

Before moving to the cloud, ask these 3 questions

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Jack Singleton's gift delivery business FlowersCorp would not be able to operate if its operations were not in the cloud. The business was incorporated in 2005, and since then it has acquired Fast Flowers, Baby Buds, as well as its flagship transaction, Roses Only, to create Australia's biggest delivered gifts brand.

One of Singleton's co-founders, Anthony Rohde, took the decision to put everything in the cloud from the start, so anyone in the business could access information about it from anywhere in the world.

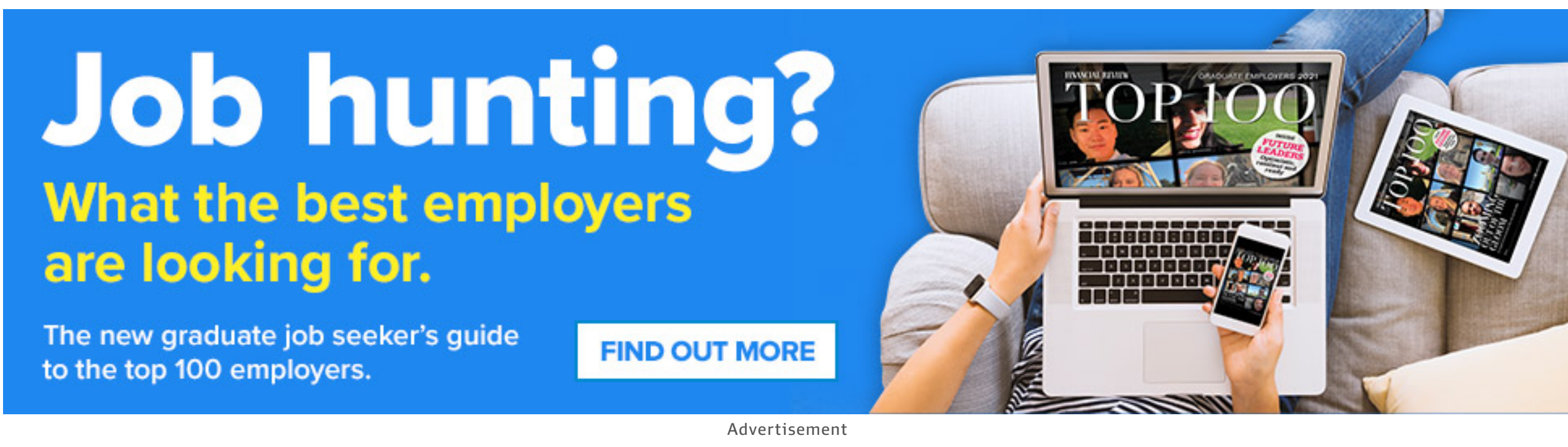
"We can log in and take phone calls, run and monitor a virtual call centre, review sales and get real-time oversight of orders from anywhere we are, 24/7. It gives us a real advantage in the market," says Singleton, who adds that as operations are in the cloud, the business is largely disaster-proof.



Jack Singleton's delivered gifts brands are all on the cloud. Here's how to make your business's transition as rosey as possible. **Nic Walker**

The elegance of the system means every time FlowersCorp acquires another company it can be bolted onto the IT system in a matter of days.

It's a technological model from which many other businesses could learn, given PwC research shows an additional \$49 billion of private sector output could be unlocked over the next 10 years by making better use of digital technologies.



In the lead-up to the end of the financial year, now's the time to explore how moving operations to the cloud could give your business a competitive advantage.

Time to act

Most businesses will meet with their accountant at this time of year for tax planning purposes, so it's an opportune time to explore how shifting to the cloud can address pain points such as accessibility, visibility and ease-of-use of financial data.

"It's the time of year when you look at what next year might hold. When you're talking to your accountant it's a great idea to explore which systems are still offline or inaccessible by some staff members, and areas of the business that still rely on manual processing, causing significant inefficiencies," says PwC Private Clients' partner Mark Soulos.

