



What's the future of hybrid cloud strategies?

From small businesses to multinational enterprises, cloud computing adoption among companies continues to shoot upward, through public or private cloud services, virtualization, or other cloud models. In enterprises, piecemeal adoption of cloud services left many companies attempting to manage several different architectures with varied levels of security and shared compute or storage capacity. As these companies start to closely examine hybrid cloud models, they will finally start to recognize that the cloud can *reduce* complexity, not just add it. With cloud computing there is an opportunity to transform business models, drive innovation and increase business agility.

To realize these benefits, companies need to consolidate their services and leverage a hybrid cloud model. This is easier said than done - once companies choose to deploy a hybrid cloud infrastructure, they must navigate how to piece their existing cloud architectures together efficiently.

As those of us in the industry have witnessed the shift toward managed networks, I believe that companies will be forced to look to service providers to help them both identify the best service mix for their business, ultimately navigating the cloud. From experience with our own clients, Glassbeam, an innovative product analytics vendor, initially began partnering with us for a dedicated data center environment, but later made the decision to leverage the cloud more fully. It started looking at hybrid clouds; some in private cloud environments and some in public cloud environments. However, after a while they all move to a hybrid cloud.

With various forces combining to transform the IT landscape, how do you see the role of the IT department evolving?

IT has already jumped on the SaaS bandwagon. They've realized that it is easier to use a SaaS application than to build and support a custom application in-house. As cloud computing becomes increasingly pervasive, businesses will move more and more of their infrastructure

into a public or private cloud, initially looking to benefit from the economics and efficiency. As end users become more familiar with consuming infrastructure on-demand, the role of IT will change from being more project-oriented to being more service-oriented, essentially delivering IT-as-a-Service.

Historically, IT initiatives have been implemented on a per-project, integration basis-essentially, the antithesis of how cloud consumption models operate. How, then, would organizations rectify their business and IT objectives to ensure they remain on similar paths?

The answer is to take IT to the cloud as well.

This transition, though, will require a fundamental shift in thinking with IT breaking out of a project or department-centric model and moving toward a more strategic, business-oriented approach. Like other applications being taken to the cloud, IT must be nimble, drawing from the market for proven solutions it can implement and customizable on the fly. Additionally, organizations must expand beyond simply focusing on delivering an IT project to enabling business outcomes, speeding development and being flexible enough to scale quickly.

The result is an IT structure that is no longer a cost-center, but a core driver of activities that bring in revenue and support the overall business' success. It may sound like a radical change today, but businesses that carefully guide this transformation will stand to reap significant long-term benefits.

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