



Where to Start With Cloud Computing

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When it comes to cloud solutions, one size doesn't fit all. Every business has to look at its own unique situation and particular needs, as well as industry-specific requirements for regulatory compliance. From planning to actual implementation of the best-fit solution, here are a few guidelines for getting started.

Top Five Steps to Move to Cloud Computing

Step 1: Identify the real value drivers and risks

Start with why. Is this move to the cloud driven by strategic or tactical business needs? At the strategic level, if you plan to grow through merger and acquisition, you may expect to use the cloud to improve organizational flexibility. But most businesses anticipate benefits of a tactical nature such as cost savings, or anywhere, anytime access for employees.

However, to build a credible business case, look at operational or project opportunities and also risks such as security, privacy, confidentiality, and regulatory issues. A realistic assessment is the best way to win over the skeptics and explain to all employees and other stakeholders why moving to the cloud will provide the optimal benefits for your organization overall.

Step 2: Talk to your cloud expert

Once you have clarified what you want to achieve with the cloud, you should talk to a cloud expert to establish a realistic roadmap.

During this exercise, you'll be able to select and prioritize the IT functions you should move to the cloud versus the ones you would prefer to keep in-house, and you can determine how cloud-based solutions will integrate with existing business processes, your identity and access management policies, and in-house data and applications.

The result will be a detailed implementation plan that clarifies how you intend to measure success and mitigate risks. It will also detail your budget and schedule expectations.

Step 3: Evaluate different cloud offerings

To evaluate potential vendor choices, your cloud expert is probably your best ally. Cloud services partners typically know the strengths and weaknesses of each cloud vendor and can help you avoid the most common pitfalls. Some of them may even provide ancillary services such as cloud support services with guaranteed service level agreements. It is worth taking the time to look at the long-term viability of the vendors you are considering, their market position, their security and data practices, and the potential risk that they will be bought out. All of these factors need to be taken into consideration.

Step 4: Start small

As tempting as it may be to run several cloud projects at once, it is far preferable to start with a pilot project that will demonstrate the value of the cloud for larger initiatives.

Although each situation is unique, some systems are more suitable for moving to the cloud than others. The best candidates are disaster recovery, email, online storage, unified communications, online collaboration, and customer relationship management. In this respect, Microsoft's cloud offerings are particularly interesting.



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Microsoft Azure delivers a proven Infrastructure-as-a-Service solution to build or host applications in the cloud, leverage virtual machines for development and test projects, and consolidate primary, archive, backup, and disaster recovery. It provides greater agility than many other options and eliminates the need to buy and maintain on-site hardware.

Office 365 offers a compelling choice for any organization looking to move to the cloud. Not only does it allow employees to access their emails and documents from any location, at any time, and from any device, but it also provides the scalability and reliability that businesses need as their requirements evolve and change over time.

Microsoft OneDrive for Business, which is an integral part of Office 365, is a cloud-based file storage solution that allows users to store and synchronize Microsoft Office files across multiple devices and easily share them internally and externally while controlling permissions.

Lync, Skype, and Yammer are collaboration and communication tools that make it easy for employees to connect with each other, their customers, and business partners, thus increasing productivity.

SharePoint Online is another solution that comes bundled with various Office 365 plans, but that can also be purchased as a stand-alone solution. Although SharePoint Online can be used as a cloud service, thus reducing the costs of ownership of storage hardware and its associated management, it can also serve as a powerful collaboration platform with rich content-search functionalities.

Step 5: Consider cloud managed services

Today's needs may not turn out to be tomorrow's needs, so once you have successfully completed your first cloud project, you still need to assess and reassess, through a proper system of continuing review, that the cloud is the best solution for all your business purposes.

Also, as you move more business applications and servers to the cloud, you may realize that you do not have the right in-house resources and expertise to manage the complexities of the cloud. In this case, cloud managed services provide an interesting option to proactively monitor private, public, and hybrid cloud environments and prevent potential problems from happening.

The cloud offers tremendous benefits for businesses of all sizes and in all sectors. But with all the different technologies and cloud vendors, you may find it difficult to manage the transition on your own, especially if you don't have the right resources and expertise in-house.

Itergy can simplify your move to the cloud. Let's talk.



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