

Streamlining *security*

SJA Editor Victoria Hanscomb speaks with Adam Benson, Vice President of Customer Operations at Salient Systems about the benefits of the cloud

Can you define the term “cloud-based systems”?

At one end of the spectrum, the cloud can be where you operate all the various parts of a security system. This includes the storage, viewing and managing of every solution throughout an ecosystem. However, this is quite an extreme example and might not be appropriate for all organizations.

Instead, the cloud can also mean taking individual parts of a system and hosting only these parts in the cloud. A lot of people are increasingly turning to the option of hybrid storage, where the cloud is used for tailored purposes, with the rest of their solutions on premise.

What are the advantages of using the cloud?

Broadly speaking, one of the biggest benefits of using cloud-based systems for physical security is that it eases the maintenance, management and update of solutions for integrators, who do not have to be on site to carry out work.

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If you look at the rate at which a lot of companies take to update or refresh their technologies, it becomes clear how this remote work could benefit them. With someone else offsite making sure that software is patched and maintained, it frees up personnel to focus on other tasks and eliminates the lag in adopting new features, also ensuring that organizations remain as secure as possible.

Another advantage is that for a lot of organizations, digital security is not a silo, it's a team sport. They have to work with their local police department and other first responders. There might be additional organizations they work with, but the cloud provides the ability to grant certain permissions or access, especially during an emergency.

Lastly, the cloud helps to streamline workflows. For example, a store manager may want to check on their location after hours. By hosting their video streams on the cloud, the manager can log into their system from anywhere and check

this with ease. That can help to dramatically improve physical security.

What kind of organizations are choosing cloud-based systems?

The adoption and relevance of the cloud varies quite a bit by market segment. One aspect to highlight is that if a company is not hosting all of the infrastructure to run their security solution, then someone else is. This requires a high degree of trust, because it means that the cloud provider is the one hosting security footage or the ability to lock and unlock access.

We've had some customers who are more timid about moving everything to the cloud. They tend to be more measured about what they want, for example, only wanting a specific remote access use case in the cloud, but with everything else on premise.

However, where we have seen the cloud becoming a lot more popular is in the small to medium ▶

size business (SMB) space. A local company that might need two weeks' worth of footage may not have the capacity to manage all of that recording, so a completely cloud-based solution could be the answer.

Then there's everything in between. We've seen a lot of adoption from schools, retailers, even some banks where for years, these organizations have done everything on premise. They certainly have the personnel and the talent. However, for them, it's a case of making it easy to share information with first responders.

This reinforces the idea of security as a team sport, and these mid-sized market segments are really seeing a growing interest in hybrid cloud deployments. These high schools, local clinics or hospitals, have a lot of existing infrastructure that they're happy with, but they just need the cloud to ease some of their issues and take the burden off their teams.

What would you say to someone unsure of adopting cloud-based systems?

Often the hesitancy surrounding cloud systems comes from the idea that the organization doesn't own their data and is reliant on another organization.

There's a real fear over a lack of control. Large enterprises are



Adam Benson
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generally more conservative about this on average, as they also tend to have the resources to keep everything on premise. However, they ask very legitimate questions like 'How are you protecting my data?', 'Who has access to my data?' and 'Is there a back door into my account?'

I would certainly encourage curiosity around these things, because at the end of the day, you need to find the provider that suits you best.

If I had any piece of advice to give, it would be to stay cloud curious. There are some people who just want to dip their toes into the cloud and I'd say that's a very healthy place to be.

I recommend that customers consider the biggest problems or the biggest improvements they would like to make. Very often, these can be addressed faster, easier and cheaper with the cloud. That might be the reason to then say, I will now use the cloud to share my video with the local police department.

How do you think cloud-based systems will evolve?

At the moment, we're in the early phases of the cloud and I think generally as a market, the adoption rates are very healthy, but there's still a lot of people in that 'cloud curious' category.

I think there's going to be some pretty remarkable growth over the coming years, but I also think we'll see increasing levels of hybrid cloud adoption. This could be applied

just for evidence storage or remote management, or maybe maintenance and license management.

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Major providers are beginning to take a more balanced approach, so it's not all or nothing. As a result, there will be more suites of options available, where it's easier to customize the solution to their needs.

At the end of the day, it's about flexibility and the rise of hybrid cloud is really catering to this requirement.

What's one thing you'd like our readers to walk away with from this article?

The cloud represents a really powerful new tool that provides a lot of organizations with the ability to solve some of their problems more effectively. It's very exciting to see where it will take the industry next, as it is such an enabling technology. ■