google Apps is a collection of web-based programs and file storage that run in a web browser and are accessed using a PC, laptop, or mobile internet device. The applications include communication tools, productivity tools, a customizable start page and Google Sites. Files and content are stored centrally, and records are kept of different versions of a file for your reference.



### Advantages

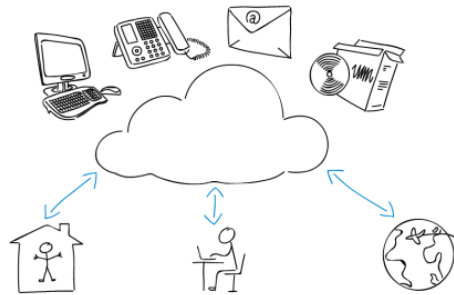
- Easy to use
- Minimizes costs
- Ideal for colleges & universities
- Minimal training required
- Minimal maintenance required
- Highly secure – data stored offsite
- Enables home / mobile working
- 99.9% uptime guarantee (email only)
- Disaster recovery

### Disadvantages

- Partial, limited set of applications
- Advertisements displayed
- No integration with existing applications
- No offline access
- Only credit card payments accepted
- Applications can be updated and changed at any time without warning
- Telephone support only available 5 days per week, and only if the service is down
- Google Docs and Spreadsheets only have a small amount of the MS Office features

### Hosted Desktops

Hosted Desktops are delivered to end users via the internet. They can be accessed using an energy-efficient 'thin client,' or a regular PC, laptop, or mobile device. Hosted Desktops look and act like a traditional PC desktop, but, instead of residing locally, all software and data are housed in state-of-the-art data centers. This provides cost savings, security, resilience, flexibility, and reduced management. Users connect to their desktops from anywhere with an internet connection.



### Advantages

- Easy to use
- Minimizes costs
- Suitable for organizations of all sizes
- No IT experience necessary
- Minimal maintenance required
- Highly secure – data stored offsite
- Enables home / mobile working
- Feature-rich
- Support available 24x7
- Fully scalable – add or remove resources easily so you don't pay for more than you need
- 99.99% uptime guarantee
- Integrated backups and disaster recovery

### Disadvantages

- Dependant on internet connection

## Conclusion

With terms and conditions running to many pages, including clauses that say the company can change the terms at any time (without telling you), it would seem sensible to be very cautious about entrusting any of your data to Google.

Over three years, \$50 per user per year works out to be around half the cost of a single OEM license for Microsoft Office 2007 Small Business Edition – and that provides you with considerably greater functionality. Other packages, such as OpenOffice, still have more features than Google Docs but are completely free.

Perhaps more worrying for potential users is Google's privacy policy and the way it treats personal information. Even at Google's offices, Apps is used internally only as a collaboration add-on to Microsoft Office! All in all, Google Apps lags behind as far as functionality and usability are concerned. If you only deal with plain text, with very little formatting required, you don't mind your documents looking very simple and you can live with all the restrictions and possible breaks in service or loss of confidentiality, then Google Apps could be for you – but in the majority of cases, Hosted Desktops are likely to present a better way to meet your business needs.

Google Apps and other web-based programs are one way to enable anywhere-access for certain kinds of documents, but Hosted Desktops offer much more: Along with increased security and support, Hosted Desktops give you access to your ENTIRE business desktop (documents and applications) from anywhere!