

Introduction to Encore cloud hosting services from Anagram Systems

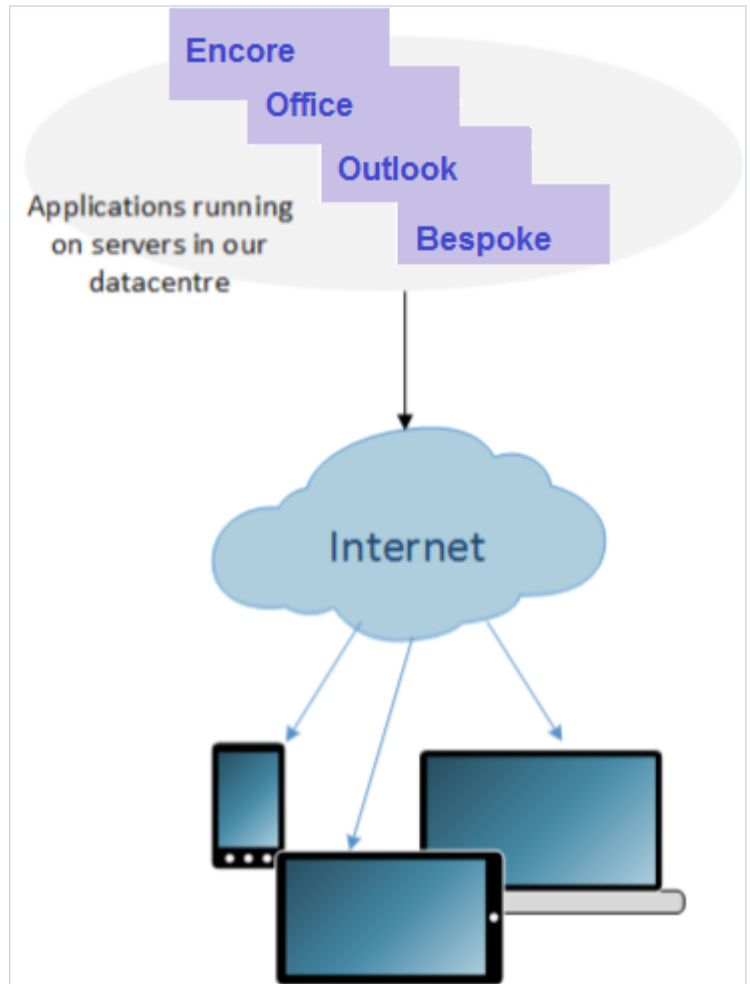


What is Cloud Hosting?

Traditionally businesses wanting to share files or share an accounting package or other line of business application would keep a “server” in their office that everyone could access. They would probably pay a local IT company to provide support for the server, make changes and fix problems.

With the improvements in Internet bandwidth combined with exponential increases in the power of computers and the advent of server virtualisation (the ability to run dozens of virtual servers on one physical computer) it is now more cost effective to host that server in someone else’s data centre and access it via the Internet. Taking advantage of the economies of scale of shared resources, along with changes in software licence agreements which now allow organisations to rent software on a month by month basis.

For many businesses the “Hosted Desktop” is becoming the obvious choice. The business applications such as Encore, Microsoft Office, Outlook etc. are all run from the hosted desktop, not on the users PC. Not only does this allow the individual to run their business applications from anywhere that has an Internet connection, and from pretty much any device, it also means the business doesn’t need to fork out precious capital on servers or software, instead choosing to pay on a month by month basis from an operating budget.



Although the applications appear to be running on the users’ PC or tablet, they are actually running on servers in the data centre. The only thing that travels over the internet is the keyboard and mouse clicks and the picture from the screen. This is what enables the applications to run on any devices and even on relatively poor internet connections.

Managed hosting for Encore is provided by Anagram Systems in partnership with Your Office Anywhere, a leading provider of datacentre hosting facilities.



Is it really cost effective?

Customers considering whether to purchase on premises servers or rented cloud hosted servers will often compare the monthly rental costs over say 3 years directly with the purchase costs of a new server. This is clearly sensible but it isn't always the whole picture. We set out here some of the other things that should be taken into account when building a business case for a hosted solution.

Costs

When comparing costs you should take into account all the costs of owning and supporting your own servers:

- Power/Cooling - Even the lowest price servers will cost up to £20 per month in electricity
- Scalability - If you invest in infrastructure that can't be expanded you limit your ability to grow your business. However, if you plan ahead you can may purchase more hardware than you need at the outset.
- Licences - On top of the cost of the physical server there is the cost of the operating system. Windows Server 2012 Standard costs about £650. Then there are the Windows Client Access Licences (CALs) for every user that will connect to that server. These retail around the £28 mark per user. All of which you will need to purchase again if you upgrade your server.
- CAPEX vs OPEX - From an accounting point of view many companies will prefer the benefits of low monthly hosting payments from an operating budget and the ability to flex to meet business needs over an upfront capital investment, depreciated over time that sits on the balance sheet.
- Support - Getting the most out of your IT hardware, maintaining backups, Anti-Virus, critical updates, general user administration, not to mention dealing with inevitable problems, requires specialist skills; ideally from someone who works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Risks

What is the cost to your business if your servers are down for a day and you can't use Encore. If the answer is "A lot" then you need to pay for some mitigation. At the very least you will need to factor in the cost of a warranty for your servers.

What happens when something does go wrong, do you have the in house expertise to resolve it or is your contingency measure to call an external support company, either way there is a cost.

When you host Encore with Your Office Anywhere we provide the mitigation, the support, and it is all included in the price. And it enables us to offer a 99.5% uptime SLA.



Supporting our customers...

