



INFRASTRUCTURE COST REALITY CHECK

The cloud isn't always cheaper. Here's how to tell.

Some businesses pay two to three times more than they need to, just by renting workloads they'd be better off owning. Here's a two-minute check on where you stand.

A photograph of a person in a white dress shirt and dark tie, sitting at a desk. They are holding a pen in their right hand and looking towards a laptop on the right. The background is blurred, showing indoor plants and a window.

The expertise you need, all under one roof. Managed IT, cybersecurity, compliance, and the hardware we build.

Some of your workloads cost two to three times more than they should

If your cloud bill climbs a little every year and you've started wondering whether you're paying for things you don't need, you're asking the right question. Here's the part most owners never hear: some workloads cost two to three times more in the cloud than they would on hardware you own. Not all of them. Some. And almost nobody runs the math to tell which is which.

Picture a line-of-business application that the same forty people use all day, every day, all year. Rent it in the cloud and you pay for those forty seats every month for sixty straight months, and the bill grows each time you add a person or more storage. Buy the server once, maintain it, and refresh it at year five, and the cost curve looks nothing alike. Same software, same people, two very different five-year totals. That's not true of every workload. It's very true of the steady, heavy ones, which is exactly why you check workload by workload instead of moving everything one direction.

The cloud gets sold as the cheaper option because it's easy to set up and easy to bill every month, so most IT providers steer everything there by default. We can tell you straight, because we sit on both sides of it. We build our own servers and PCs in Wichita, and we still put plenty of our clients' workloads in the cloud, because for those workloads it's the right call. No reseller markup riding on the answer, no subscription we're protecting.

This guide does two things. It gives you a two-minute read on where your business likely lands. And it explains the one cloud misunderstanding that costs owners the most, no matter which way they go.

The infrastructure cost reality check

Answer these from memory. You don't need a single invoice. Total your points at the bottom.

1. Would losing access to a core system for 24 hours materially hurt your revenue?

- No 0 pts
- Yes 2 pts

The more a day of downtime costs you, the more control over your own systems is worth.

2. How many people rely on your systems every day?

- Under 25 0 pts
- 25 to 75 1 pt
- 75 to 150 2 pts
- More than 150 3 pts

The bigger the team, the more a per-user cloud fee multiplies, and the sooner owning a steady workload pays off.

3. Roughly how much data do you store and work with?

- Under 5 TB 0 pts
- 5 to 20 TB 2 pts
- More than 20 TB 3 pts

Large data is expensive to rent month after month, and expensive to pull back out.

4. Which of these do you run? Check all that apply. (1 point each)

- Line-of-business servers or databases that run all day 1 pt
- CAD, engineering, or large design files 1 pt
- Manufacturing or shop-floor systems 1 pt
- AI workloads, or plans to run your own models 1 pt
- Rules about where your data is allowed to live (CMMC, HIPAA, FTC Safeguards) 1 pt

5. How does your usage move across the year?

- Steady, about the same all year 2 pts
- Spiky, big swings at a season or a launch 0 pts

Your total _____

WHAT YOUR NUMBER MEANS

0 to 4 · Mostly cloud likely fits you

Your workloads are light and flexible. Renting buys real convenience without making you overpay. Your money is better spent making sure what's in the cloud is actually backed up and secured (see the next page), not on hardware you don't need yet.

5 to 9 · You're a hybrid, and this is where the wasted money hides

You've got a mix. Some of your workloads belong in the cloud. Others are almost certainly costing you more there than they should. Most well-run businesses live here on purpose, but most have never sorted which workload belongs where. That gap is usually worth real money every year.

10 or more · You likely favor owning, and should look hard at private AI infrastructure

Heavy, steady, data-rich, or regulated workloads usually cost less and run better on hardware you control. Renting all of it is probably inflating your bill and giving up control you may actually need.

Checked the AI box, or thinking about it? Read the third path before you decide anything. The math for running AI is different from the math for email and files, and it's the fastest-changing part of this whole question.

First, the part that costs the most

Before you spend another dollar on either side, understand this, because it's the single most expensive thing business owners get wrong about the cloud.

Putting your data in the cloud does **not make the cloud provider responsible for protecting it.**

Read the user agreement on any major cloud or email platform and you'll find the same split. The provider promises the building. They keep the service online, they keep their data centers secure, they keep your data from disappearing because a drive failed on their end. What they do not promise is to protect your data from a mistake, from a retention gap, from ransomware, or from an attacker who gets into your account. That part is yours.

Microsoft says so in plain language. Their own service agreement recommends you use a third-party application to back up the data you keep in Microsoft 365. The company that hosts your email is telling you, in writing, to back it up yourself. Most owners have never read that sentence.

Think of it like renting an apartment. The landlord insures the building. He does not insure your belongings inside it. Your files, your email, your customer records, those are your belongings, and they're yours to protect whether they live in the cloud or on a server in your office.

This is why a real backup plan belongs in your budget no matter which way you go. If a provider ever told you "it's in the cloud, so it's safe," that's the tell that nobody is actually protecting your data.

Three paths, not two

The old debate was cloud versus server. That framing is dated. Today you're really choosing among three, and the right answer is usually a mix.

Path one: rent it (cloud)

You pay monthly, the cost is predictable, and someone else maintains the hardware. It's the right home for email, for tools your team uses from anywhere, for anything that grows and shrinks, and for anything you simply don't want to babysit. The catch is the one on the last page: your data is still yours to protect, and the bill compounds quietly as you add people and storage.

Best for: light, flexible, collaborative, spiky workloads.

