![Your Office Anywhere]

Hosted Access Databases

An introduction to Microsoft Access database hosting from Your Office Anywhere

Microsoft Access is a powerful way of creating bespoke database applications for either your own business or for resale.   By taking advantage of Cloud computing it is now possible to share Access databases between multiple people across many sites simply and cheaply without expensive and complicated on-site infrastructure.

Cloud hosting Microsoft Access

Used by millions to create low cost bespoke applications Microsoft Access is a powerful and flexible database application platform.   Traditionally sharing Access databases between multiple users has required an on site server, and if multiple sites are involved then complex network infrastructure has been required to connect sites together securely. All of which is costly and inflexible.

With the advent of Cloud computing all of this changes.   The Access database, including any front end applications can be run from the Cloud with users connecting over the Internet from anywhere.   There are no issues of buying, maintaining and supporting on-site servers, and where Cloud Hosting is on a monthly "pay as you go" model there is total flexibility over the number of users licenced from one month to the next.

The Access database or relevant front end application is presented to the user either as a Terminal Services "RemoteApp" - An icon on the desktop that just runs the application - or if preferred a full Remote Desktop.   In addition these can be run from Apple MACs, iPads and Android tablets as well as Windows PCs.   Meaning people can not only run their Access application from work, but also from home or when mobile from laptops and tablets.   There is even a web portal so the application can be run securely from public PCs, Internet Café's, libraries or hotels and airports.

Commercial developers of Access applications can also use this platform to provide their customers with an off the shelf application that doesn't require capital investment in hardware to run it, something which can be a barrier to selling Access applications.

Features and Benefits

- "Web-enable" Access without any re-coding.

- Run Access apps on different platforms.

- Share Access apps between many users

- Share apps between multiple sites

- Database server supported and maintained by Your Office Anywhere.

- Backups, Anti-Virus and Windows Updates all managed by Your Office Anywhere.

- Server performance monitored by Your Office Anywhere.

- Flexible monthly Pay-as-you-go licencing model.

- Discounts for Resellers

Technical Pages

Hosted Servers

By using Cloud hosted servers, businesses of all sizes can take advantage of infrastructure normally only affordable for Enterprise level corporations. This includes fast SAS disk storage on EMC Storage Area Network (vital for good database performance).   Daily database backups replicated offsite to a second datacentre. Full Antivirus protection, Windows updates and access to our UK helpdesk team staffed by Microsoft Certified Professionals who can be available 24/7 for critical issues.

Each Your Office Anywhere customer has a dedicated Windows 2012 server running on high spec Hyper-V host servers.   This infrastructure provides a high level of resilience with the ability to "failover" customer's servers to another host in the event of hardware failure or general overloading. This failover is seamless and invisible to the end user.

Architecture to support Access databases and applications

Every Access application is different and our technical sales team will work with you to design the most appropriate architecture for your database.   In this section we will discuss some of the typical setups used by customers.

One of the critical decisions is the architecture of the application itself.   Microsoft include Access as part of Office Professional or as a standalone product; but they also provide Access Runtime as a free licence.   If the application can be split into a backend database and a front end application that runs using Runtime then there are no Access licence costs for the individual users.   Developing a completely bespoke front end application using Visual Basic for example also does not require an Access licence, although generally one full Access licence is required on the server to provide day to day maintenance of the database.

Typically on a Terminal Server platform each individual user requires their own unique Runtime application and we would publish icons for each user to their own application file.   Logon scripts can be used to check the file is the latest version of the bespoke application and copy over the latest version if not, making deployment of updates to many users very easy.   Certainly easier than visiting every users PC to install a new version.

Generally we would create a second local drive on the hosted server e.g. Drive D: to hold the backend database and the front end applications.   Where other Office products are also installed we would also have a shared network drive (Drive S:) to house shared documents which could also be available to Access if needed..

Behind the scenes are a host of other servers and infrastructure that come as part of the platform including Active Directory servers providing authentication and other network services and Remote Desktop Brokers with SSL certificates to enable secure encrypted access to your application over the Internet.

The applications can theoretically be accessed from anywhere in the world with an Internet connection, although Internet performance can vary from country to country so we would recommend testing first.

