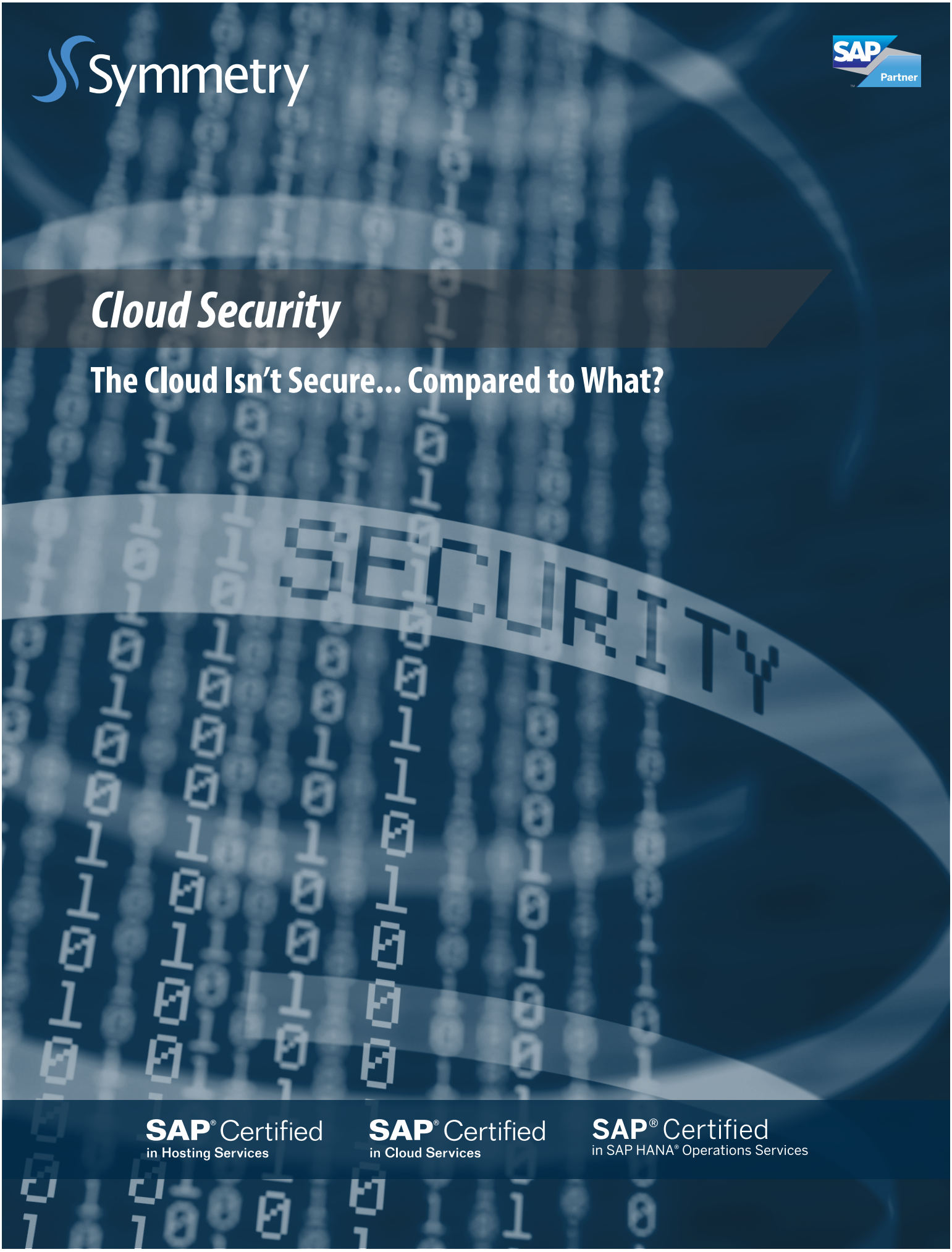
Symmetry

SAP Partner

Cloud Security

The Cloud Isn't Secure... Compared to What?



SAP® Certified
in Hosting Services

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Every emerging technology is usually met with some level of resistance and concern. For many business executives and IT professionals, the idea of moving critical corporate applications and data off premises to a third party Cloud provider is uncomfortable. Recently, a few well publicized incidents have reinforced the perception that Cloud technology is inherently not secure.

Like many cocktail party truisms, the blanket statement that "the Cloud isn't secure" can circumvent the important discussion of the benefits of moving to Cloud technology. Those who are fearful of this new technology tend to frame a Cloud discussion as moving from 'secure' to 'insecure'. However, for many enterprises, internal IT operations are in a poor state. For those businesses, real question should be…

How Secure Are You Right Now?

While there are certainly concerns to be addressed in moving to the Cloud, you should also be asking yourself how safe your current environment is. What is the likelihood of outside people attaining access to your confidential corporate data, financial information or proprietary secrets? What could a disgruntled employee do? These are five levels of security your business should evaluate.

