

High-tech firms pitch gov't 'data cloud'

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- High-tech companies such as Amazon and Microsoft want U.S. government agencies to store data on their servers as a way to cut costs, industry analysts say.

If they did so, they would join consumers who are using "cloud computing" to store documents and other data on off-site servers run by such popular Web sites as Google, Flickr and Facebook and accessed over the Internet, The Washington Post reported Tuesday.

In a bid to tap government business, Google has opened an office in Reston, Va., to sell applications such as Google Docs to federal employees, the newspaper said, while Microsoft Corp. spent \$2.3 billion in 2007 to build cloud computing data centers.

IBM and Sun Microsystems also are angling to provide the "government cloud," observers say.

Although it could save costs, federal officials contend that storing government data on public servers could make the information vulnerable to security breaches, said Jimmy Lin, assistant professor of information studies at the University of Maryland.

"The government may be outsourcing functions to contractors now but this takes it to a whole new level," he told the Post. "And what happens if Google gets hacked by a third party? The answer is, nobody knows."

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