HCA Cloud Account (as of 29-May-2017)

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.

But like all changes, this one requires a bit of work on your part.

The next sections discuss HCA Cloud Accounts, subscriptions, how to upgrade from an older account to a new account, and a description of authorizing services in your account. Read them over to see what you will need to work with these new features.

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.

However, if you want to use the new features available starting in version 14, or you are using Amazon Alexa with HCA version 13 and you want to continue to use Alexa after you upgrade to V14, you must either create a new HCA Cloud account or upgrade your existing account.

Do I need to subscribe?

Starting in HCA version 14 there is a yearly subscription that must be purchased to have all the HCA Cloud services available. Just to make this completely clear:

- A user with HCA 13 that uses Amazon Alexa and remains on HCA 13 doesn't need to subscribe. Everything remains as it was before.

- A user with HCA 13 that uses Amazon Alexa who upgrades to HCA 14 and wants to continue to use Amazon Alexa needs to subscribe. In addition to Alexa support, having a subscription also makes it possible to use Google-Home and all the partner services available at release and those that will be added later.

- A user with HCA 13 upgrades to HCA 14 but doesn't currently use and doesn't intend to use any of the Cloud facilities, does not need to subscribe.

- A user with HCA 13 that users Amazon Alexa upgrades to HCA 14 but no longer wants to use Amazon Alexa and isn't interested in Google-Home or any partner service, does not need to subscribe. Immediately after the upgrade Amazon Alexa will function for 30 days but then stop working.

How do I subscribe?

After you complete the account creation process or after you upgrade from an older account to this new system, 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?

A 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 much more 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 additional 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.

Note: If you have used Amazon Alexa you have already seen this authorization process in action when you added the HCA Skill to your Amazon account though the Alexa app.

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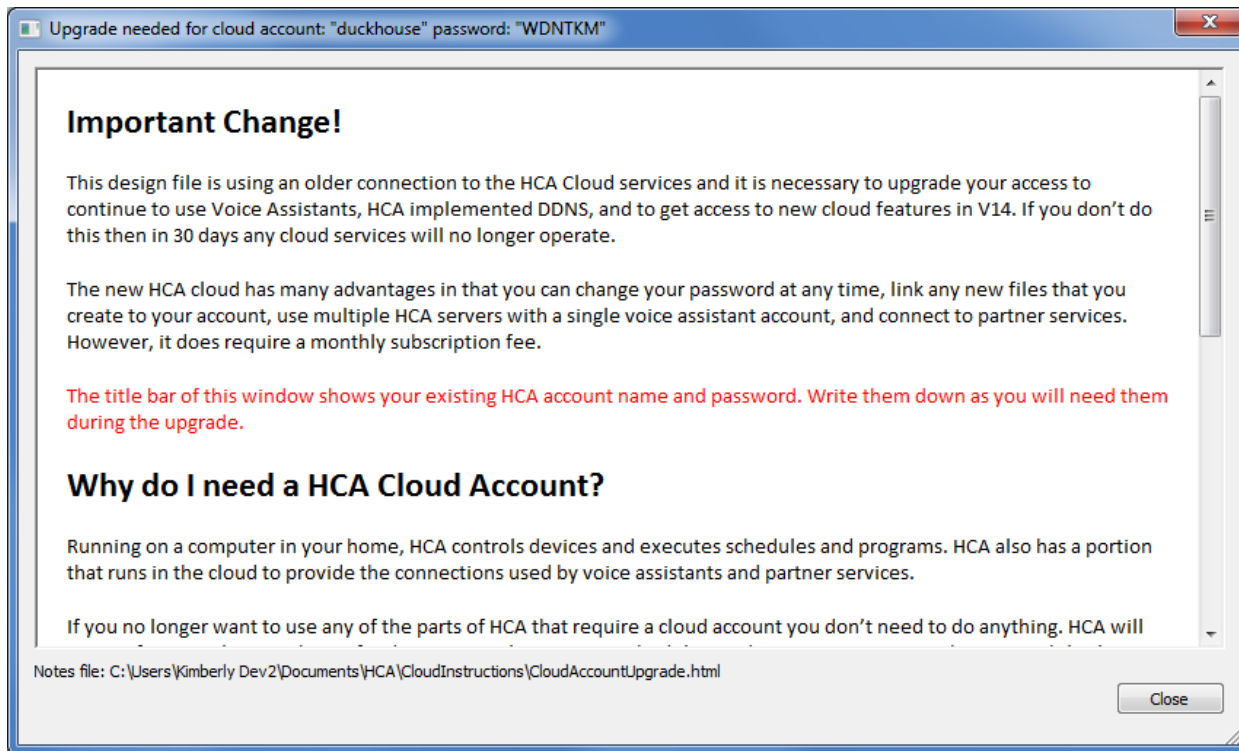
This is called the "HCA Developer Service" and is described in its own technical note.