Microsoft have also released a Remote Desktop client for Apple devices, meaning the application can be run on Apple MACs and iPads. Remote desktop clients are also available for Android tablets.

To see Remote App or Remote Desktop in action on an Access database please visit our YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/user/TheHostingVideos
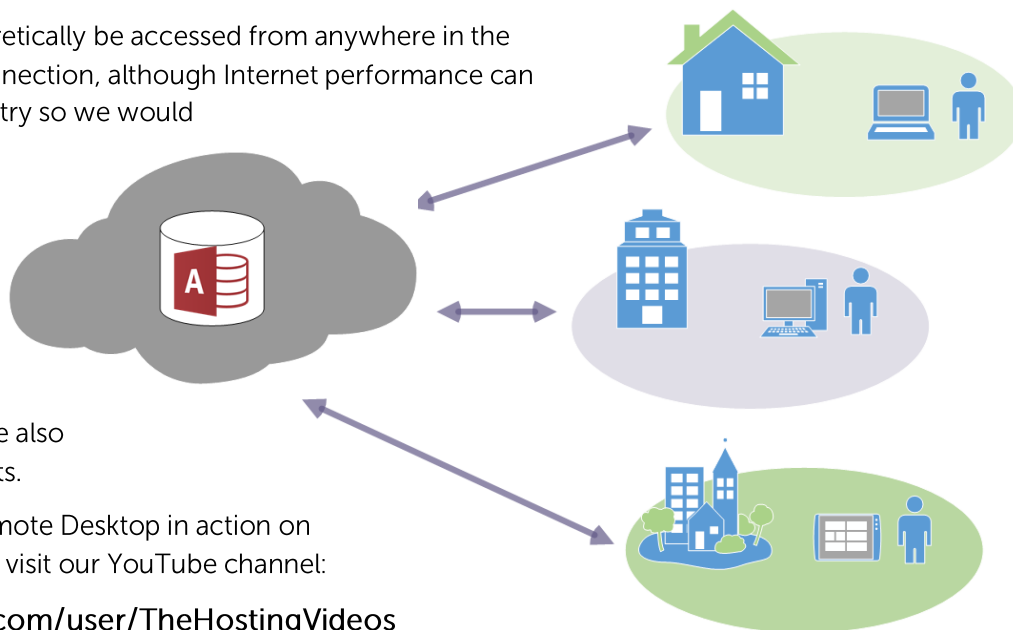
Commercial Application Developers

For companies developing Access database application for resale to other businesses the ability to host the application on a Cloud platform can be a real selling feature.   The fact that the end customer doesn't have to invest capital expenditure in IT infrastructure gives your application the edge over your competitors.

You also have the added bonus that your customer can run your application from anywhere with an Internet connection.   If you are competing with web based applications you can show that you provide all the functionality and interconnectivity typically only found with proper client/server applications, including integration with other Office applications or 3rd party applications that can also be hosted on the server.

You would not be limited to just hosting your application. Your customers can take advantage of the platform to run any of their other business applications, including Office. As long as it runs on Windows it will run on our platform, so they can take advantage of the ability to access any of their applications over the Internet.

We can provide different architectural options for you and your customers such as a dedicated server per customer or a single server for all customers with more resources with security permissions configured to protect individual customer's data.

As mentioned previously all the supporting infrastructure to make your application available over the Internet comes as part of the package, including backups and support of the server itself, so you can provide a fully supported turnkey solution to your customers at very low prices.

As a reseller for Your Office Anywhere you would be entitled to a 15% discount off the monthly rental as a thank you for helping to sell our platform. So not only can you offer your customers a great platform to run your (or any other) applications from, you would also benefit from a steady revenue stream as a hosting reseller.

Please contact our technical sales team for more details about becoming a reseller for Your Office Anywhere.

Testing

Test Servers

To test how your particular Access database application runs when Cloud hosted we can provide you with access to a Windows 2012 r2 or Windows 2008 r2 server, help install your software and provide you with demo accounts to make sure that your application works as you expect it to on our platform. Our helpdesk team can work with you to configure the server to replicate the setup and security you would expect in your production server.   They will also publish your application to demo user accounts so you can access it as a RemoteApp or vis the web portal.

