

Chapter 2

HCA Cloud

Running on a computer in your home, HCA controls devices and executes schedules and programs. And at one time that is all there was. Everything resided in the home. But with the advent of the “Internet of Things” and “Voice Assistants” this has all changed.

To make all this possible, HCA also has several other pieces running on computers someplace in the world, collectively called the “HCA Cloud”. These pieces provide the connections used by voice assistants and partner services.

For example, when talking to a Voice Assistant like Alexa, the Amazon Echo hears what you say and communicates it to the Amazon servers. The part of Alexa running on the Amazon server decides what type of device is being controlled, and if it is one managed by HCA, the HCA Alexa service is invoked to control the device. The HCA Alexa service then connects to the HCA server in your home and your device is controlled.

Starting with version 14, HCA is also partnering with other “Internet of Things” devices like the Ring Doorbell. Their systems talk to the HCA Cloud to pass messages to the HCA Server in your home.

Note: All this applies to only HCA Plus as it all requires that HCA operate in Client-Server mode. HCA Limited and HCA Standard do not support client-server.

Do I need a Cloud Account?

Having a Cloud Account is necessary if you want to use all the parts of HCA that don't reside in your home. A cloud account lets you use Voice Assistants, any of the partner services that HCA supports, and a way to integrate the HCA service into applications that you may develop.

If you don't want to use a voice assistant like Amazon Alexa or Google Home and don't want to connect your automation design to any of the partner services then you don't need to have a HCA Cloud account and can stop reading now. Without a cloud account, HCA is fully functional for device control and, when using HCA in client-server mode, remote connections are available from the iOS, Android, and Windows clients.

Do I need to subscribe?

Yes. A low-cost subscription must be purchased to have all the HCA Cloud services available.

If you want to use a voice assistant – Amazon Alexa or Google Home – or any of the partner services that link their events to HCA, a subscription is needed.

How do I subscribe?

After you complete the account creation press the “Account Management” button in the HCA Cloud ribbon category. Log into your account and press the “Renew Subscription” button. This redirects to your PayPal account where you can complete the payment.

What can I do with a cloud account?

An HCA cloud account comes with many features:

- You can choose your own account user name and password.
- You can change your account password at any time.
- You can recover your account password if forgotten.
- It is a secure system as the password to your account isn't stored in your HCA design file.
- All the connections to your HCA Server require permissions and those permissions can be viewed and revoked at any time. You are in control of what services can access your HCA server and you can change that at any time.
- Both the Amazon Alexa and Google-Home voice assistants are supported.
- You can add to your design products made by manufacturers that are HCA Partners and handle messages from those devices.
- You can create your own applications and hardware that interface with your own HCA Server in a much simpler way than previously possible.

HCA Partner Services

By establishing the HCA Cloud, it becomes possible for HCA to partner with other companies and integrate their products into your HCA design. Unlike older products, like UPB or Insteon, these new products are all about communicating with the “Internet of Things” as it is sometimes called.

For example, the Ring Doorbell provides a way that, in addition to all that it does as a doorbell with a video system, it can notify other systems of actions. So not only do you get notified when someone is at the door through the Ring mobile application, HCA is also notified and you can carry out actions that you create using the HCA tools.

For each service or product that HCA partners with there will be a method by which you can authorize HCA to work with their product. The exact steps are different with each system.

Once this connection is made and authorized, then the HCA Server is notified when an event happens and, depending upon the service, information about what happened is passed along. How you handle the event is up to you. In general, a program you designate is started and it provided with whatever information came from the partner service.

Note: For each partner service, there is a specific technical note on the procedure to follow.

Personal HCA Developer Access

Using the same facilities used to support partner services, HCA now provides a way for individual users to get access to their own HCA Server using the same cloud interface that HCA provides for partners.

This makes it possible for individual users to create their own hardware and/or applications that connect to and control their own design.

This is called the “HCA Developer Service” and is described in its own technical note.

