

Google adds storage to sweeten online office suite

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(AP) -- Google Inc. is expanding its Internet warehouse so people can stash more digital keepsakes from their life and work.

The upgrade announced Tuesday will provide one free gigabyte of storage to all users of Google Docs, the company's online suite of word processing, spreadsheets and other commonly used programs.

The expansion will let people store photos, video and a variety of other computer files that previously couldn't be accommodated. Each file can be as large as 250 megabytes, and those needing more space can buy it at prices ranging from \$17 annually for an extra 5 gigabytes to \$14,000 annually for an extra 4,000 gigabytes.

Google already offered unlimited storage for files that were automatically converted into the Docs format. With the change, Google Docs will store files in their original format, and only those will count toward the limit.

Subscribers to Google's \$50-a-year Docs service will continue to get more advanced features.

The increased capacity will be phased in by the end of the month.

It's the latest step in Google's crusade to make it easier, cheaper and more convenient to store information in its data centers instead of on individual computers in homes and offices. This remote method of storage has become known as "cloud computing."

Google, the Internet's search leader, has embraced cloud computing in hopes of making people more dependent on its services, while undercutting rival Microsoft Corp., which makes most of its money from selling software that's installed on individual computers.

Microsoft has been fighting back with its own cloud computing products, including a service called SkyDrive that offers 25 gigabytes of free storage. Although that's 25 times as generous as Google's service, SkyDrive can't store individual files larger than 50 megabytes, one-fifth the limit now imposed by Google Docs.

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