

Microsoft chief sees software future in the Internet "cloud"

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Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer said Wednesday that the technology giant that built a fortune with packaged software is betting the future of computing is in the Internet "cloud."

"Cloud computing represents the next frontier," Ballmer said at an annual gathering of corporate chief executives at Microsoft's campus in Redmond, Washington.

"We've been betting or investing in the cloud for about ten years and in earnest for about six or seven years."

Cloud computing gained momentum during the economic downturn as people and businesses saved money by using applications hosted online instead of buying, installing and maintaining software on their own machines.

"There is incredible opportunity in the cloud," Ballmer said.

Microsoft sees cloud computing as playing roles in its investments in personal computers, smartphones, and Internet-enabled television.

"Those are intelligent devices that are going to continue to morph," Ballmer said.

The Internet cloud will "fuse the best of what we think of as the phone, the PC, the TV, the Internet and the corporate data-center," he added.

Ballmer cited as an example the company's Project Natal technology that promises to imbue [Microsoft](#) Xbox 360 videogame consoles with facial recognition and natural gesture control capabilities.

"It's not really just for playing videogames," Ballmer said of Natal, which is to be released in time for the year-end holiday shopping season.

"You want to watch TV, have a video conference, talk to friends across the Internet; we have a little shopping application we like to show."

[Cloud computing](#) enhances [social interaction](#) with online services such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and enables software to learn from feedback as in the cases of automated spell checks or locations on map programs.

The more than 100 attendees at the CEO Summit included Queen of Jordan Rania Al Abdullah, legendary investor Warren Buffet of Berkshire Hathaway and Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos.

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