

Getting ready for the inevitable: Easing the transition to cloud with basic best practices.

Executive Summary:

As the cloud becomes a viable option for many IT services traditionally delivered in-house, IT departments have shifted from being the sole builder of IT services to a manager of many services. This requires a fundamentally different set of skills and strategies and necessitates a foundational restructuring of IT.

Companies often struggle to successfully integrate and manage their disparate services, threatening the IT organization's focus and efficiency. This ultimately leads to suboptimal service, inflated costs and poor vendor relationships.

Although companies may move to the cloud for many good reasons, they often run into unexpected problems. The cloud is a drastic reimagining of IT and a lack of familiarity with the problems, expectations and use cases for cloud solutions mean there are often many challenges that companies simply aren't prepared for. In order to achieve success, it is important to develop a rigorous strategy based on best practices.

Common cloud integration questions:

- What cloud strategy is the best fit for my company?
- How can we plan and execute migrations?
- How do I manage cloud providers?
- How do I migrate data and services?
- How do I evaluate performance?



Background

The growth of cloud infrastructure into a mature and viable service has dramatically shifted the landscape of IT. Today, over 95% of enterprises have adopted some form of cloud infrastructure technology and 31% run more than 1,000 VMs in the cloud. [1]

The ability for companies to rapidly source needed IT infrastructure drastically changes their ability for innovation, efficiency improvements and costs savings. However, understanding the challenges of cloud integration is critical for success.

Creating a more effective cloud integration strategy.

Creating a structured cloud integration strategy allows companies to take advantage of the many benefits of cloud-based alternatives without disrupting services, compromising data or creating a disorganized, inefficient IT organization.

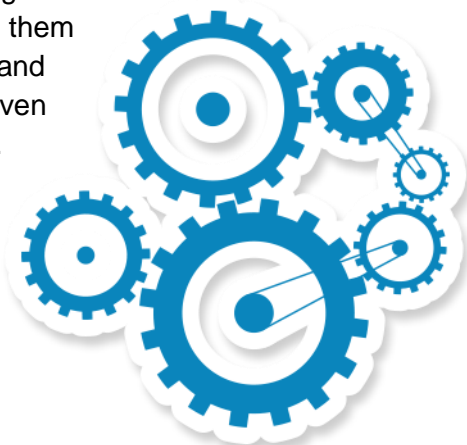
The following best practices will help your company better manage its cloud based infrastructure and prepare for the future.

1. Think enterprise-wide

This IT's cloud strategy should encompass the entire company to ensure that services are properly integrated and there are no redundancies.

Many large companies suffer from disparate "shadow" IT groups that spend resources on solutions outside the control of the central IT department. This problem is compounded by the rise of cloud solutions, which make sourcing new services as easy as clicking a button. IT leaders must develop an integration plan that takes these services and integrates them together into a manageable unit.

A company with SaaS applications or other cloud services spread across various divisions in the enterprise should build an integration platform that allows them to maintain control and good governance even in this environment.



2. Get ready for migration

When moving services or data to the cloud, companies should go through a rigorous migration process to ensure continuity of service and data integrity. This means analyzing business demands and existing infrastructure, defining a migration strategy, creating a cost/risk assessment and creating a project plan and timeline.

After the backup is complete, the organization should then verify a strategy for backup and disaster recovery, measure performance and efficiency and execute a handover to operations to provide day-to-day support.

3. Consider Hybrid IT

A hybrid enterprise is one that uses both on-premise and cloud-based applications. For example, a company may use an on-premise database along with a cloud-based CRM system. This solution allows companies to keep sensitive data or mission critical applications on-site, while still offering the ability to take advantage of the cloud for other purposes.

However, hybrid IT also presents unique challenges for integration. Data can become fragmented across a wide range of cloud based and on-site servers, leading to serious problems with compliance, efficiency and reliability. In order to overcome this, IT departments must consider how the organization is using cloud as a whole and then develop an integration platform that works across all environments.

4. Measure Vendor Performance

The ability to accurately measure vendor performance and tie those metrics to business goals is a critical part of cloud management. Companies must develop systems to collect data about reliability, performance, efficiency and security in order to meet core objectives. This also helps ensure that vendors are delivering on their SLAs and provides leverage for negotiations.



The challenges of cloud integration.

The cloud offers many benefits and opportunities, but it also presents many challenges. The movement of infrastructure and services from being on-site to managed third party locations represents a significant shift both in the role of IT and potential problems that may arise.

Some common challenges include:

- Lack of cloud focused expertise
- Ensuring security and compliance
- Delivering the best cost-to-performance
- Managing multiple cloud services
- Implementing effective governance
- Negotiating with vendors
- Lack of integration between on-premise and off-site services

IT leaders must now understand the uses of public, private and hybrid cloud, and how to integrate these into their overall enterprise IT strategy. This integration requires drastically different skills, processes and expertise than many IT organizations currently possess.

Conclusion

The benefits of cloud services are compelling. It offers the potential of easy ease of implementation, scalability, reduced technical complexity, and lowered cost due to economies of scale. However, implementing cloud services is not always an easy solution.

No matter where applications or data reside, developing an IT integration strategy is critical. By ensuring that all services are coordinated and under the control of IT, companies can increase their efficiency, reduce redundancies and ensure compliance, reliability and security.

About Lighthouse Computer Services

Since 1995, Lighthouse has provided expert counsel, sales, and service for clients' complex IT requirements.

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About Lighthouse Cloud Integration Services

Lighthouse offers comprehensive cloud infrastructure integration and migration services, allowing IT clients to take advantage of the cloud without extensive integration expertise. With a wide range of solutions for every company's needs, Lighthouse can help make cloud adoption faster, easier and more reliable.

Lighthouse cloud services include:

- Business Process Analysis and Management
- Business Process Monitoring
- Security Management Services
- End-to-end integration services using Open Source Integration Platforms.
- Integration architecture design, advisement and consulting
- Integration development, migration and consolidation
- Integration hosting services for both integrated applications, business critical applications and development
- Integration governance and management services
- Integration application support and maintenance

References:

[1]<http://www.rightscale.com/blog/cloud-industry-insights/cloud-computing-trends-2016-state-cloud-survey>

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