How to upgrade from HCA 13 to HCA 14

The process starts when you load a file last saved by HCA 13 into HCA 14. When that happens a popup window shows this:

As it says, take note of the account name and password shown in the title bar. There are a number o steps and they are described below but if you want to read the popup again, the text is in a file in the HCA documents area. The path is shown at the bottom of the window.

Step 1.

In the "HCA Cloud" ribbon category press the "Account Management" button. A browser starts where you can login using your <u>existing</u> account name and password. It may take a bit of time to load this first web page.

Step 2.

Edit your account information to enter your name and an email address used to confirm your account. Save the updated account information and follow the account activation instructions.

Press "Edit Account" to begin.

Step 3.

Fill in your name and email address. This address will be used to confirm your account. Also enter a new password.

The save your changes with the "Save" button.

Step 4.

The account confirmation process starts with this:
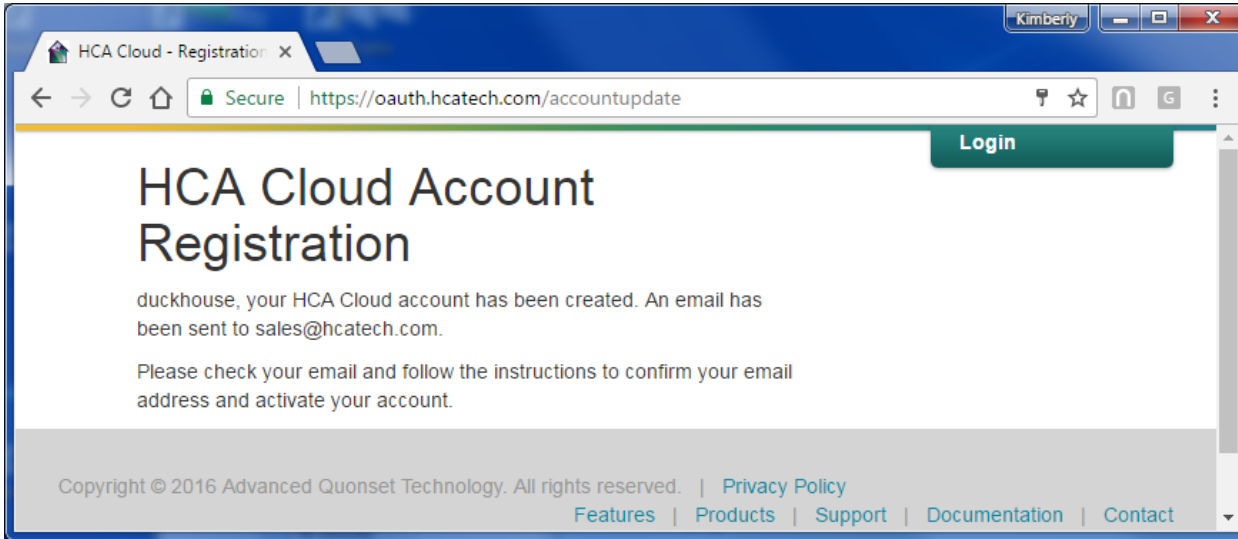
Step 5.
The email from the cloud service will arrive that looks like this:

