Elevate Your Retail Business

10 questions to reveal if the cloud is right for you

EPICOR.

What's Inside

Choose Your Altitude

As recently as 10 years ago, most organizations didn't have the option of deploying their retail business software in the cloud. In that time, technologies have matured, broadband reliability has dramatically improved, and vendors have designed business software to be as easy and convenient as the phone and tablet apps they use for fun.

That means that where you deploy your software—in the cloud or on premises—is now a legitimate and important choice. In other words, it's time to choose your altitude.

This eBook will help you dive in into that question. First, though, let's get clear on the term "cloud."

When we use the cloud, we use technology over the Internet. Most of us do this every day—when we check social media, traffic, or mapping apps on our mobile phones or in web browsers. When we say "cloud solution," we mean:

▶ Software tools, apps, features, and capabilities designed for organizations—in our case, retailers—to manage their business

▶ Software installed on servers in secure data centers—not at your business location

▶ A system where you and your team can use all the tools and capabilities through a web browser and just about any device

▶ Software that you don't own and don't manage—instead, you pay a predictable monthly subscription fee
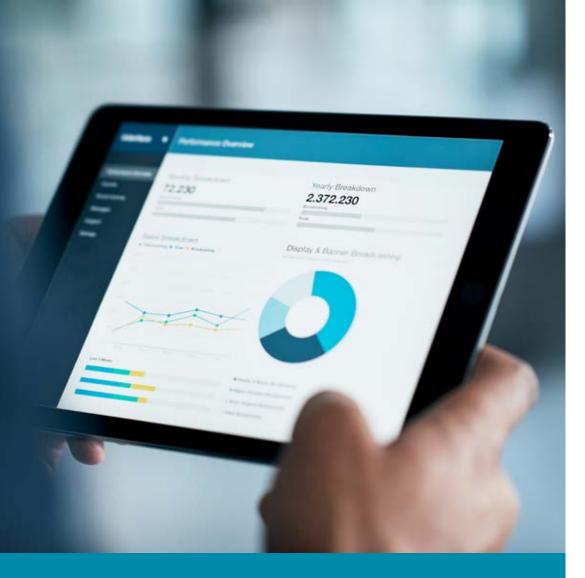
Now that we're clear on cloud, let's figure out if it's the right fit for your retail organization.

Cloud solutions help retailers do all the things traditional installed-at-your-business solutions let retailers do.

The difference is you don't buy, install, or maintain the software—someone else does.

Would that work for your organization? Would it be the better choice?

Let's find out.

Cloud or Not— 10 Questions to Consider

The business questions

1. What are we in business for?

Whatever you offer to your customers—hardware, donated goods/thrift items, outdoor sports equipment, garden or pet supplies, whatever—you're doing it for a reason. It might be to make a profit, or it might be to help the community.

You've got goals. That's one of the reasons you need retail technology. Of course, that doesn't mean you're doing retail for the joy of managing retail technology. Managing technology requires IT resources that you may not have or would likely prefer to focus on more strategic tasks.

Of course, technology is critically important, but it's just a tool. If you're like most retailers, it's all about the customer and the sale so you can meet your goals.

In that case, look upward. The cloud likely makes more sense, because:

▶ It removes all those IT distractions

▶ It gives your team better tools to do what they do best—help customers and move merchandise

2. Do we want to grow?

Assuming you want your volumes and revenues to grow, your technology will have to support it. That's more investment and more work for your team—but if your solution is in the cloud, it can expand effortlessly to fit your needs.

Epicor can help.

At Epicor, we've been helping thousands of retailers face these challenges for more than 45 years. Many use our powerful on-premises software solutions, but for some, our cloud solutions are a better fit.

Now, we're ready to help you.

The tech team question

3. How much technology do we want to manage?

If your organization has IT people who like doing the following:

▶ Installing and updating third-party software and the underlying server software needed to run it

▶ Keeping server software and hardware running smoothly, and chasing down any problems

▶ Applying security updates

▶ Adding more computing capacity every time your volumes increase

▶ Helping users keep track of multiple apps on multiple types of mobile devices, making sure everyone has the right version, etc.

If they have time do all these tasks—and if they prefer these tasks—then an on-premises retail management solution might be right for your business.

Otherwise, if you're short on IT resources or you would rather focus on what's unique in your organization, then look upward. The cloud likely makes more sense for you, because a cloud retail management solution eliminates most of those IT distractions and the costs and risks that go with them.

