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**Title: Cloud-Based CRM Solutions are Taking Over and Benefitting Fundraisers**

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[Android](#) versus [iPhone](#); PC versus [Mac](#); [Prius](#) versus [Porsche](#) —there's always a decision to be made, but what's the basis of that decision? Cost? Convenience? Functionality? Design? Technology? Green-ness? Possibly a combination of all of the above? In the world of customer relationship management or fundraising software, you face a similar choice: cloud versus on-premise.

Statistically, the chances are that the CRM solution you use is installed on a server somewhere in your organization's IT infrastructure — otherwise known as an on-premise solution. That will change. The tide is turning toward cloud- or Software-as-a-Service-based solutions. But what is driving that change, and what difference does it make to fundraisers?

On the face of it, CRM solutions in the cloud are the same as any on-premise solution, except they are hosted in a data center. But true cloud solutions can provide technology, economic and business benefits over the traditional on-premise solutions. The combination of these benefits is driving people to cloud-based solutions, and we will see them all over the next few months. But first, what is the technology case for cloud?

**Ease of use**

For many years, the software business has been making software that is endlessly configurable and difficult to understand without first attending training courses and reading forests of user guides — not to mention expensive. On behalf of the software business, I apologize, but the good news is that cloud solutions mean we are entering the next generation of software applications. One of [Steve Jobs'](#) lasting legacies will be software that puts usability before complexity: software that doesn't require you to spend long hours learning how to use it. Anyone who's used an iPhone knows that "it just works." Similarly, today's CRM user doesn't want to know how it works, just that it works.

**Integration**

It's far easier to integrate your CRM with online fundraising tools, the website, payment gateways, address verification services and social media when it's in the cloud. Solutions designed for the cloud usually have what's called an [application program interface](#) (API), which essentially is an integration kit for the software. It enables other Web-based services to interact with your database. Other technical terms you may hear are [service oriented architecture](#) (SOA) and Web services, which are essentially the same thing as an API.

Gone are the days of importing and exporting data — the updates are dynamic. True, you can achieve this with an on-premise solution. But what happens when your website is dependent for some of its functions on the availability of your CRM solution, which is in your office on little more than a domestic Internet connection? It's just better to have it all in the cloud — then the connection hassles belong to someone else.

### **Easier implementation and updates**

If you've been through the implementation of an on-premise CRM solution, you realize the inconvenience of having a new application loaded onto your computer, the associated compatibility challenges when you find out your anti-virus doesn't agree with it and so on. Because the software is in the cloud as well as the database, all you should need for a cloud-based solution is your Web browser. And when the vendor comes up with an update, it's applied once so everyone in your organization immediately gets the benefit.

### **Scalability**

Lastly, the technology resources in the cloud are virtually limitless. So if you plan to run a campaign that will result in people flocking to your website to register and make donations, you don't have to worry if it's in the cloud because capacity in the cloud is elastic.

Cloud-based CRM solutions are beginning to take over, and they provide many benefits for organizations of any size. Now is the time to ask yourself if a cloud-based CRM solution is right for you.