As the text says, click on the link and a browser starts. Log into you HCA Cloud account using the username and your new password. If it doesn't arrive, check any junk mail filters you may have.
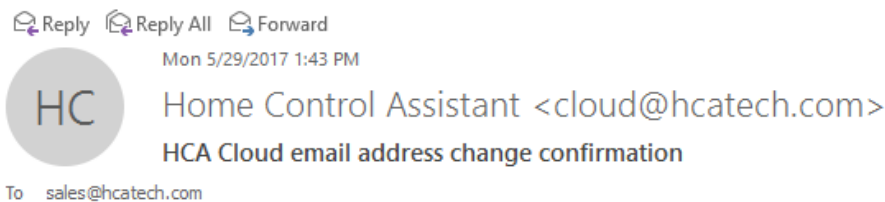
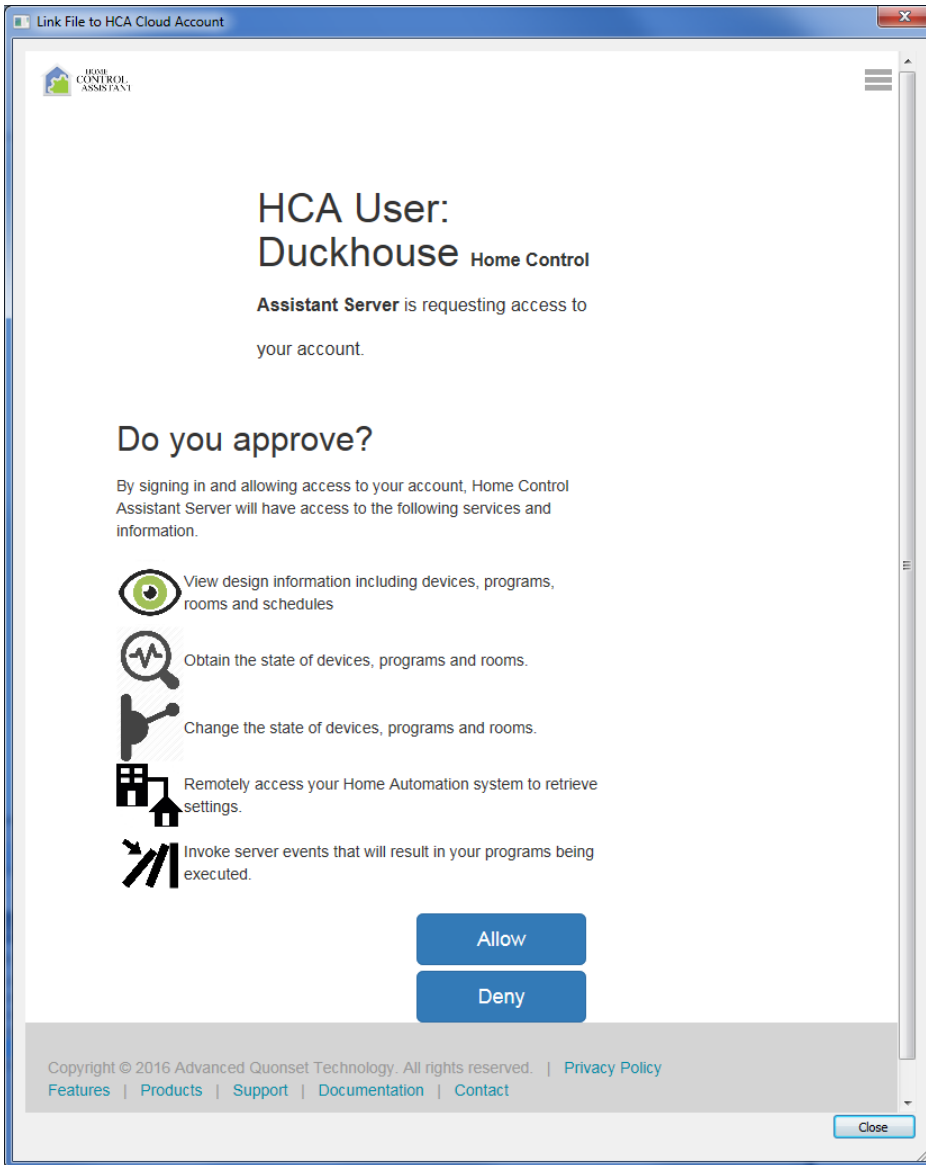Once activated, the system will email you again with a final "Thank you for registering" message.

