

## I. Everyone's a Cloud Service Provider

### 1. Tiptoe into the Clouds?

When I train IT consultants (or write books), my “big theme” is always very practical: How can I help you *make* more money and *keep* more money? When I attend conferences, I'm often frustrated by vendors who only want to talk about “feature, feature, feature.” I want to hear how I make money selling their product.

I'm honestly not trying to sell you anything in this book, but I want to show you how we make money and how I have sold millions of dollars' worth of cloud services over the course of the last 11 years. So, we're going to start talking about the cloud in general and then some of the specific ways that it fits into the SMB (small and medium business) space. After that, we'll cover the specific cloud offering that we put together and how it's evolved over the years. Finally, we'll talk more generally about the kinds of things you can be doing in the cloud.

Along the way, we'll have lots of specifics and “click-by-click” integration information. Be sure to download the supplemental materials! There are some checklists that get into quite a bit of detail about getting clients on board and so forth.

#### Zero-Based Thinking

I would encourage you to have what I call a zero-based view of this. Way back in the 1980s, they had something called *zero-based budgeting*. The idea was to take a fresh look at budgets. Instead of making incremental improvements based on where we are today, the theory went, let's assume we start at zero: Would we create this program? And if so, at what level would we fund it?

That's what I would like you to think about in terms of technology. If you were young, just graduated from high school, and you're trying to figure out what to do, would you create the business you have today? And what would you sell? How would you bundle it? How would you price it? And who would you sell it to?

There's a great product called ClickFunnels, developed by a guy named Russell Brunson. ClickFunnels is a marketing product, and he explains how it works in a book called *DotCom Secrets*.

Brunson says that, when you go out to market something, you should do a couple of things. One of them is you should be *an attractive character* or have an attractive character as your symbol.

Think about a company that has Ronald McDonald or Jack Box (the big ping pong ball head) for Jack in the Box. You should have an attractive character that you can put your marketing around and you should also have an *ideal client*.

Before you spend a nickel on trying to sell anything, it's very important that you know who your client is, because if you sell to the wrong clients you won't sell very much and it'll just frustrate you.

What does that mean for cloud services? Simple: When we talk about what we're going to do going forward, you may be looking at different clients as well as different products. That's an important thing to keep in mind. You may be rebuilding your business from the ground up.

Zero-based thinking . . . Look at everything with fresh eyes!

## Handout: Change Plan

At the end of this book, I've left a few lined pages in case you need them. In the download materials that accompany this book you'll find a Change Plan form. Please take lots of notes as you work through this book.

Make notes of books you want to add to your reading list, products you want to try, services you want to check out, and so forth. Eventually, you need to sit down with the list of to-dos you've put together. Prioritize them and begin taking action!

Print out the Change Plan. Keep it close as you go through this book. Keep notes about things you might want to do, products you might want to try, and so forth. Determine which actions you need to take, and write them in your change plan.

For example, if you need to choose a PSA, actions might include signing up for trials with SolarWinds MSP, ConnectWise, SyncroMSP, and Autotask.

Later, you'll prioritize all the actions you've decided to take. And, of course, you then need to execute the highest priority actions you've identified.

## Opportunity Everywhere!

*“The future is already here.  
It’s just not widely distributed.”  
-- William Gibson*

I love this quote.

It is very true with regard to so much technology today – especially cloud services. The cloud is already here but lots and lots of people don’t know about it. Much of what we talk about here is almost unchanged since we started selling it in 2008. So some people have had this for eleven years.

And others haven’t started looking yet.

Another favorite quote is:

*“The factory of the future will have only two employees,  
a man and a dog.  
The man will be there to feed the dog.  
The dog will be there to keep the man from touching  
the equipment.”  
-- Warren Bennis*

We are getting close to this with robotics and driverless cars.

My daughter is in her mid-twenties. Her children will never learn to drive a car. I probably own the last car I'm going to own. My current car will be ten years old in 2025. Between driverless cars, Uber, and Lyft, why would I invest in another? I can rent a car when I go someplace or there'll be an app and a car will magically show up.

We are in an era where things are moving very fast and there's a dizzying amount of change. For example, look at all the light bulbs in an average office building or hotel. All of those lights are going to be replaced with smart LEDs. Soon.

And as TCP/IP becomes dominant in security, lighting, signage, business machines, and everything else, *you will have more opportunity in the next 10 years than the last 50 years*. It is a truly great time to be in a technology business!

But you can't think of it in terms of *servers*. Servers are not the answer. They probably haven't been for a while, but again, that knowledge isn't widely distributed.

There will always be a need for certain older technologies, but right now your opportunities are exploding. Think about IoT – the Internet of Things. Very soon, every light bulb in most office buildings will have an address and need to be monitored. Does that fit in your business model? It should!

