

The personal cloud - taking digital storage to new heights

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The way we work and play has evolved dramatically over the past decade. Tennis racquets and cricket bats have been replaced by tablets and smartphone devices. Stacks of CDs have become MP3 libraries. Movies have transformed from piles of tapes or watching what was on television to on-demand download and content streaming. This expanding digital universe has not only revolutionised our everyday lives, it has also created massive demand for content storage.

While hard drives have become increasingly larger to accommodate this growth, there is also a need to be able to access and share content from any device at any time, no matter where the user is. Public cloud services are one solution, but many users have concerns about the security and privacy of their content on such a platform. The personal cloud has emerged as the solution to this challenge, offering a private central storage device that enables users to store and access all of their content, from a multitude of different devices, regardless of geographical location, while ensuring this content remains secure and in complete control of the user.

Increased awareness and adoption of cloud services

The rapid adoption of mobile devices including smartphones and tablets, the need to be able to access this content from different devices, as well as the sheer volume at which content is created and must be stored. These are all factors driving the increased awareness and adoption of cloud services. In fact, the number of connected devices owned in each household is increasing dramatically and research firm Gartner estimates that the average household will own approximately 3.3 terabytes (TB) of digital content by 2016.

However, while public cloud platforms offer a solution to the centralised storage and access of content, security remains a concern for many users. Incidents of these platforms being hacked or otherwise compromised are not uncommon and many users require a solution that provides not only the centralised storage and access, but also complete control over their digital lives.

A personal cloud storage solution is the easiest, most secure and most affordable way for users to have the best of both worlds - access and security. Personal cloud storage allows users to keep media and files safe at home on their own private physical drive and then access them over the internet with any PC or Mac computer or on tablets and smartphones through mobile apps. This enables families to connect, share, sync, and back up numerous mobile devices and computers in their household, simplifying the complex issue of organising digital files across various devices so that users can enjoy their digital videos, photos and music on all of their devices.

Photographs, videos, music and important documents can now be centralised into one secure place on the home network

and accessed from anywhere on any device. Aside from delivering centralised storage for connected computers, personal cloud solutions, through purpose-built mobile apps, offer direct file uploads from mobile devices. This means that important files and videos can be safely moved to the personal cloud, freeing up valuable space on users' tablets and smartphones.

Integration between the personal cloud and public cloud solutions like Dropbox, Google Drive and Skydrive also allows users to connect these and other accounts to their personal cloud. Files can then be easily transferred between the different solutions, freeing up space on public cloud platforms to ensure users need never pay for additional storage space, and ensuring users retain complete control over their personal data. In addition, as well as providing a central repository for storage and access of media, personal cloud solutions can perform a dual role as a back-up device for computers and digital files, protecting data and content.

The personal cloud offers a number of benefits

For creative professionals and "prosumers", the personal cloud offers a number of benefits. Large capacities of up to 4TB provide enough space for storing large high-definition files, whilst enabling the quick and easy access, storage and sharing on the go, so often required in these fields. Users now have their work at the fingertips no matter where they go.

For the Small to Medium Business (SMB) the personal cloud offers an effective way of protecting sensitive data while ensuring accessibility. SMBs can use a combination of personal and public cloud storage not only for primary storage, but also to replicate their data in a secure manner, rather than creating a simple back-up, thereby adding redundancy and reducing risk. The personal cloud enables the SMB to secure data from unauthorised access while still allowing for this information to be shared between authorised users.

Personal cloud storage is fast becoming the new standard, allowing users to keep media and files safe at home or in their office on their own physical drive and then access this information over the Internet with any of a number of devices. Users of today demand to be able to do more with their content without losing control, and the personal cloud has arisen to meet this demand head on.

ABOUT ANAMIKA BUDREE

I am brand sales manager at WD South Africa. WD, a Western Digital company, is a long time innovator and storage industry leader. As a storage technology pacesetter, the company produces reliable, high-performance hard disk drives and solid state drives. These drives are deployed by OEMs and integrators in desktop and mobile computers, enterprise computing systems, embedded systems and consumer electronics applications, as well as by the company in providing its own storage products.

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