

Intuit Pushes Deeper Into Cloud - the safest place for data

Source: Michael Block, CPA, BlockTax QuickBooks

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This Intuit Pushes Deeper Into Cloud story relates to Intuit Connected Services and QuickBooks Add-ons, which integrate with QuickBooks. Despite security and reliability scare stories. BlockTax QuickBooks is making this the safest place for data.

Intuit publishes the Industry leading QuickBooks, Quicken and TurboTax programs. The Intuit Pushes Deeper Into Cloud effort relates to significant recent announcements affecting further Intuit moves in cloud computing (Software as a Service or SaaS). Google, SalesForce, Amazon and Microsoft are making similar efforts. Intuit is doing so despite contrary security scare stories, since the QuickBooks SaaS online cloud is the safest place for data.

QuickBooks recently got a shocking 94.2% of all small business accounting program sales at retail, despite efforts by #2 Peachtree, #3 Microsoft and many other companies. Intuit also now has 50,000 local accountants and bookkeepers registered as ProAdvisors. This means there are more QuickBooks ProAdvisors than there are paid users of most small business accounting programs. Mike Block, a Fort Lauderdale QuickBooks CPA, recently found only two New York City Microsoft Accounting advisors. Intuit recently further announced that it was opening its easily programmed QuickBase web database, which half of Fortune 500 companies use, to QuickBooks and QuickBooks add-ons. Finally, Intuit announced it would offer various Intuit Connected Services to integrate with QuickBooks.

Mike Block has many years of computer management and security experience. He finds it very sad when he sees what he calls "sensationalized head-in-the sand prejudice" about privacy and reliability in "the safest place for data: the online home of cloud computing." To Block, this is simply a case of relative risk, as no one should consider the risk or reliability of online data without evaluating alternatives.

Many security experts feel personal computers are one of the least secure places for data. Fire, flood, user accidents or malicious acts, storms, thefts, electrical surges, hacking and program failures (some due to insecure, incompatible and less tested programs) all affect personal computers. The lack of adequate backup often destroys businesses, so this is not news. One industry saying is that there is only one real guarantee for local computers. "They will fail, often at the worst possible time, destroying all data not backed up." Personal computers also almost always lack the virtual images that quickly reset programs, program preferences and data in "the safest place for data."

Block feels a simple relative risk analysis shows that cloud computing has the safest place for data. Online systems often use better computers, facilities, power protection and security. Online anti-virus, anti-spyware and backup programs are usually better and run far more often. New online programs also tend to have more secure designs and run with policies that limit or prohibit many programs that might compromise security and reliability. The newer programs and services also are more likely to run in a connected or offline mode, with fast batch updates when reconnected. Security professionals test and maintain programs and systems. Offsite storage of extra backups is the rule, not the exception. 256 bit National Security Agency encryption may be more common among online QuickBooks hosting companies than it is for banks, while local computer data is rarely protected by effective passwords or encryption. Compare this to the 128 bit encryption of online bank and credit card records most consumers have had for many years.

QuickBooks, and the QuickBooks add-ons and services that extend its functions, can run much more

securely and reliably if they are online under a QuickBooks Terminal Server (a Microsoft, Citrix or Linux server running QuickBooks and other programs in terminal server mode). They do so because they generally keep computer programs and data on the same computer. Extensive instructions and data do not clutter networks, as they do when local computers otherwise run programs with data on servers. With QuickBooks terminal server only keystrokes go to server computers and little more than screen changes come back.

Linux, PC and Mac users can all use a QuickBooks Terminal Server. This lets Linux users effectively run "QuickBooks on a Linux Desktop." It avoids the need for expensive local systems, frequent updates and spending lots of time and money on spyware and virus checking. QuickBooks Terminal Servers also increasingly replicate equipment and services, to further increase reliability, with far more duplicate drives, power supplies, computers and utilities than most local computer users have. The online cloud will be even more reliable if users can quickly take a portable out of any area without utility service, especially if their programs and data are all on line.

Finally, Intuit has long had a far better record on security than most banks and credit card companies. However, for ultimate cloud computing security and reliability, users should run QuickBooks, QuickBooks Add-ons and other programs on a multi-location replicated or co-located QuickBooks Terminal Server. These systems do not need computer experts as users when BlockTax QuickBooks personnel make them easy. They host QuickBooks Terminal Server for as little as \$29 per user per month, half the price some charge, with fast 24/7 support. They also can support local or remote QuickBooks Terminal Servers with many QuickBooks Add-ons, Intuit Connected Services and other programs, on the safest place for data.

Block feels this is why news stories now only treat a few rare cloud system failures as newsworthy. Further improvements in design and replication should soon make effective failures almost non-existent.

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Michael Block (BlockTax QuickBooks) is a very independent Fort Lauderdale CPA. He has long been famous for QuickBooks, QuickBooks pre-release tests, QuickBooks Add-ons and writing about them. He often supports Intuit, publisher of QuickBooks, However, he was the main reason Intuit dropped a payroll tax change, which may have cost it around \$30 million. He became friends with Intuit CEOs, who wrote, "Keep raising hell when Intuit does something wrong" and "You're fantastic Mike, absolutely fantastic!"

This led to the <http://quickbooksgroup.com/BlockTaxBlog/> on Intuit's QuickBooks Community site. Block was the subject of the September 2007 Accounting Technology cover story and got in-book credit for his technical review of QuickBooks 2008 for Dummies. Now he and his assistants are helping make QuickBooks Terminal Server and QuickBooks Add-ons faster, easy and less expensive for hundreds of users.

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