The getting-through-the-day questions

4. How much complexity do you and your team want to take on every day?

Even the most straightforward retail operations have daily challenges. Point of sale (POS), inventory and purchasing, and merchandising and pricing all present their own difficulties. That doesn't even cover customers—who must be pampered, cajoled, rewarded, and lured back again and again. That takes the right kind of promotion and loyalty-building tools.

The list goes on, but you get the idea—there's plenty to do every day. It's time-consuming. Errors happen. Important decisions get made. New staff face learning curves. Experienced staff want to do more and learn more.

On-premises retail solutions certainly address these tasks. Though, cloud solutions offer some advantages to organizations that want to work more quickly, effectively, and accurately.

▶ Because they're generally newer, cloud solutions better reflect the way businesses work today—and the way users like to work today.

▶ Because they're accessed through browsers, cloud solutions look and work about the same on any device—making them easier to learn and use.

▶ Retail staff move around—to the aisles, the warehouse, and even to customer locations. Mobile tools are essential, and cloud solutions simply do a better job at enabling the mobile side of retail.

▶ When things change, cloud software updates are automatic and immediate. Each time a user logs into a cloud solution, they're seeing the latest and greatest features and refinements.

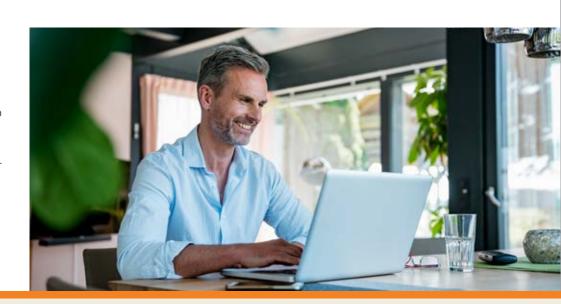**5. How do you feel about interruptions?**

Technology hardware—and the sophisticated software that keeps it running—suffers hiccups from time to time. Sometimes it's the weather. Other times, it's simply an old part that fails to keep up. For your organization, that can spell downtime. Interruptions like this can disappoint customers and trigger headaches and frustration for your team.
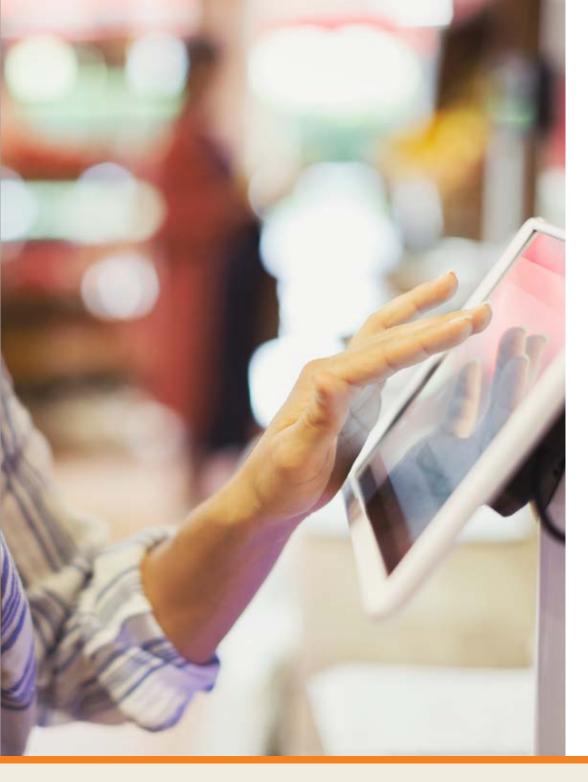
Here, cloud solutions have some advantages. They run every process and store every piece of data with backups—and they have professionals on hand 24/7 to quickly clear up any issues that arise. With well-managed cloud solutions, your risk of downtime is dramatically reduced.

6. Does your team ever need—or want—to work remotely?

With the cloud, if you've got an Internet connection, you can work. You can give your employees the ability to produce wherever they happen to be. They can enjoy the work-life balance that suits them, and you can enjoy greater loyalty and output.

Of course, this also means that you can access your system at any time and from anywhere to effectively and efficiently drive success across your organization.

