

Building the case for Google Apps - 10 questions every IT Manager should ask

IT is the art of the possible. As an IT Manager, you need to measure new projects not just on their own merits, but also against all the other business initiatives that compete for the same time and money.

With that in mind, here are ten questions every IT Manager should ask when building an IT business case for Google Apps:

1. Is Google Apps right for me?

Google Apps for Business can reduce IT costs, simplify your infrastructure and catalyse a real change in the way you do business. But because it is Cloud-based, it also involves a break from the traditional. It requires a new way of thinking about how the IT department and the rest of the business interact.

2. Does it align with our IT strategy and business goals?

Many companies start looking at Google Apps for Business as a way of cutting costs, but a fully developed business case can't ignore the many broad benefits it brings. Saving money is always a winner, but if you can also demonstrate measurable benefits? Well, let's just say we've never met a CEO who didn't want more for less.

3. What are the business' requirements for the project?

The way we work is changing at an unprecedented pace, which means that many companies rolling out Google Apps for Business are focusing on collaboration, mobility, outsourcing and new ways of working (such as 'bring your own device'). This kind of approach positions the IT department, if you'll forgive the jargon, "bang in the middle of the critical path to business success".

4. Do we have senior management buy-in?

Early engagement with business decision makers is crucial. You're about to change the way they work, so take time to understand their concerns and any potential deal-breakers. This is a good time to pop the hood and show them just what Google Apps for Business can do, from working together on documents to communicating over IM, voice and video. There are plenty of resources that can help. We've created a website, [Five In the Cloud](#), to show financial decision makers just how important cloud computing is, and we have [case studies](#) from almost every economic sector to help you make your case.

5. Have I explained the benefits in non-technical language?

A roll-out of Google Apps for Business will affect everyone, so it's only fair that discussions take place in a language that everyone can understand. The benefits are clear, so while you can (and should!) go crazy with the technical terms when you're talking to technical people, it pays to focus on the obvious benefits when you're addressing the whole business. Our own [Google Apps for Business website](#) is a good source of non-technical information.

6. Do we have the resources and skills to make the change?

Why not take it for a test drive to find out? A pilot of Google Apps can help your team familiarise themselves with the system: they should be able to pick it up pretty quickly, but formal (re-)training should be available if required.

7. If not, can we find third party assistance?

All of our Google Apps Resellers can help you get up to speed quickly and efficiently, and will help you manage specialist migrations and integration tasks if you need extra help.

8. Can I quantify the benefits in financial terms?

In the end, money talks. That's just the way business works. So we put together this [online calculator](#) to help you figure out just how much you could save by switching from Exchange Server 2007 to Google Apps.

9. Is migration our only potential saving?

Oh, most definitely not. How about your intranet? Would you save money switching to Google Sites? Would Google Drive economise your file sharing? Will our built-in video-conferencing help cut your business travel budget? How much could you save by retiring old office software and letting your users unleash the collaborative power of Google Docs instead?

10. How do I get buy-in from end-users and stakeholders during the changeover?

In a nutshell, get them involved early. Early trialists and user panels can help spot potential issues before they become problems, not to mention create an informal support community for when you deploy to the rest of the business. Above all, early buy-in will help you spread the benefits of Google Apps for Business as quickly and efficiently as possible to the widest number of users. And isn't that what running a great IT department is all about?