Even the way we monitor security for IoT will be different. We won't look at each individual bulb and say, "Oh, this bulb at that address is throwing an alert." That would be impossible with tens of thousands (or hundreds of thousands) of devices. We're going to be looking at the entire pattern of all the traffic and then seeing when something is different. Then engineers can identify a problem. It's not because the memory on the server reached X%: It's because a pattern emerged that isn't recognized in the flow of data.

If you expand your knowledge and skillset to LED and other new technologies, your opportunities will explode.

The good news is that every one of those kinds of technologies is moving toward TCP/IP. So anyone who wants to move to the newer technologies will have to hire network engineers to get to the next level. (I assume TCP/IP means IPv6. Newer technicians will assume that. Older techs better get used to it.)

As a technology consultant, you have to step up and learn new technologies. If you don't, the opposition will hire network engineers and learn your technology. You have the advantage because you already master the networking protocols. But you can't rest on that. You need to keep learning.

In my opinion, it's all about opportunity, and I don't think we have any threats going forward. I really believe that everybody reading this book has an explosion of opportunities, and you have to decide what you're going to focus on to make money in the next few years. Someone is going to master the new technologies and make a lot of money. It's yours if you want it.

### **What is The Cloud? What is Not The Cloud?**

So, what constitutes "The cloud?"

Nicholas Carr wrote a great book called *The Big Switch*. He talks about the evolution of electricity and how it's analogous to the evolution of the cloud. There was a time when, if you wanted electricity, you had to generate your own.

If you were on a farm, you had to have a windmill or you had to be near a river so that you could turn a water wheel and generate electricity to run your equipment. If you were in the big city, you wanted to be within the three-block area where Edison could get power to your building, or you had a power station in the basement.

Over time, technology evolved to have centralized ways that you could buy electricity and then the generators just moved somewhere else. With the distribution of AC (alternating current), electricity could be generated hundreds of miles away.

Today, we plug something into the wall and electricity is just there. We pay for it as we need it, turn it on when we need it, turn it off when we don't need it.

The Internet became the same way. And, he argues, the cloud became the same way. It used to be that if you wanted storage, you bought a storage device. And if you wanted computing capacity, you bought a server and you bought processors. But we've evolved from there.

My favorite example of something moving to the cloud is voicemail. Voicemail used to be an answering machine that was huge, and it had a reel-to-reel tape. Then the machine got smaller and smaller, and the tape got smaller and smaller. Eventually, the tape disappeared and it was digital. Then voicemail was built into the phone; and then it became built into the wall and the phone company sold you voicemail.

Today you have voicemail on every phone number. You probably have voicemail boxes that you never answer or look at, or ever use, because it's just included with the phone service and you don't need it. But it's there all the time.

And here the best part: You don't know where your voicemail is stored. You don't know what server it's on, how big the hard drives are, how much memory it has, or whether it's even backed up.

You don't know whether it's on redundant systems. You might assume that you know what country it's in, but you don't really know that.

It's just voicemail. It's just there. It's just on. It just works.

That's what technology needs to become for all businesses. It's just there; it just works. NOT "It's in that rack that I have to air-condition."

You need to let the client stop worrying that hard drives will get too old and stop spinning. Technology needs to *just be there*, just be secure, and just work.

When you talk about cloud services, you are probably the only one that needs to know where that stuff actually is. Your clients don't need to know where it is. They don't care, as long as they look you in the eye and say, "I'm going to sign this piece of paper because I trust you. You're taking care of my network."

You have to do the due diligence to sell the right thing, but they don't really know or care where that stuff is. They just want it to work.

Consider the current epidemic of ransomware. Your clients just want to look at you and say, "Is it going to be okay? Did you take care of us before this happened so that we're either not affected or we're not as affected as we might otherwise be?"

You need to make good choices with email, cloud services, storage, backup, antivirus, spam filtering, and everything else that goes into a comprehensive offering.

Yes, it's true that "The Cloud" is just someone else's computer. But quite realistically, we need to take full advantage of fully hosted services and let that "someone else" worry about the servers.

For your clients, The Cloud is simply technology that works all the time, and that is purchased as a service. It allows them to reduce capital expenditures but requires them to increase operating expenses.

YOU have to make sure you sell the right thing. That means you have to verify that you've chosen good partners, that the services are secure, and that downtime is as low as humanly possible. As we'll talk about later in the book, you are also responsible for all the configurations and documentation. You need to make the client feel that it's "safe" to stop worrying and just enjoy using cloud services.



### **A Few Key Take-Aways:**

- “The future is already here. It’s just not widely distributed.”  
– William Gibson
- You don’t know (or care) where your voicemail is.
- Clients don’t care about The Cloud. They just want their stuff to work.

### **Additional Resources to Explore**

- *DotCom Secrets* by Russell Brunson. See also [ClickFunnels.com](http://ClickFunnels.com)
- *The Big Switch* by Nicholas Carr.