POINT OF VIEW:

Managing IT in a Multi-Cloud World

5 Best Practices to Prepare for a Future in the Cloud

By Clint Harder, Chief Technology Officer and Senior Vice President, OneNeck® IT Solutions

DELL EMC PARTNER GOLD
CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER & STRATEGIC OUTSOURCER

OneNeck® IT SOLUTIONS
a TDS® Company

By Clint Harder, Chief Technology Officer and Senior Vice President, OneNeck® IT Solutions

Welcome to the multi-cloud world. IDC predicts that more than 85 percent of enterprises will be committed to multi-cloud architectures in 2018[1], where they will mix and match services from different cloud providers to meet ever-changing workload requirements.

The advantage of multi-cloud environments is that they free you from vendor lock-in, provide the flexibility to spin up and offload resources on demand, and ease disaster recovery concerns. More to the point: Multi-cloud environments can be more efficient and cost-effective than on-premises environments, and they are a valuable tool in rolling out new and improved applications.

If you're waiting for the catch, here it is: While the multi-cloud world is indeed the future—and one that offers significant benefits—it requires an IT transformation more involved than some organizations may yet recognize. Preparing for that transformation is not a quick and easy endeavor, nor one that will go smoothly without focused attention and thoughtful planning. Your plan should include every element of your IT environment and your business: technology, strategy, budgeting, staffing, and management.

The good news is that while the move to the multi-cloud world requires commitment, it has already been accomplished successfully by many organizations, resulting in lessons learned that you can follow to achieve similar results.

The following five best practices will guide you through some of those steps and help you prepare for your future in the multi-cloud world.

5 Ways to Ensure Success in the Multi-Cloud Environment

1. Develop a cloud strategy

At Before moving to a multi-cloud environment—or any cloud environment—it is essential to have a comprehensive cloud strategy that defines the organization's goals and motivations for moving to the cloud. Is the primary goal to accelerate application delivery or to reduce risk? Do you want to improve IT efficiency or add new capabilities and expand into new geographies?

Once your organization's goals have been identified, you can develop a strategy that establishes governance and control and clearly states preferences on specifics. These include whether your organization prefers to deploy software-as-a-service (SaaS), infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS), or on-premises, and whether your strategy is to lead with one of those or move toward all of them at once.

In an age in which IT is sometimes left out of key decisions, the development of a detailed cloud strategy—one that also addresses security, disaster recovery, and other ongoing concerns—is also valuable

[1] https://www.idc.com/research/viewtoc.jsp?containerId=US41863916

opportunity for IT to show the business it is ready for this challenge.

IT can lead the discussion and demonstrate the pros and cons of all the available options, including the selection of an appropriate multi-cloud management approach. By establishing an evaluation framework to assess each option, IT can also ensure that both technical and business concerns are carefully and thoroughly considered before any key decisions are made.

2. Inventory your applications

Once you have a cloud strategy in place, the next step is to conduct an application inventory—an essential step that a surprising number of organizations do not perform regularly.

The goal of the application inventory is to identify all the applications you currently have. You may find overlapping or out-of-date applications that can simply be retired. In addition, the inventory should document all the details associated with each application, including how they are accessed and licensed, how they map to business processes, and which users they affect.

A thorough application inventory provides valuable information that you can use to quickly choose, optimize, and execute the right application (and associated cloud) for a given job based on availability, performance, cost, security, and other considerations.

3. Shift to cloud-specific budgeting

In traditional on-premises deployments, budgets are predictable. There are certainly surprises, but for the most part IT knows at the start of the year the approximate costs for managing and maintaining the environment. This is simply not the case for multi-cloud environments. Ultimately, they often reduce overall costs, but over the course of the year they also can inject more variability and complexity into the budgeting process.

Numerous organizations that have moved to the cloud have horror stories about IT being the last to know when a particular line of business has rung up thousands of dollars a month in bills with a cloud provider unbeknownst to IT.

To avoid such unpleasant—and likely unbudgeted surprises—you need to recognize that the flexibility of multi-cloud environments to quickly spin up workloads and meet huge demands also makes it easy to incur unanticipated bills.

It is, therefore, critical to develop and institute a budgeting structure from the outset that specifies how you are going to predict, allocate, and measure your available cloud resources. Unlike with traditional deployments, cloud-specific budgeting is not a once-a-year process. It requires a clear and detailed structure that everyone follows, and is monitored frequently and closely to prevent unwelcome surprises.

4. Develop soft skills

Multi-cloud environments require different skills than traditional IT deployments, where well-trained, deeply technical, and highly paid staff are focused on designing, installing, configuring, and managing an on-premises infrastructure. For better and worse, in the multi-cloud world, many of those infrastructure-related technical skills will not be needed at all or will be less of a priority.

In their place, organizations will need to identify, train, and recruit employees with semi-technical, general management skills such as business analysis, cloud monitoring, and SLA reporting skills, as well as capabilities related to vendor selection, management, and integration.

The good news for organizations moving forward is that positions requiring deep technical expertise are typically more expensive and difficult to fill. The bad news is that it can also be a significant challenge to find

and develop people who have the right combination of business and technical skills.

As organizations move into the multi-cloud world, it is important—indeed, as important as hiring qualified high-tech experts was a decade ago—to commit to building an internal team with the skills needed to monitor and manage multi-cloud environments.

Once a commitment is made, organizations can focus on several methods of hiring and developing employees with soft skills. Typically, the least demanding method is to mentor and train existing personnel who show an aptitude for cloud management and optimization roles.

In addition, organizations should look for qualified external candidates and, if necessary, consider hiring consultants who can be brought in to guide the cloud management and training program.

5. Implement a cloud management platform

According to the RightScale 2018 State of the Cloud Report, 81 percent of enterprises surveyed have a strategy to use multiple clouds, with more than half implementing a hybrid cloud, 10 percent with multiple private clouds, and 21 percent with multiple public clouds[2].

Managing all those various types of multi-cloud environments can quickly get complicated, which makes it vital to select a cloud management platform early on that will unify your on-premises, public, private, or hybrid clouds.

Ideally, the platform should provide you with a single pane of glass that you can use to automate, manage, monitor, secure, and govern the usage, performance, and cost of all your cloud resources, regardless of whether they are public, private, or hybrid.

It's difficult to overstate the benefits of having a single hub from which you can, for instance, assess workloads, plan and execute migrations, and analyze and optimize costs. The right platform can also help you orchestrate all your workloads, and significantly reduce costs by ensuring that your applications and service requests are supported with the right resources at the right time.

Make the Move to Multi-Cloud

By Multi-cloud environments are the new reality for business today, giving you the control and flexibility to select the right type of cloud for every workload. But to move successfully to a multi-cloud environment, it's best to follow proven best practices. These best practices include developing a multi-cloud strategy, conducting a detailed application inventory, creating a cloud-specific budgeting structure, developing staff with necessary soft skills, and implementing the right cloud management platform to get the most value from your investments.

If all that sounds like a lot to take on, you're right. That's why they call it digital transformation. But the benefits—in efficiency, productivity, and cost—are worth it. While the move to multi-cloud is likely for most organizations, and many organizations have started moving forward with a sense of urgency and purpose, it pays to develop a strategy first. With a solid strategy in place, you gain an edge over the competition and an opportunity to be at the forefront of innovation in the years ahead.

To learn more about planning a multi-cloud strategy and how a cloud management platform can streamline your efforts, contact OneNeck today.

[2] https://assets.rightscale.com/uploads/pdfs/RightScale-2018-State-of-the-Cloud-Report.pdf

(855) ONE-NECK

WWW.ONENECK.COM