Cloud Hosting from Anagram Systems and Your Office Anywhere is not about providing you with servers, it is about giving you a managed platform to run your applications. Generally our customers aren't interested in the server or the memory or the storage they just want their applications to run properly and be confident in the knowledge that if something did go wrong there is someone there who can sort it.

To this end these are the things we do behind the scenes (the things normally done by IT department or support consultants) to ensure you only have to worry about your business not worry about your IT.

- **Hardware Resilience** - Customer's servers are held on Microsoft Hyper-V clusters using Dell hardware for the hosts. At the time of writing we have several dozen host servers. In the event of any issue on one of the hosts e.g. a hardware failure or over loading, the customer's servers can be instantly and seamlessly moved to another host. This would be invisible to the users.
- **Data Backups** - User data (generally stored on a shared drive e.g. S:\ drive) is backed up at 08:00am, 12:00pm and 17:30pm providing a point in time restores. Backups are included in the price, file restores i.e. a user has accidentally deleted a document are charged at £15 per 15mins. Backed up data is held at a separate data centre and is kept for 30 days.
- **Server Backups** - Virtual disks holding the operating systems for each customer's server are backed up daily and kept offsite at a separate data centre for 7 days.
- **Database Backups** - SQL Databases are also backed up daily and kept offsite for 7 days. Many customers using applications with propriety backup features such as Encore will want to manage their own backups to suit their business needs. In these circumstances we advise customers to backup to their Shared (S:\) drive.
- **Anti-Virus** - We install and manage Anti-Virus on all servers, this is included in the price.
- **Windows Updates** - We install all relevant Windows Updates across all customer servers, again included in the price.
- **Microsoft Licences** - We declare the Microsoft Licences rented to the customer under the SPLA agreement so that they can be assured of compliance.
- **File and Folder Security** - Configuration of security to allow specific groups of users access to specific data folders as requested by the company contact.
- **Performance** - We monitor CPU and Memory usage on the servers to ensure performance. If certain applications or databases are particularly resource hungry we can recommend they rent extra memory.
- **Management** - Locked down desktop that ensures users can't access parts of the operating system that would cause them to "break" the system and cause unnecessary downtime and support for that user.



...and managing change

Along with the day to day job of “Keeping the Lights On” we also pride ourselves in making the transition onto the hosted platform as seamless as possible as well as ensuring any changes are also trouble free.

We provide the following services as part of the package:

- Installation of any software on the platform that is supported on a terminal server solution. In complex cases we will work with the software vendor to install the software as part of the setup cost. We don't limit customers to a subset of applications but allow customers to install the applications that make their business work.

- Installation of additional software at a later date it doesn't have to be installed at build time.
- Upgrades to the latest version of Microsoft products as they are released for example Microsoft Office.
- Ability to take a snap shot of the server prior to any major software updates – the server can be rolled back prior to the software update in a matter of minutes.

Help when and where you need it.

Our Helpdesk Portal is always accessible, from here you can search the Knowledge Base, raise support tickets or track existing tickets.

The address for the portal is:

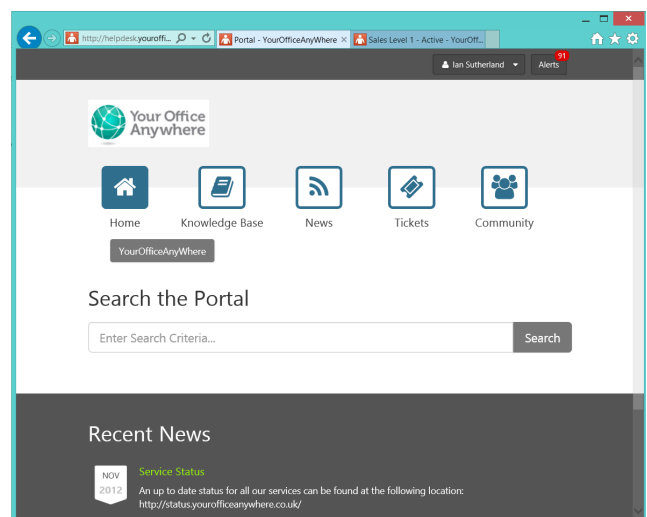
<http://helpdesk.yourofficeanywhere.co.uk>

However, we also pride ourselves on the fact that you can call our UK helpdesk at any time, 24x7. The helpdesk is manned between 9.00am and 5.00pm and is available for emergency calls outside of these hours. The helpdesk can be called on our main number:

+44 (0)1282 500318 - Option 1

Emailing the helpdesk will automatically generate a support ticket for you. The helpdesk email address is:

helpdesk@yourofficeanywhere.co.uk



All issues and support calls on the Your Office Anywhere platform are performed by Microsoft Certified professionals, and the platform support costs are included in the monthly charge.

Our helpdesk team can remote control the end users' PC to help resolve issues logging on to the hosted platform.



About Anagram Systems

Anagram Systems is a global company, with its main office in the UK and resellers and customers across the world. The company provides Encore, an integrated stock control, accounting and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system designed for retail, manufacturing, wholesale and distribution companies across a variety of industries.

Encore is a flexible, scalable system designed to centralise different business areas within a single system. Consolidating all information within a single repository eliminates the need for multiple systems and improves the flow of accurate, up to date information around a business.

We pride ourselves on the expertise of our staff, our caring approach to customer service, our use of up to the minute technology and our ability to work closely with our customers in order to help them achieve their business objectives. Encore is a competitively priced system designed to provide our customers with a rapid return on investment.

We have 35 years of supporting small and medium sized businesses and Encore is used by more than 2,000 businesses in the UK and US.

For more information about hosting
Encore in the cloud, please email
sales@anagramsystems.co.uk or call
01403 259551