

NetDocuments vs. Hosted (aka “Cloud”) Versions of Traditional On-Premises DMS

NetDocuments is the pioneer and leader in cloud-based document and email management. Hundreds of law firms and corporate legal departments have switched from traditional on-premises document management systems to the NetDocuments native cloud platform, including 1000+ user firms such as:

Arnold & Porter • Baker Donelson • Buchanan Ingersoll • Crowell Moring • Cuatrecasas • Davis Wright Tremaine • Dorsey & Whitney • Finnegan Henderson • Foley & Lardner • Frost Brown Todd • Jackson Lewis • Lewis Brisbois • Milbank • Nelson Mullins • Nixon Peabody • Pillsbury

The term “cloud” can be used rather loosely today by software vendors. It’s important that customers understand the fundamental differences between native cloud platforms like NetDocuments and hosted versions of traditional on-premises system, as the latter do not include many of the key benefits sought by customers when moving to the cloud.

	NetDocuments NATIVE CLOUD PLATFORM	Hosted VERSIONS OF TRADITIONAL ON-PREMISES DMS
PLATFORM	Born-on-the-web, native cloud platform with a single instance of the software running globally for all customers. Backend technology infrastructure comprised of modern and scalable cloud technologies such as NoSQL and NewSQL, Lucene and Solr search, Object Storage, Erasure Coding, HSM cryptography, etc.	Traditional on-premises technology with the back-end infrastructure running off-site in a remote datacenter. Requires that a completely separate instance of the software and infrastructure be deployed and maintained for each individual customer, which negates many of the inherent benefits typically associated with modern cloud solutions.
CLOUD EXPERIENCE	15+ years of cloud-first experience, with nearly 2,000 customers now running on the NetDocuments native cloud platform.	Relative newcomers to the hosted/cloud space, and most experience has been with smaller customers; very few large deployments of hosted version.
SECURITY & COMPLIANCE	Trusted platform with built-in certifications, third-party testing, and audits such as ISO 27001, SOC 2, SOC 2+, HIPAA, SEC, etc. By simply using the service, NetDocuments customers “inherit” these highest levels of security and compliance.	No built-in security/compliance certifications available as there is no single instance cloud platform to certify, test or audit. The burden is on customers to provide for their individual implementations the levels of security and compliance required by their clients.
UPGRADES	Automatic – all customers are always on the most recent version and have continuous and instantaneous access to the latest product upgrades, bug fixes, and security patches.	Manual – customers need to be upgraded one-by-one, which results in additional complexity and more frequent and lengthy scheduled downtimes for maintenance.

	NetDocuments NATIVE CLOUD PLATFORM	Hosted VERSIONS OF TRADITIONAL ON-PREMISES DMS
END USER EXPERIENCE	Proven, simple, intuitive, modern web user experience on the desktop, tablets or mobile devices. Robust yet lightweight app (“ndOffice”) for full desktop application integration with MS Office, Adobe, etc., as well as dozens of third-party desktop applications.	Traditional heavy client footprints still used even with hosted/cloud deployments; very new (beta/1.x phase) web user interfaces generally meant to be secondary user interfaces – mostly for mobile devices – and not purpose-built for work product management (editing documents, etc.).
DOWNTIME FOR SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE	Typically only once or twice per year, as the modern cloud back-end platform enables continuous maintenance and upgrades without service downtime.	As frequently as twice per month, as the traditional on-premises back-end technology generally requires downtime for maintenance, updates, etc.
ENCRYPTION	All data encrypted at rest by default, with a separate AES-256 encryption key per document; all encryption keys are held in Hardware Security Modules (HSMs); customer custody over encryption keys; entropic cryptography.	Basic hardware encryption available.
LOCAL BACKUP OF DATA	Optional and available out-of-the-box with the “Local Document Server.”	Requires custom services and configuration.
THIRD-PARTY INTEGRATION	Robust native cloud APIs and infrastructure that scale to the performance of third-party applications whether they are cloud-based or desktop applications. NetDocuments does not charge for its API.	Third-party API calls go against a single instance of a hosted DM server, which can result in severe performance issues. Customers may incur additional fees to standup additional hosted DM servers to handle the load of third-party integrations.
DATA STORAGE LOCATION FLEXIBILITY	Data storage location (cloud or on-premises) can easily be set on a matter by matter (or client by client) basis, and it’s transparent to end users.	Data storage location (hosted or on-premises) can only be set on a library by library level, which introduces significant usability issues as users have to think about which library to search in, save documents in, etc.
OFFLINE CAPABILITY	ndSync provides Dropbox-like bidirectional synchronization of documents, matters, folders, etc. across all devices including laptops, tablets, and mobile devices; includes built-in information governance controls and device management (e.g., remote wipe).	Bidirectional synchronization only available on traditional desktop/laptop offline clients. Separate mobile apps that provide one-way synchronization for tables and mobile devices. Generally lacking advanced information governance controls such as remote wipe, etc.