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Successful hybrid cloud adoption

How to achieve the best hybrid cloud structure for your business by building on what you already have.

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Hybrid cloud infrastructures, which combine the positive elements of public and private cloud environments, aim to help businesses achieve the best of both worlds. However, getting there is rarely simple. With a myriad of different options for structuring your hybrid cloud, how can you choose what's right for your organisation?

Understanding the choices available begins with understanding how we have got to this point. Cloud adoption has been one of the biggest trends in enterprise IT over recent years, as organisations in multiple sectors seek to enjoy the cost savings, flexibility, and management efficiencies of deploying their applications over the internet as a service. Public cloud solutions such as Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Azure enable organisations to avoid the cost and management burden of running their own dedicated hardware and software.

However, it is not always simple to establish. Many companies remain reluctant to place business-critical applications and data in the public cloud, since they lose visibility and control over where it is hosted and how it is protected. Hybrid cloud infrastructures enable organisations to find the best blend of flexibility and control for their bespoke IT setup. They can host select resources in the public cloud whilst building and managing a private cloud for the deployment of the applications and data they want to retain strictest control over. This private cloud might be deployed over internal infrastructure, or it might still use a third-party cloud provider's infrastructure, but be dedicated to this particular organisation.

A blended approach
The key point is that any hybrid cloud infrastructure is by nature a blended thing. It involves a combination of different products and services – one or more third-party, public cloud agreements, one or more private cloud solutions, which may involve on-premise hardware, and, crucially, orchestration technologies to allow workloads to move between the platforms. Not only do hybrid cloud infrastructures contain multiple parts; they are, in a sense, multiple moving parts, with data constantly transitioning between different cloud environments.

As such, achieving the best hybrid cloud structure for your business means ensuring that all of the separate parts of this puzzle are managed as efficiently as possible, all year round, and ensuring that they work together as seamlessly as possible. This is no small task

– but there are some principles that will help you get there.

Principle 1: Consider the security/control balancing act
Many perceive hybrid cloud as a balancing act between the expense of private cloud and the requirement for in-house expertise to manage, whilst public cloud presents the potential for security issues and loss of overall control. There is a lot of truth in this – but don't forget that an organisation which specialises in providing secure cloud space may actually be better at keeping your data safe than your in-house team. Examine carefully the security implications of both private and public cloud solutions for your most sensitive data and business-critical applications, and don't jump to conclusions regarding the protection available. There can also be data protection and compliance implications for where different cloud resources are ultimately hosted; for example, it may be prohibited for specific forms of personal data to be hosted on cloud resources that pass through particular nations.

Principle 2: Think long-term
Most organisations experience significant peaks and troughs in demand on their infrastructures, particularly retailers who may experience massive additional network strain around Christmas and events like Black Friday. Clearly, it is ineffective from a cost and resource point of view to deploy physical datacentre space to handle this extra demand which is only required for a couple of weeks every year. Virtual infrastructure is far more appropriate.

Principle 3: Rationalise and consolidate
For the most cost-effective and streamlined approach to developing a hybrid cloud, you need to consolidate your infrastructure as much as possible before you begin. Build up a clear picture of your in-house capabilities, both from a technology and a human resource point of view. Spend time understanding your existing infrastructure. Rationalise, standardise and virtualise as much as possible. This will enable you to get the very best out of

your new cloud model. You will be able to make clear decisions about how you use your public and private cloud resources whilst allowing the overall infrastructure to seamlessly scale. A managed service provider can be the ideal partner to guide you through this process, including advising on brokerage, orchestration and portal software to pick and automate the right selection of those cloud processes.

A unified view

Hybrid cloud infrastructures undoubtedly have the potential to deliver a huge range of business benefits. They can enable organisations to develop an IT infrastructure with precisely the right blend of security, visibility, control, flexibility and agility for their needs, with stretchy scalability around peak periods of demand and lower management overheads across the board.

However, they are complex to design and deploy, with multiple moving parts and a mixture of hardware and software. The best way to overcome this complexity and create a hybrid cloud that works for you is to simplify and consolidate things as much as possible before you begin. Working with a managed services provider can be the ideal solution for enabling you to both make the most of your private cloud, and manage your public cloud subscriptions.

A managed services provider can also look after your hybrid cloud infrastructure on an ongoing basis, keeping it under control and within budget. They can integrate the required services such as networking and security with those hybrid cloud services using

a single unified view, which can be invaluable in bringing simplicity and clarity to what is essentially a complex, blended environment.

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At every stage, we help our customers minimise the cost and maximise the business value of their IT expenditure. We have experience delivering globally across a wide range of industry sectors.

Our people strive to deliver excellent customer service, to exceed expectations and consistently go that extra mile.

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