Step 6.
Once all the account registration is complete back in HCA press the "Link file to account" button in the "HCA Cloud"

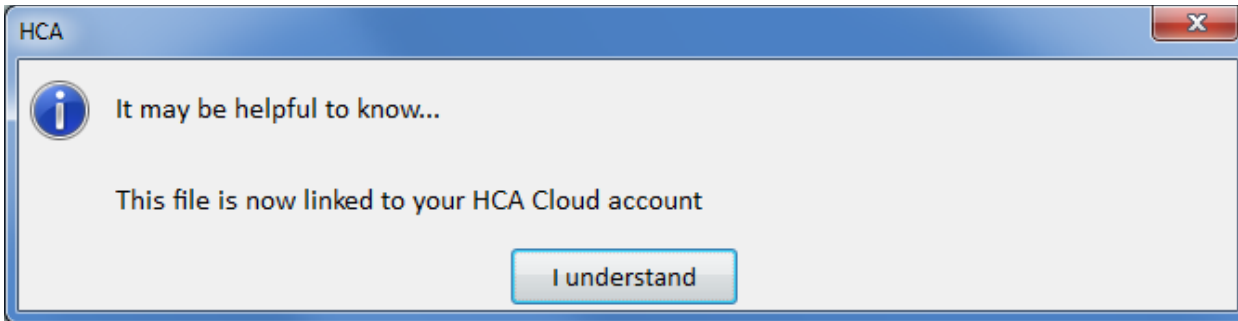ribbon category. A window opens that has an embedded browser. Login into your account and then authorize access.

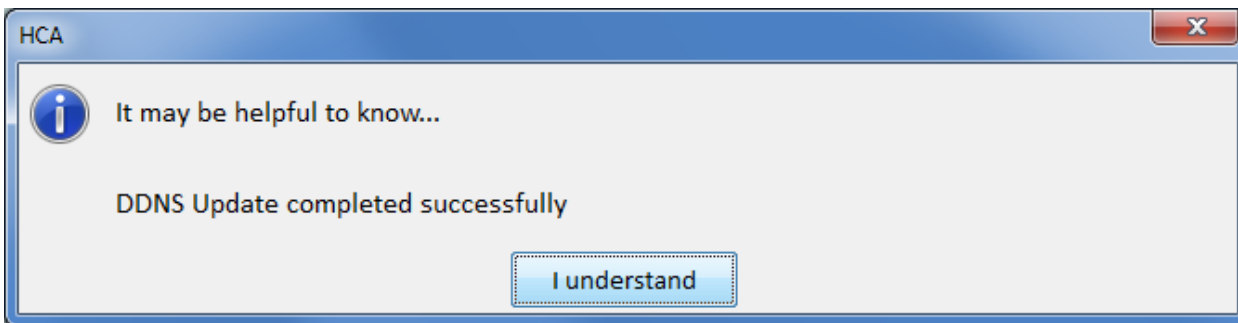Press the "Allow" button to complete the process.

Step 7.

A few seconds after the Allow button is pressed the window automatically closes and this popup message appears:

Close this popup and one more appears.


And that – finally! – completes the process.

Remember at this point to save your file!

What else do I need to know about a HCA Cloud account?

