

Cloud **HOSTING** Backup
Service Bureau **Business**
HYBRID **Private** SERVER
Data protection
Microservices
DevOps Internet of Things
VAULTING Outsourcing **SaaS**
Disaster

LIFTING THE CLOUD of Terminology Confusion

Business partners can lead the effort for uniform definitions for common cloud terms

My first job out of high school was telemarketing phone and paging systems for a telecommunications startup in Eastlake, Ohio. One of my early clients was a medical billing company that worked by literally parking a van outside a doctor's office, carrying boxes of handwritten records out of the building and retyping them into a minicomputer. They didn't use terms like "outsourcing" or "service bureau," but that's what they did and what they were.

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A few years later, while attending graduate school and interning at IBM, I supported a manufacturing client whose administrative staff was transitioning from IBM Selectric typewriters to the IBM Displaywriter. They didn't call

the dedicated word processor a Software as a Service (SaaS), but that's effectively what it was.

In 2005, "vaulting" was the buzzword of the day. It eventually morphed into online backup, then cloud backup. Recovery became

"business continuity" and then "data protection," but it was basically the same thing.

What's in a Name?

They say history repeats itself, and there's no better example

than the IT industry. The early era of centralized mainframe computing gave way to distributed processing on minicomputers and then to the client/server model. Then came the web followed by the cloud before centralized computing became hip again.

Until recently, that is. Now cloud is sometimes viewed as a chokepoint and the Internet of Things may drive a massive decentralization of both data and processing out to the network's edge. Some people call this "fog computing," but it sounds a lot like the client/server model to me.

The IT industry loves its terms du jour. Service-oriented architecture became microservices, and is now known as serverless computing. Data dictionaries turned into data catalogs. Rapid application development became agile development and now DevOps. Service bureaus are now SaaS providers.

Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison has often been chided for his rant against cloud computing during a Churchill Club interview in 2009, where he called cloud computing "water vapor" and said, "They just change a term and they think they've invented technology," among other highlights (bit.ly/1Y3IaH). But he had a point: The concept of the cloud isn't really all that different from timesharing, which was invented back in the 1950s.

This ongoing name game is part of the natural ebb and flow of the IT industry. After all, companies don't want to be associated with an established category if they can invent a new one. But these constant terminology shifts also confuse our clients. Every week, I talk to clients who have preconceived ideas that they need the latest hot multicloud solution, when what they really need is reliable backup and restore capabilities.



The more business partners use the same language when helping clients make decisions, the less confusion is caused and time is wasted.

Standardizing Definitions

I'm not suggesting that we go back to using terms like "time-sharing," but those that are on the front lines with clients can help cut through the noise by adopting a common set of terms when speaking to clients. Below are a few examples:

- A co-location (colo) is a secure facility where clients can rent space to run systems that they own, with the colo providing the building, cooling, power, bandwidth and physical security
- Managed hosting is like colo, but the provider also takes care of setup and installation, monitoring, technical support, software installation and upgrades
- A web hosting provider owns the equipment and software and provides all the services and support the client needs to run a website
- A cloud hosting provider owns the hardware and software and rents slices to clients as LPARs or virtual machines for whatever purposes the customer wants
- A cloud backup service copies a client's on-premises data to one or more remote, secure data centers
- Hybrid cloud backup is the



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same as cloud backup, but the client also has a local appliance on premises for quick local backups and restores

- Disaster recovery is a plan for resuming mission-critical functions following a significant negative event, including restoration of data from backup
- Private cloud backup is a secure form of backup that uses two appliances—one at the client's location and a second at a secure colo—connected by a dedicated, high-speed connection

Those definitions are just a starting point for what should be a more comprehensive list of terms that describe products and services that will be with us for at least the next decade. This list can provide a common point of discussion, even as the industry invents new terms. The more business partners use the same language when helping clients make decisions, the less confusion is caused and time is wasted.

I'd like to hear what you think. Is it time to simplify the language we use? How can we make this happen? We could start a blog, set up a wiki or even outsource the project to a service bureau. Um, I mean a managed service provider. **P**