Finding the Right Cloud Blend to Support Midmarket Businesses
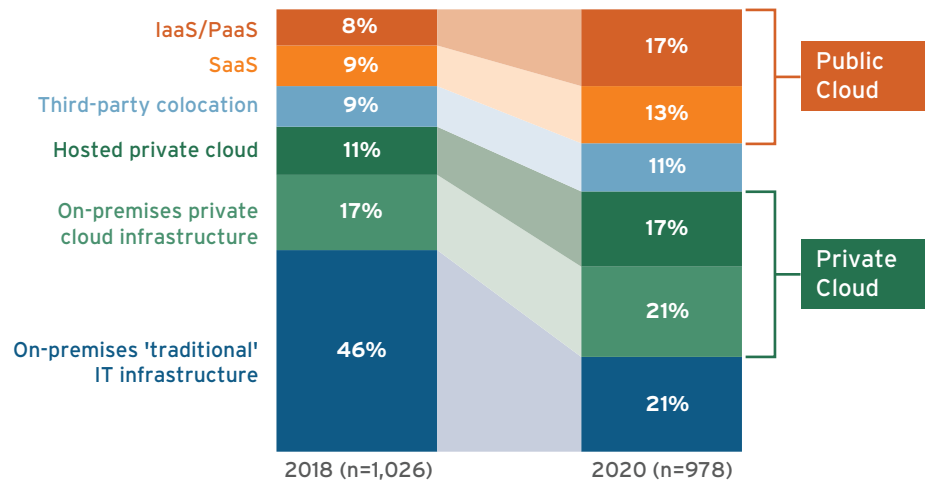
The 451 Take

For large companies, decisions around cloud adoption are influenced by a need for flexibility to support new product development and delivery, and other essential production and management initiatives. On the other hand, smaller companies typically focus on replacement of major IT expenditures with affordable services from cloud providers. The road to cloud adoption for the midmarket business, however, is full of obstacles because internal IT resources are often limited compared with large companies, yet the one-size-fits-all approach to services favored by smaller organizations won't suffice.

Every midmarket organization is different when it comes to cloud and data needs. Each has unique preferences and requirements regarding security and privacy issues. Some businesses are heavily regulated, with greater need for auditing and compliance features. These characteristics contribute to an enterprise's appetite for private or public cloud services. The challenge becomes identifying the right 'hybrid IT' blend to effectively meet the performance and security needs of each company.

Generally speaking, midmarket enterprises are looking for ways to streamline IT infrastructure that is complex to manage with a small internal IT staff. Cloud computing offers a way for IT teams to more efficiently manage infrastructure with limited financial and manpower resources. Most midmarket IT professionals have some exposure to public cloud services, but far less experience with private or hybrid cloud use. Thus, as 'cloud-first' policies and large-scale cloud adoption become more prevalent, midmarket buyers need consultative planning support from an external service provider to identify the most appropriate blend of infrastructure services for their particular business.

Workload Movement in a Hybrid IT World

Q. Where are the majority of your organization's workloads/applications currently deployed, and where will the majority be deployed two years from now?

Source: 451 Research, Voice of the Enterprise: Digital Pulse, Workloads & Key Projects 2018

As indicated in the figure above, organizations typically expect to split their workloads roughly 30:40:30 between public cloud, private cloud and traditional infrastructure, with a mix of on-premises and off-premises delivery models. Midmarket buyers should bear in mind this rough benchmark for blended services when planning the best deployment location for their suite of applications – both those currently in use and those in the planning stages.

Business
Impact Brief

Business Impact

CREATING THE RIGHT CLOUD BLEND IS A JOURNEY, NOT A ONE-OFF PROJECT. Most organizations begin with server virtualization to reduce IT overhead, before deploying automation and orchestration technologies to further streamline infrastructure management. The ultimate goal is for the internal IT department to adopt the mentality of an external service provider, managing public and private cloud locations alongside existing on-premises and hosted infrastructure.

A CLOUD MANAGEMENT PLATFORM IS THE BEST TOOL TO MANAGE HYBRID IT. Cloud management platforms provide cloud-ready infrastructure for commonly used server, application and storage configurations, in addition to containers used for application and workload portability. Thinking ahead, buyers will also need cloud brokers that can automate scheduling, delivery and access to multiple cloud services. Access to a cloud management platform that addresses these capabilities will help bind on- and off-premises cloud services to existing IT resources.

WHICH APPS GO WHERE? Characteristics of apps that are most favorable to public cloud deployment include the need to scale to a large number of users, the requirement to connect to other data with application or web services, a low organizational risk in the event of failure, and the ability to support significant numbers of mobile users. That's a lot to take into consideration. Thus, finding the best deployment venue for applications is an area where most businesses require external expertise.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CLOUD PARTNER. Midmarket businesses should look for cloud hosting providers that can provide full-fledged strategic support to assist in aligning business outcomes and technical resources to augment in-house talent. These partners should assist with application auditing to determine the best infrastructure location for each workload. A good cloud partner should also be able to either provide access to and support for a cloud management platform, or provide technical assistance for internal deployment of cloud-enabling technologies.

Looking Ahead

An individualized approach must be adopted when designing hybrid cloud solutions for mid-market enterprises because organizations' needs can drastically differ. The ideal hybrid cloud strategy not only addresses the current and near-future requirements of the enterprise but also involves significant considerations around accommodating the company's long-term growth strategies. For this reason, the most successful companies involve business decision-makers alongside the IT team when planning the right cloud blend.

As an example, many midmarket businesses are currently reimagining and transforming the ways that they support employees (individually and in workgroups) to increase productivity and efficiency. As the transformation to digital workforce services drives more control and transparency into the hands of end users, it requires well-aligned business and IT strategies. With forward planning, blended cloud delivery can pave the way to a more agile and productive future work state.