This is all free of charge.
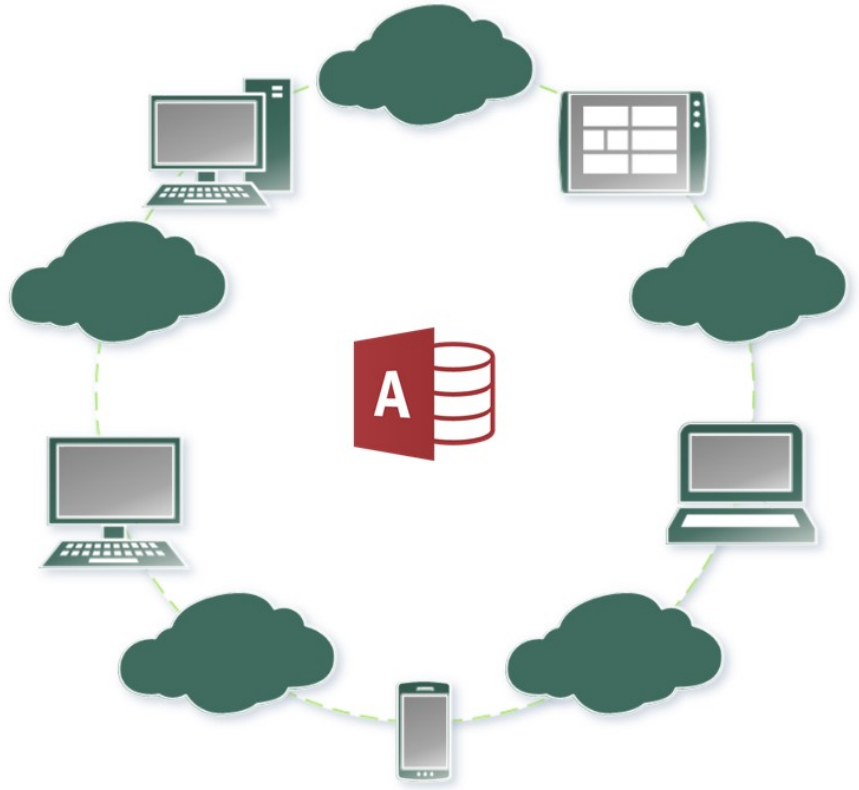
Licencing

Cloud hosting is all about "Pay-as-you-go", so there is no longer a need to purchase perpetual licences or software assurance, you just rent the software for the duration you need it which means that you can easily cater for temporary increases in staff numbers, as well as decreasing numbers without paying penalties or wasting money.

We licence Microsoft Access under the Service Provider Licence Agreement (SPLA) and there are a number of ways to licence it.

Microsoft Office Professional.   Access is one of the components of Office Professional. If you need Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc, on the hosted desktop as well as Access then this may be the best option for you.

Microsoft Office Standard.   Access isn't included in Office Standard but we can licence it as an add-on.

Microsoft Access Runtime.   Runtime is a free licence, so if your database has been developed to use Runtime then you don't need to pay for licences.   Runtime can also be used in conjunction with Office Standard.

In some instances we recommend having at least one full licence for Access as well as Runtime to enable someone to perform database edits, or admin tasks such as compact and repair.

Three ways to run your hosted Access database

Hosted desktops from Your Office Anywhere use solely Microsoft technology to deliver the desktop or individual applications running on them. There are 3 different methods of running the desktop or applications and it is down to the customer's preference or specific circumstances which method is used.
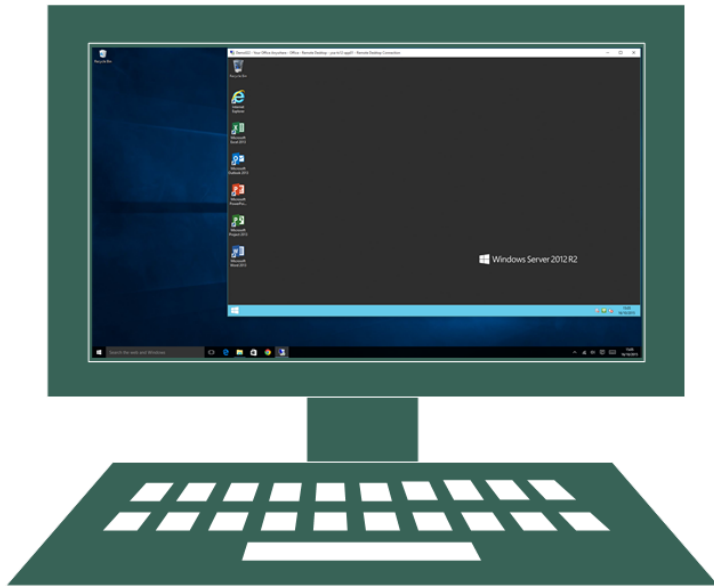