Path two: own it (your own infrastructure)

You put more money down once, you own the asset, and your cost per year drops after it's paid off. It's often the cheaper home for steady, heavy, always-on workloads, and it gives you control over exactly where your data sits, which some contracts and regulations require. The catch is that owning only saves money if someone actually maintains it. Hardware gives you three to five solid years under manufacturer support, then it needs a refresh before it ages into a risk. Buy it and ignore it and you lose the savings.

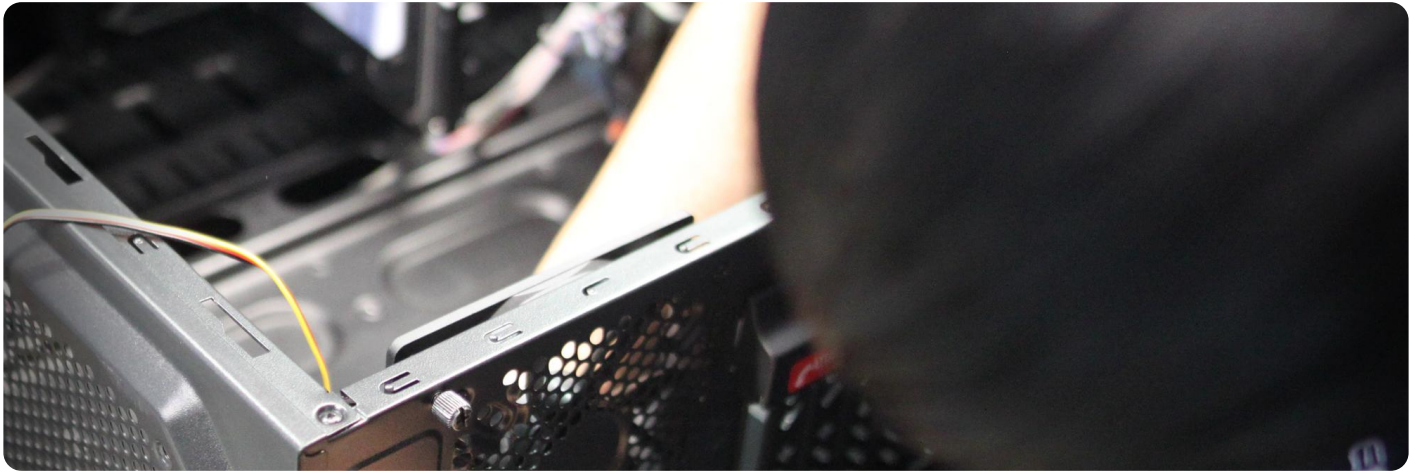
Best for: steady, heavy, regulated, data-rich workloads.

Path three: private AI infrastructure

AI is forcing many businesses to revisit infrastructure decisions they thought were settled years ago. This is the path almost no one has costed out yet, and it's the one moving fastest. The economics of AI look nothing like the economics of email and file storage. Renting AI in the cloud, whether that's per-user copilots or per-call charges to run models, adds up fast at real volume, and every prompt and document you send is leaving your control. Running models on GPU hardware you own (local language models, inference for your own data, AI workloads that never leave your building) can cost less at steady volume and keeps sensitive information in-house. For anyone under CMMC, HIPAA, or FTC Safeguards, that last part isn't a nice-to-have. You often cannot put regulated data into a public AI tool at all. This is the clearest case where owning beats renting on both cost and control, and it's exactly the kind of system we build.

Best for: real AI volume, sensitive or regulated data, anyone who wants the AI advantage without handing their data to someone else's model.

Where each workload belongs is a strategy call



The real question isn't cloud or server. It's where each of your workloads belongs, across the cloud, the hardware you own, and now AI, with backup and your data rules figured into every call. That's a strategy conversation, and it's one most providers aren't set up to have.

We are. We're CybertronIT, the managed IT arm of a company that's built its own PCs and servers in Wichita since 1997. That heritage is why we can give you a straight answer. We don't earn more by pushing you to the cloud, and we don't earn more by pushing you to a server. We make the call the way you would if you had a hardware team, a security team, and a compliance team in one room, because that's what we are, one accountable team for businesses across Wichita, Hutchinson, Newton, Derby, and the rest of the metro.

Your scorecard gives you a direction. It can't give you the dollar figure, because that depends on your actual workloads, your contracts, and what your data rules require. That's the part we do for you, at no cost.

Get your free infrastructure cost review

Fifteen minutes. We'll take your scorecard result, put real numbers to it, and show you exactly where you're overpaying and what to move. No obligation, no pressure to switch anything.

[Book your review](#)

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Go deeper: run your own five-year numbers

If you want to put real dollars to it before we talk, this is the math we run. Take one workload at a time and run it through both columns. Use five years, because that's a fair hardware lifecycle and it stops a small monthly number from hiding its true size.

Workload: _____

Rent it (cloud), five-year cost

Line item	Your cost
Subscription (monthly fee x users x 60 months)	\$ _____
Expected growth in seats or storage	\$ _____
Data transfer or exit fees	\$ _____
Third-party backup for this data	\$ _____
Admin and license management time	\$ _____
Five-year cloud total	\$ _____

Own it (your hardware), five-year cost

Line item	Your cost
Hardware purchase	\$ _____
Setup and configuration	\$ _____
Refresh or upgrade within five years	\$ _____
Power, cooling, space	\$ _____
Maintenance and monitoring	\$ _____
Backup and data protection	\$ _____
Five-year owned total	\$ _____

Lower total wins for that workload. Run it again for the next one. And remember the lines a spreadsheet can't hold: who answers at 2 a.m., where your data is allowed to live, and whether you have the cash for upfront versus monthly.

CybertronIT, Wichita since 1997. 4727 S Emporia St, Wichita, KS 67216. This is a planning tool, not a quote. Your real costs depend on your workloads, your contracts, and your data protection needs, which is exactly what the review is for.