
QCTerm and Apps-on-Tap

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Whether the new trend of “apps-on-tap” is good or bad is merely a value judgment, and one that may perhaps be slightly irrelevant. Most companies, of any size, do not want to run a data processing center — and the Internet provides the capacity to potentially eliminate much of that bother. In that, it’s always important to recognize what is, or what will soon be, rather than dwell on what was.

*The “apps-on-tap”
trend*

I’ve believed in this new potential for a number of years now and have been an active supporter of the “Open Skies model”, even before I had heard of Open Skies. Indeed, everything we’re doing—and are giving away for free—in QCTerm is constructed around this model.

We began life 25 years ago as a time-sharing company [with an HP3000 at the core], but we were limited then to how far a local phone call could reach. Long-distance charges were 40 to 50 cents per minute, thus that cost made support of customers outside of your local calling area quite prohibitive.

But the internet changes everything. And because of that, I have been saying for some time now that “timesharing will come back with tidal wave force.”

Using the phrases “ASP” and “apps-on-tap” is just a matter of using different words to describe the same phenomenon. It’s now going to be possible to support customers much outside of your local calling area. Indeed, it may soon be possible to support customers anywhere in the world.

But the second, perhaps more interesting attribute of the internet is that it is a great leveler. AOL operates wholly in the host-terminal model. And soon, most organizations will too.

*The Internet is a
great leveler*

However, the remote user will not only NOT be able to readily tell the kind of hardware that the application(s) are running on, the size of the organization will also be somewhat irrelevant.

The application provider may be the size of AOL (now larger than the Pentagon), or of an intermediate size, such as Open Skies, or even more interesting, the size of just one or two people running an application that they've written off of an HP3000 server in their garage in Grand Junction, CO, servicing customers anywhere in North America, Europe or Australia.

***A recent example
(August 1999)
involving San
Francisco and Cape
Town — two of the
World's Greatest
Cities***

For my talk in San Francisco demonstrating the new features of QCTerm, Neil Harvey in Cape Town, South Africa was kind enough to allow us the use of two of his HP3000s. Cape Town is as far away from San Francisco as you can physically get and remain on the planet. The entire hour-and-half tutorial was conducted by running the various mock-up applications off of Neil's machines half a world away. And the extraordinary thing was that you could hardly tell that the machines weren't local, in the building somewhere.

***This is the world that
is coming***

This is the world that is coming. And it isn't going to do the end-user customer any harm either. Using a cheap PC as a terminal, it's going to be possible to pull a construction trailer up to a new job site in Minnetonka, Minnesota, find a phone line, and have an instant office, as well equipped and as well connected as any one back at headquarters, wherever that may be.

Similarly, it will be possible to expand or contract the usage of an application within an organization, almost instantly, by adding small, inexpensive PCs and phone lines.

***The stability and
reliability of the
HP3000***

This is bound to be good for the HP3000. Stability and reliability are going to be the watchwords in this new environment. As Tom Brandt said, the user neither knows nor cares what server the applications provider is using so long as it is fast, reliable and always there.

The change to this new model is actually going to be reasonably slow, transpiring over a number of years, perhaps a decade, but there are going to be extraordinary opportunities out there for new business, serving new customers, previously too small to afford the quality of HP3000-level databases and servers.

And there are a lot of these businesses out there.