Full Remote Desktop

A desktop within a desktop. In the picture opposite you can see a hosted desktop (black screen) running on a Windows 2012 server. The hosted desktop is running on a Windows 10 PC, but could equally be a MAC, iPad or Android tablet

The Remote Desktop can be run full screen or reduced down as required by the individual user.

RemoteApps and Desktop Connections

Instead of a full desktop , individual applications can be published to a Windows 7, 8 or 10 Start Menu/Start Screen. The application, once launched, will look and behave exactly like a locally installed application, they also have access to a hosted Home Drive (H:) and a shared data (S:) drive, to enable multiple users to work on the same data.
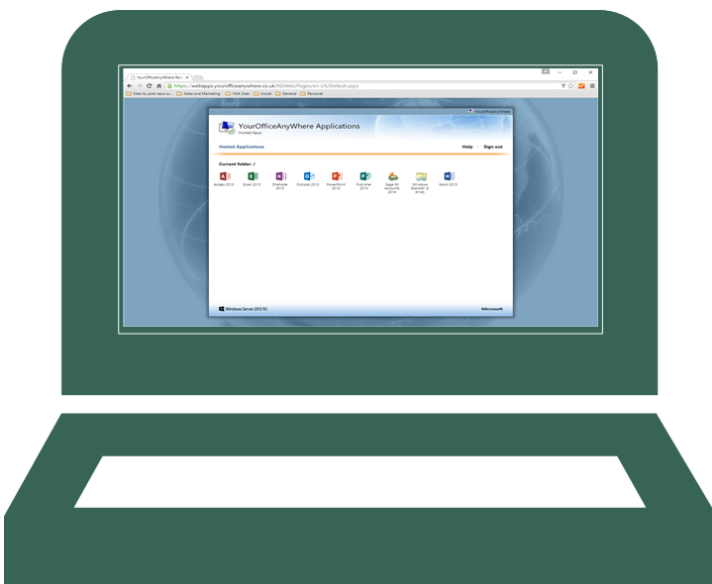
Web Portal

With an easy to remember URL and secure authentication users can access their business applications from a web browser anywhere there is an Internet connection.

Great if you want to check in from home or while on holiday and don't have a laptop.

Technical Pages

The Hosted Servers

Every Your Office Anywhere hosted desktop customer gets their own dedicated Windows 2012r2 server.   This is a virtual server with a starting specification of 2GB RAM and 1 processor core.

The virtual server runs on one of dozens of physical server "Hosts", the hosts each have 96GB RAM and 8 processor cores.   As the customer's server is virtual if there was ever a hardware problem with a host, or it was just overloaded we can move the customer's server to another host instantly and seamlessly with no interruption to the users, they won't know it's happened.

Each physical host runs many virtual servers enabling maximum utilisation of resources which in turn reduces costs.

The host servers are housed in a state of the art data centre, accredited to ISO 27001 for Information Security Management.   The data centre has a host of security and availability measures including multiple internet connections through different providers, uninterruptible power supplies and diesel generators.

Data is stored on a high spec Storage Area Network (SAN) with fast disks running at 15,000rpm

Backups

One of the advantages to hosted desktops is running your systems on "Enterprise" class infrastructure.   This is particularly true of backups which have often been a headache for small businesses, remembering to take tapes off site or worrying about whether something has been backed up correctly or having the skills to restore it.   Data, Operating Systems, and Databases are backed up to disk and then transmitted offsite to a second data centre in case of disaster.

The backup policies for Your Office Anywhere are as follows:

- Documents such as Word or Excel stored on the Shared drive are backed up three times a day. Backups are retained for 20 days.