Once you have a cloud account created and configured it becomes the central place for you to control access to your HCA Server. Login to your account and select from the menu – click on "Menu" in the top right or the web page – "Services". You can also get to the same place by pressing the "Account Services" button in the "HCA Cloud" ribbon category.
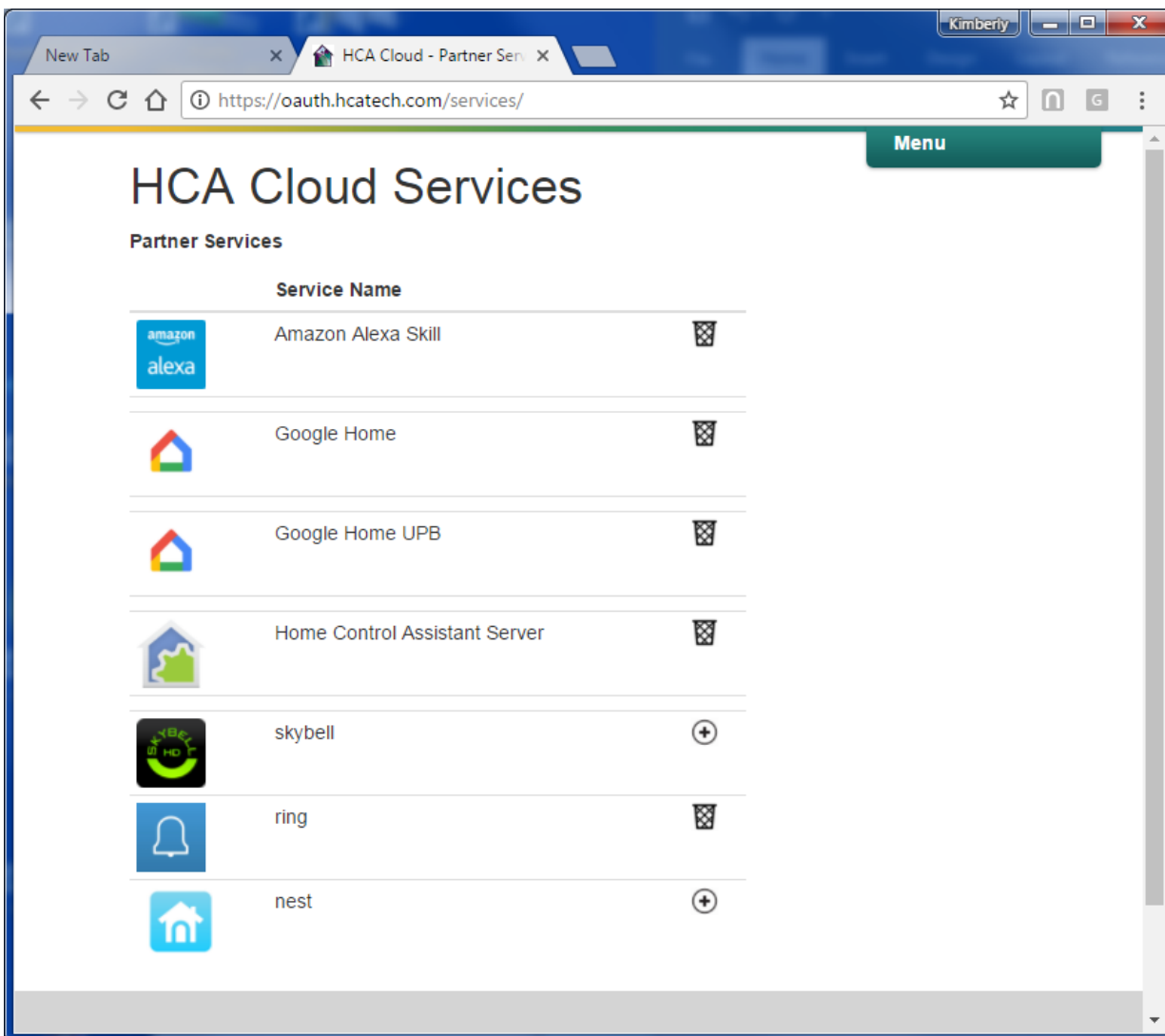
On this page are all the available services provided by the HCA Cloud that you have authorized and those that you have not. Services you have authorized show a "garbage can" icon to the right. Click on that and that service is no longer authorized.

Services that you may want to use are also listed. If you click on the "plus sign" icon, the browser redirects to the web site of the partner product where you will login to your account. For example, if you are authorizing "Nest" for example, you would have already created a "Nest" account when you installed the "Nest" hardware so you would be login with your Nest account name and password".

What can you do with these partner services? For each supported service, there is a technical note describing the linking process and what that service will bring to your automation design. Look for those on the support web site.

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