Before you convert to the Cloud: 5 tips

A Pegasus Business Guide

Gartner's **Worldwide IT Spending Forecast** claimed that cloud software will drive $3.8 trillion of overall IT spending in 2015 alone; and a recent IDC study highlighted a 7.1 month payback period and 5-year ROI of 626% for cloud solutions. It's no wonder many organisations are curious, if not converted, to the benefits the cloud can bring.

For the majority, the question is no longer 'Why cloud?' but 'Which cloud?' Cloud is not a "one size fits all" solution, so taking time to consider the best approach for your organisation is crucial. To help you determine the best way forward and ensure a smooth transition, here's a 5-step guide that aims to dispel the myths and help you avoid the pitfalls, to maximise the benefits of the Cloud.

5 tips to consider before moving to the cloud

1 Are you ready?

With any new project, it's important to review your current infrastructure, applications, skills and resources in order to establish a benchmark from which to measure improvement.

SMEs inevitably have fewer resources than their larger counterparts, and arguably have more to gain from moving to a Cloud model. But it's important to ensure that the timing is right. Having established a benchmark, many organisations make the shift to the Cloud when upgrades are due or when new software needs to be introduced, in order to maximise the payback.

2 Know your options

Cloud isn't one-size-fits-all, and one company's cloud might be another's downpour. With Cloud options spanning infrastructure, software or platforms, there's an abundance of flexibility and choice. Hybrid approaches, whereby companies adopt a combination of Cloud and on-premise systems, are currently the most prevalent.

Very few organisations are likely to make a wholesale shift to Cloud in the short term. Most opt for a more incremental approach, where a combination of on-premise, software as a service and platform as a service applications are scoped out to fit the unique challenges, requirements and timescales of individual organisations. Testament to this trend is that Gartner predicts that by the end of 2017, half of organisations will have made the shift.

3 Dispelling myths

Some of the biggest pitfalls associated with Cloud are perceived to be cost and security.

For companies who have invested in costly data centres and continue to invest in associated maintenance, upgrades, power and air conditioning, the idea of ripping everything out in order to make way for a new way of working can be an uncomfortable concept. The reality is that the millions spent on data centres can almost certainly be re-invested in initiatives which will support a company's competitive position and boost their growth strategy.

Similarly, security concerns have been proved in many cases to be unfounded. Providers have put security at the forefront of their propositions, with data hosted in ISO 27001 accredited data centres, with back-ups to secondary data centres as well as a host of other measures which would rival most on-premise deployments. One recent study found that 94% of SMEs have actually experienced increased security benefits since moving to the cloud.

Of course, it's paramount to apply the same rigour you would apply to an on-premise deployment and ensure expectations are incorporated into SLAs, but for the most part, these are already extremely robust.

4 Pick the right partner

Don't underestimate the value of working with a partner who can offer advice on the right solution and provide additional consultancy and services. While a basic SLA may be sufficient for some applications, others may require a more comprehensive framework. And don't assume that big is best. Often smaller players can offer a comprehensive managed service approach which is much more tailored to the size and specific requirements of SMEs.

5 Embrace the benefits

Having evaluated the options and navigated perceived pitfalls, the benefits really are there for the taking. Low total cost of ownership, reduced reliance on legacy skills, greater flexibility in upgrading to new versions, and accelerated deployment are just some of the advantages of a Cloud model.

In addition, two of the biggest advantages to a Cloud model are enhanced security and disaster recovery capabilities. Any solution worth its salt will guarantee high availability, replication and backup to a far greater degree than if they were deployed on-premise.

Offering access to data anywhere, at any time, Cloud is designed to support modern working. And with the ability to add new users and applications quickly and easily, it really is a win-win for the majority of organisations.

For more information on how Cloud can benefit your organisation

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