An example is manual coding of credit card expenses, which might take someone many hours to complete. Moving to the cloud means these items will be immediately categorised in real time, giving the business up-to-date access to its data. Another example is manually preparing rosters. A cloud-based system will give staff and managers access to this information from any device, giving staff the ability to swap shifts and the business the capability to ensure it has the right combination of staff with the requisite qualifications on any given roster.

End-of-year focus

Soulos says there is three considerations businesses need to be making at this time of year when it comes to a transition to the cloud.

They should be ensuring all the parts of the business that can be connected are connected. This includes making sure bank accounts are linked and that everyone who needs access to them can do so.

They should be automating as much as possible, which starts with making a list of all the manual tasks in the business and exploring solutions to streamline operations.

Finally, it's the perfect time to ensure business processes support the ability of staff to make decisions, communicate and work together collaboratively.

Cloud solutions can enable this functionality and PwC recommends taking advantage of best-of-breed solutions that can plug into existing accounting software. "These add-ons help streamline operations, automate manual tasks and tighten your sale cycle," says Soulos.

Look for solutions that will provide real-time financial information and business insights. They should also be capable of integrating information from point-of-sales and accounting systems, without manual interaction. Ultimately, this will tighten the sales cycles and could lead to improved working capital as invoices are distributed in a more timely fashion, leading to quicker payment cycles.

It's now easier than ever for businesses to move to a cloud-based accounting system. As a starting point, list all your existing pain points, your wish list of functions that should be in the cloud and prioritise the list.

Soulos adds: "Eighty-five per cent of all new software development is cloud-based. So if you're not thinking cloud you may be left behind. If you are still manually entering bank transactions into your accounting system, now's the time to make the move to a cloud account system."

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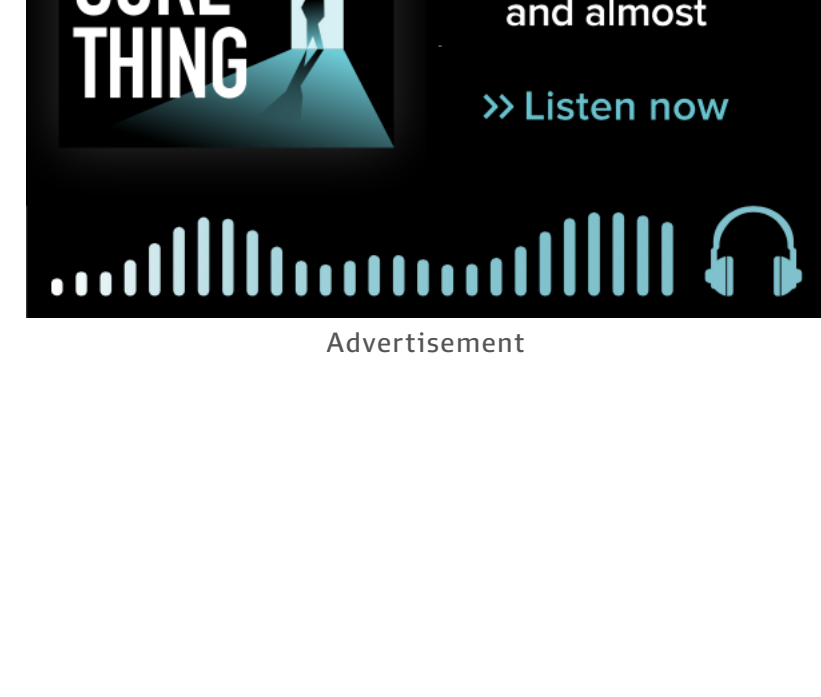
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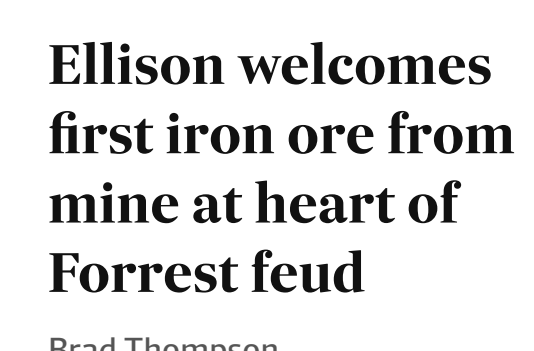


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