Our expert panel consisted of three industry experts on Cloud Computing.

Tyler Roye – CEO of GroupGifting.com, a Long Island startup that is developing disruptive technologies which are helping transform ecommerce into social commerce.   Tyler was formerly the founder and CEO of Invision.com, an Internet services firm founded in 1995.

Dr. Scott Vinci – a healthcare IT consultant providing EMR strategies and implementation services, including Cloud Computing solutions and medical program application hosting and managed services. Corporate partners include EMC, Cisco and Hewlett Packard and VM Ware.

Bob Vormittag – President and CEO of VAI, sets the company's strategic goals providing an environment that encourages customer –focused technical and business innovation. Working closely with the executive team to drive its ERP product development and marketing and sales initiatives.

What is Cloud Computing?

Vinci: In simplest terms it is delivery of an application or storage to a group of heterogeneous end users.

Vormittag: In pure system technology terms, it is hosted systems or software. It is a consolidation of resources but is more than just Software as a Service (Saas).

Roye: I was an early player in Cloud Computing. It is a range of different services: infrastructure, software licensing, Software as a service, infrastructure as a service, with service agreements on top.

Are there any arguments against Cloud Computing or any significant push back?

Roye: The cloud is not outsourcing friendly. This is a great sweeping change. Companies have to get used to the idea that they are giving up control.   Clients must accept that achieving real savings is only accomplished by eliminating the staff whose functions had been outsourced.

Vormittag: This has a big effect on the ERP space. There are big changes for the way that heavily modified applications can run in the cloud. On the other hand, in-house staff is greatly challenged keeping up with virtualization and other demands. It is simpler to use the Cloud to fulfill these demands.

Vinci: There is a lot of resistance. In this area Healthcare is in disarray. Charts are handwritten and most practitioners want it to remain that way. Older clients do no want to change, and the process of moving to technology is just starting. It is not always possible to quickly share charts with all the entities that need access to them. There are also big security issues, particularly with HIPPA regulations. The bottom line is that technology can fix all of these problems.

Where is ERP on the IBM i? Where is the one size fits all solution like salesforce.com?

Vormittag: A one version solution that everyone uses…it runs on one server in a hosted environment. This is very hard to do. There are many different industries with different needs. It's hard to keep everyone on the same version and hard to scale. Traditional ERP solutions such as order entry, inventory control, warehouse management and financial are not the same as a single application offering such as SalesForce.com (CRM).

Roye: The problem is what is in the box. We could never answer everyone's need. The hardware gets in the way. The cloud-based software application would take care of itself.

Is the Cloud more or less secure than maintaining your own systems?

Vinci: The Cloud is more secure. Hacking is a relatively small threat.

Vormittag: There can be a lot of information theft. We read about it a lot, the large breaches.

Roye: I've been involved with this back in 2005. There have been a lot of tests and background checks. It is more secure in the Cloud if properly done. They did their homework. There is a greater danger from your own employees doing damage than from the general public.

Will IBM i survive the Cloud?

Roye: IBM has invested heavily in IBM i so it can work in the Cloud. They have plans for the next 5 – 7 years at least.

Vormittag: Windows is a fierce competitor, but IBM is investing big in the i. The focus is on the internet. The biggest shortcoming is the visual thing…the user interface. Green screen is death. IBM i applications must convert to GUI and HTML. It has to have the same look and feel as a browser. Your father's Oldsmobile will not work. The OS on the IBM i is a great strength and that strength can be leveraged. It must work 24 X 7 on duplicate environments.

In the future, do you see the Cloud as filling the technology needs 100% or will there be hybrid solutions?

Roye: I absolutely see hybrid solutions out there. Only the smallest companies will be 100% in the Cloud.

Vinci: I think that healthcare will be 100% in the Cloud; it's only a matter of time.