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Managing a facility's assets can be complex. At the heart of your maintenance operations, you likely run specialized maintenance management software such as a CMMS (Computer Maintenance Management System) or EAM (Enterprise Asset Management software). Today, these legacy programs are proven, invaluable tools for managing a tight ship of daily maintenance activities.

Recent technology leaps within CMMS/EAM have shifted these legacy programs into the Cloud Computing space—*something that should come as welcome news within facilities management* . Shifting to the Cloud means that the CMMS/EAM you count on becomes markedly more valuable.

Think of Cloud Computing as an application being run over the Internet via a simple Web browser, Web book or smart pad—*and you may already have been using it.* (Have a Hotmail account, a Facebook page or do your banking online? These are all examples of Cloud Computing).

Using CMMS/EAM in the Cloud eliminates the costs associated with purchasing expensive software and hardware. Waiting long periods of time for IT to schedule deployment and relying on IT staff to manage a large database and IT infrastructure are things of the past. Cloud Computing provides the rich maintenance-centric software functionality while eliminating the heavy and expensive IT distractions of legacy software solutions.

Typically, Cloud CMMS/EAM offerings will run month-to-month—*which makes them cash-flow friendly and lowers the overall cost of ownership*
. Remember that IT infrastructure and potentially nasty details of deployment are being moved

to the Cloud and, thus, are being managed by the CMMS/EAM-development company. This shift allows maintenance workers to focus on delivering a well-managed facility instead of trying to avoid technology hurdles and speed bumps.

Leaders in Cloud CMMS/EAM ensure that transactions are secure by encrypting all data transactions across the Internet. This is achieved using Secured Sockets Layer protocol (SSL) and other encryption technology (the same technology used by online credit-card companies, banks and even the military). Large, modern enterprise datacenters with specific security standards, ensured by third-party audits such as SAS 70®, hold your data, so data maintenance, data recovery and disaster recovery are guaranteed processes that protect your investment. Maintenance management via a Web application requires both modes of security to ensure end-to-end integrity and offer a solid alternative to legacy CMMS/EAM.

In the Cloud model, an extremely large volume of maintenance data is stored in a datacenter that is designed to be agile, increasing storage on demand, enhancing configurations and allowing for upgrading or customizing—typically within minutes, not weeks. Collaboration and the flexibility to scale up and down quickly, all within a robustly secure environment, is a hugely compelling factor in considering the Cloud model.

As a maintenance manager, you should find the elimination of concern and costs associated with technical details a welcome change. You can rest easy knowing your data is safe within an SAS 70 datacenter. Budget-friendly payment options avoid capital expenditure and simply don't add up to enterprise-level spends. Moreover, as your needs change, it won't be necessary to pull in local IT staff. The Cloud solution provider handles all configuration, updates and upgrades, essentially becoming your IT team. **MT**

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The opinions expressed in this Viewpoint section are those of the author, and don't necessarily reflect those of the staff and management of Maintenance Technology magazine.