- Server operating systems, which may include applications and their databases are backed up once a week with 1 copy being retained.   Where it is necessary to store volatile data on a server instead of a shared drive, this can be backed up more frequently.

- SQL Databases are backed up daily and copies kept for 1 week.

- All Exchange servers are backed up daily. Items in Recover Deleted Items are retained for 30 days

- We can provide specific backup requirements for customers please provide your requirements and ask for a quote

Server Management

Hosting with Your Office Anywhere means you can forget about the day to day maintenance and management of your server, we look after all of that.

All servers have Anti-Virus installed and centrally managed.   Critical Windows updates are deployed centrally and any Operating System issues are dealt with by our dedicated UK help desk.

When your operating system comes to end of life and is no longer supported we will upgrade your server to the latest version at no extra cost.

Why Choose Your Office Anywhere?

At Your Office Anywhere we have been delivering Cloud hosting solutions longer than almost anyone is in the market long before anyone coined the term "Cloud" and certainly longer than names like Microsoft Azure or Amazon Web Services.   In that time we have learned what customers want from a hosted desktop service and have developed a platform which delivers flexibility, scalability, security and convenience at a really competitive price.   As an organisation we are proud to be certified for ISO 27001 Information Security Management System, so you know your data is safe with us.

Listed below are some of the features and benefits you should look for in a hosted desktop provider, that come as standard with Your Office Anywhere:

- UK Helpdesk manned by Microsoft Certified Professionals available on call 24/7 for critical issues.

- Helpdesk available by phone or email, plus access to knowledgebase.

- Monitoring of CPU and Memory usage for performance of the server.

- Ability to remote control customer's PCs to assist with supporting issues.

- Installation of any software that is supported on a Terminal Server solution.

- Managed (Locked Down) desktop to simplify user experience and reduce downtime/support calls.

- Anti-Virus on the Server.

- Windows Updates on the Server

- Rental of Microsoft licences, and licence reporting for compliance.

- Upgrades to latest versions of Microsoft applications.

- UK Data Centres - Important for customers who must keep their data in the UK. Note: Microsoft and Amazon don't have UK data centres.

- All Infrastructure: servers, switches, storage etc. owned by Your Office Anywhere.

- Ability to "Snapshot" servers prior to software upgrades.

- Failover to alternate host server in the event of a hardware failover.

- No long term contracts, just rolling 1 month contract.

Free Trial

Moving to the cloud can be a big decision, especially for established businesses for existing on premises infrastructure.   To make the decision easier we can provide a free trial/demo account for you and your colleagues to try the solution for a couple of weeks.   The trial server includes a copy of Sage 50 Accounts and Microsoft Office 2013, including Outlook and a working email account.

Your course to the Cloud

Access database hosting is just one of the many Cloud computing solutions available on the Your Office Anywhere platform.   Choosing the right solution depends upon individual circumstances, there is no one size fits all, and for some businesses Cloud may not be the answer.

Our technical sales team is staffed solely by experienced, time served IT consultants who specialise in working with businesses to understand the challenges the business is trying to overcome, the constraints (financial, technical, geographic), and identify the solution that is right for that business. Whether that is public cloud, private cloud, or a hybrid (which is probably the most common), and if a cloud solution isn't appropriate for your business or circumstance we will tell you.

If you are considering moving to the Cloud, or you are a new business starting up and looking at what options you have to provide your business with the flexible IT solution it needs, please get in touch. We can provide no obligation advice, indicative costs or formal quotations. We don't employ high pressure sales techniques beyond perhaps calling or emailing you to follow up on a proposal.

To get in touch either call our Technical Sales team on **01282 500318**

or email **sales@yourofficeanywhere.co.uk**

Other white papers available:

- Hosted Desktops
- Hosted Exchange
- Hosted Servers
- Private Managed Cloud
- Applications Anywhere - RemoteApps and how to get them

- Telephones Anywhere - Hosted Telephony, Voice over IP
- Documents Anywhere - Hosted SharePoint 2013 – OneDrive for Business
- Hosted SQL server
- Hosted Sage 50 Accounts, Sage 200.
- Hosted Desktop for Charities

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