The finance questions

7. How much capital do you want to tie up?

On-premises retail solutions are purchased, which usually means a hefty upfront cost and ongoing expenses for upkeep. Cloud solutions come with low, predictable monthly subscription fees. These fees are based on the number of users and certain other variables.
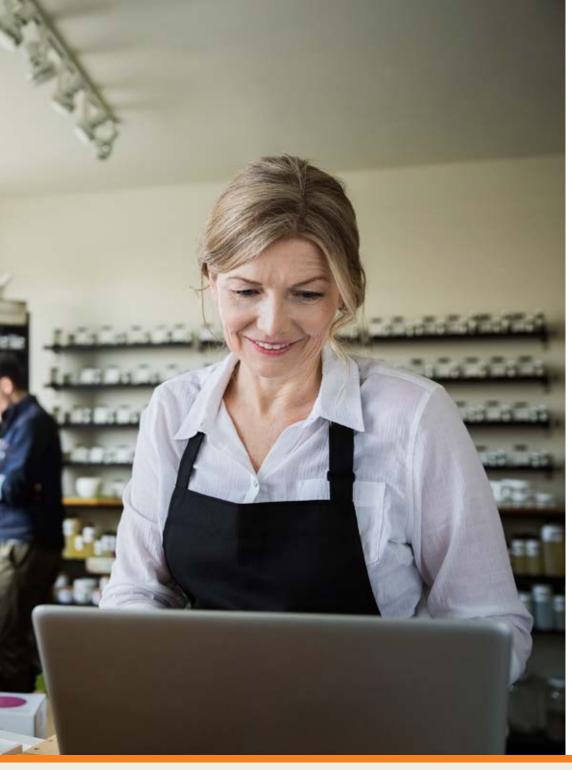
8. How long can you afford to wait for a technology investment to pay off?

This is yet another cloud advantage. Cloud solutions can be deployed, launched, and in use in a fraction of the time required for on-premises technology. Once again, these modern systems also tend to be easier to learn, so you start seeing value right away. You won't have to wait months to complete hardware and software installations, set up your network, and train your staff.

9. What long-term financial benefits do you want from your technology?

All software evolves, and it's constantly improving. With cloud solutions, real-time updates mean you don't have to wait for new capabilities that can help you work faster, track and boost profits, or improve customer service. Updates are regular and frequent. This save both dollars and "softer" costs associated with waiting to take advantage of new features.

10. Can cloud solutions lower your overall costs?

Typically, lower upfront costs, predictable monthly subscription costs, faster deployment times, and ongoing reduced IT costs mean a lower total cost of ownership for cloud retail solutions. Add to that the extended value your IT team can bring by focusing on more strategic work, and you can see how the cost savings start to stack up.

Recap

How did you do?

Let's take a quick look at your answers. Do these statements sound familiar?

▶ We want to focus on retailing, our customers, and our goals. The fewer distractions, the better—and the easier it is to use retail technology, the better.

▶ We think we might want to grow. At least, we don't want anything holding us back.

▶ Given a choice, we'd rather focus the IT resources we have on strategic efforts—not mundane tasks. If we can increase security and reduce risk, that's even better.

▶ We want to streamline, simplify, collaborate, and stay mobile. That is, we want it to be easier to serve customers and grow our team.

▶ Yes, we want the flexibility to log in, get things done, and make smart decisions from just about anywhere.

▶ Capital investments are fine, but we'd rather not make a huge one when there's a lower-cost alternative.

▶ When we get new technology, we want to use it sooner, not later—both at the beginning and whenever enhancements come out.

▶ We want to keep costs lower while getting the retail technology solution that serves us best.

If this sounds like you, then a cloud-based retail management solution is the choice for your business.

Things Are Looking Up

If you're like so many organizations today, the upside for cloud-based retail technology is significant. Since these solutions are becoming more capable every day, it makes sense to investigate them thoroughly when you're looking to elevate your retail operation.

The Epicor Retail Cloud system is a shining example of these solutions, and we would love to show you how it works.

To learn more—and see how easy it is to get started—just contact your Epicor representative. We look forward to serving you!

Epicor Is in the Cloud.

At Epicor, we've been helping retailers succeed and grow for more than 45 years, so we know retail. With a large and growing family of cloud solutions already serving hundreds of organizations, we know how to make cloud technology work for you. To elevate your retail operation with cloud technology, look to Epicor.

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software designed to fit the precise needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 45 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements are built into every solution—in the cloud or on premises. With this deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions dramatically improve performance and profitability while easing complexity so you can focus on growth.

For more information, connect with Epicor or visit www.epicor.com.

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