Security Level 1: Physical Security
Physical security seems obvious, but many businesses don't have the private space or means to safeguard their business. Here's what you should be asking yourself: Where are our systems housed? Are there locked doors? Who has access to those rooms? Where are our systems plugged in? Could the plugs be knocked out due to foot traffic? Do we have temperature alarms in place and how can we ensure they work?

Security Level 2: Internal Networks
In-house systems are actually more vulnerable and less expertly managed than most vendor systems. Time and resources often factor into the equation. On top of that, networking equipment may be antiquated and less redundant.

Security Level 3: Operating System and Database
If your system maintenance is behind, your business may be more prone to virus attacks. Systems managed at old revision levels or outdated patch levels can make them more susceptible to failure. In the event that the system does indeed fail, does your business have a strategic recovery plan in place?

Security Level 4: Application
In order to ease usability, many companies allow overly broad access rights in critical ERP systems. For example in SAP®, often users have "SAP-ALL" access rights which allows them to view, change or download critical business information.

Security Level 5: System Administration
Human error is the number one cause of outages. Since the recession, too many businesses have lost their deeply experienced IT professionals, along with the knowledge and lore from decades of managing those environments. Less qualified, undertrained replacements lack the background to make educated decisions and troubleshoot potentially harmful problems.

The Cloud is Real

It's wishful to think Cloud computing is infallible. But, if well managed by a vendor, Cloud solutions are far more reliable and secure than in-house systems. Unlike many internal data center rooms, hosting partners use purpose built data centers that are managed by a certified team of experts. A legitimate Cloud host assures a higher level of security through tightly monitored access, advanced perimeter fencing, installed security cameras, validated entry, locked racks, and well-protected cable and wiring.

SAP-certified Cloud providers employ IT professionals who know what it takes to support your business' particular needs. These specialists optimize system performance and security by continually updating the latest patch levels and testing vulnerability. Additionally, backup and tuning maintenance sustain adequate storage capacity for future growth.

From a functional standpoint, Cloud computing opens the door to endless possibilities. The Cloud gives businesses more flexibility with turnkey operation solutions and the effortless ability to adapt with ever-evolving technology. Users can gain access wherever they are, instead of being tied to their desks. Plus, hosting support reduces resource expenditures and unplanned downtime.

Are You Prepared When Disaster Hits?

In today's fast-paced business world, an unplanned system outage can affect productivity almost immediately. A Disaster Recovery (DR) plan mitigates these risks and protects the interests of shareholders, investors, customers and ultimately the company itself.

Forecast Looks Unstable for the Cloudless

A seemingly small disturbance to your in-house ERP system can turn into a big disaster for your business without warning. Common mishaps, like a kicked cable or a surplus of in-house energy usage, have created nightmares for several highly functioning companies. Here's a true story that could have been prevented had the company relied on a Cloud hosting partner, instead of its in-house data center. For privacy purposes, we'll call the company Cloudless.

Looking to improve productivity, much of Cloudless' upper management was eager and ready to go live with their new ERP system. After months of diligent preparation and testing, IT finally gave an assured thumbs up. However, within just days, the unthinkable happened. IT was alerted to a data corruption error late Wednesday night. While all employees were long gone for the day, the exhausted, lone IT professional was stuck racking his brain on how to fix the problem. Following what seemed like hours, his worst fears were realized: the failed system was non-repairable due to a power outage.

But how could this have happened? Then, he noticed the cleaning woman plugging her vacuum into the very same power strip as the ERP system. Initially dumbfounded her vacuum even worked, the IT professional's wonderment was answered with a sinking understanding: Extra power surges had caused the entire system to fail. Whether it was a vacuum, too many servers up and running or a cubicle space heater, the ERP system had blown earlier and Cloudless was left with no backup plan.

By opting for a DR environment in the Cloud instead of relying on secondary servers, organizations are able to save capital expense and operating costs, while eliminating additional labor hours for their internal IT resources. Additionally, DR systems give your company full protection against natural disasters, power outages, cooling system issues and infrastructure failures. Through a synchronized database and systematic testing, a Cloud DR system will reduce failover time to dynamically allocate your business' crucial information. A Cloud DR system also offers backup during migration projects.

Get the Most from Your Host

When it comes to finding a hosting partner for your Cloud solutions, it's most important to evaluate each outsourcing company's ERP expertise, costs and capabilities. Many DR Cloud hosting services provide you with a server and require your IT resources to assist in setup and maintenance. With Symmetry, you receive 24/7 remote support and expert enterprise-level Cloud operations, whether your needs are long term or short term.

Choosing the right partner could also mean the difference of thousands of dollars. Unlike most hosting vendors, Symmetry provides a fixed monthly rate to ensure your business plan stays within budget. You'll receive SAP full-service coverage for planning, testing, infrastructure, hosting, replication software, maintenance and execution.

Your business needs are unique, and so should your DR plan. Symmetry's knowledgeable Cloud DR solution architects can help assess your requirements, no matter how complex, and create a strategic plan that best protects your operations. Areas evaluated include: potential risks, your maximum acceptable period of data loss, maximum acceptable time to recover, downtime recovery costs and total cost of system operations.

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