Choosing a Cloud Solution

INTRODUCTION

One of the most intriguing aspects of the cloud is the freedom it brings. The lack of term or volume commitments, the pay as you go pricing, and the ease of entry and exit appear to grant a license to behave impulsively. Like a 60's commune, that image of the cloud invites dabbling, even flirting, in a free-spirited, "no commitments" sort of way. But is that any way to make a critical IT decision? Of course not. Tempting as it may be to sample your way through the cloud, IT leaders know that their businesses—and their jobs—depend on thoughtful planning. Once the decision has been made to pursue cloud solutions, the company needs to research the options in the marketplace.

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CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER: ONE OR MANY?

The biggest myth in technology is the existence of 'the cloud'. In truth, there are many clouds, each developed and maintained by its own provider, who establishes the definitions and parameters for its cloud offers. With such a tantalizing assortment of clouds to choose from—and the low barrier to entry—enterprises may consider trying them all, placing different workloads with different providers. But enterprises that go this route soon discover that the strategy creates more problems than it solves. Managing multiple vendors and multiple environments—via multiple consoles and with different pricing schemes, performance parameters, and service level agreements—adds a tremendous management burden to enterprise IT. Furthermore, working with multiple vendors will likely limit the ability to seamlessly perform critical 'inter-cloud' functions, such as bursting or backup and recovery. And without the ability to apply security profiles consistently across workloads, the multi-vendor environment can potentially expose the company to risk. But if every provider offers different characteristics

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for their cloud offers, how is it possible to select just one provider to cover all the different workloads and applications that an enterprise may want to place in the cloud? The key is to find a provider whose cloud portfolio is as flexible and varied as the workloads it may handle—today and into the future.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER

Because cloud is still a new and evolving business model, it can be argued that the decision to select a cloud service provider should be approached with even greater diligence than other IT decisions. Many providers use the same term to define very different services ("hybrid cloud" is one example), making it difficult to compare offers. In addition, the flood of new entrants into the market means that many providers have little to no experience in hosting or application delivery, thus rising concerns not only about today's service performance but also the ability to evolve their services to meet future needs. The following list will help enterprises evaluate their options in two critical areas: the cloud service portfolio and the service provider itself.

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Evaluating the Provider's Cloud Service Portfolio

IT needs are as varied as the workloads a business supports. Some workloads are relatively static in their computing resource needs; others fluctuate by time of day, month, or year; and still others are simply unpredictable. Some workloads involve data that is proprietary or regulated by industry or government, while others pose limited risk in case of a data breach. Some workloads are highly interactive, exchanging data with multiple internal or external sources, while others are largely standalone. During the evaluation phase of the cloud project, enterprises (either alone, or more likely with a partner) can determine the best environment for each workload; that is, the cloud environment that provides the right degree of performance, security, and resilience at the right price. The challenge for the enterprise is to identify a provider with a portfolio that includes the full range of

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environments for its workloads. More importantly, the portfolio should extend beyond today's vision and offer a foundation for your future cloud strategy. Specifically, look for the following characteristics: Interoperability – This is a charged word, so it's important to understand exactly how your provider defines it. To maximize the value of their cloud services, enterprises should select a provider that enables workloads to span multiple environments. This concept, sometimes described as a 'hybrid cloud', offers maximum flexibility for managing workloads efficiently. For example: enterprises should be able to place an application in a public cloud environment, but the associated database in a secure, on-premises cloud. Similarly, a workload in a private cloud environment may be configured to burst into an on-demand public cloud during unexpected traffic peaks. For greatest interoperability value, look for a provider that offers a common infrastructure platform for public and private hosted clouds, as well as your on-premises private cloud.

Flexibility

Just as different workloads are suitable for different environments, they also require different configuration and delivery parameters. As such, the cloud provider should offer a menu or range of options related to performance, security, and resiliency, enabling the enterprise to select—and pay for—just the settings it requires for each workload. Service Level Agreements – Be sure to read the fine print, and ask questions about the provider's service level agreements (SLAs). Reports of cloud outages often include statements from outraged clients who were shocked—shocked—to learn that a prolonged outage was actually permissible under the terms of the provider's 'annual average' availability metric. If a half-day outage will be detrimental to your business, then discuss this potential outcome with your provider upfront. Remember, it's not about getting the "best" SLAs; it's about getting the terms that are most meaningful to you and your business. Security – When an enterprise enters the cloud, it is entrusting its information assets to a third-party provider. To earn that trust, the provider must take great steps to protect those assets. Look for a provider that makes security a priority. Choose an expert that thinks beyond the physical security of the facility or even firewalls. Ensure the provider builds its cloud architecture for optimal protection, including measures to isolate enterprise workloads on physical servers, protections against Internet-borne attacks, and clear administrative access controls.

Evaluating the Provider As noted, the cloud demands high levels of trust between the enterprise and the provider. The ability to earn the trust of customers is what differentiates providers, and what keeps even the simplest of cloud infrastructure services from becoming a commodity. In evaluating cloud service providers, look for the following: Cohesive, forward-looking cloud strategy – Is the provider's cloud a hastily-launched effort to latch onto current momentum, or a carefully built foundation for future services? Cloud is a nascent technology and business model, one that is still evolving. Providers that are committed to the transformational potential of the cloud will be able to articulate a clear vision of the future, and will invest development resources to ensure they are leading—not following—the trends. Experience – While the cloud is relatively new, the problems it solves are old. Look for a cloud provider with a track record in managing enterprise data centers, providing secure hosting, and delivering mission-critical applications. Access to technical expertise – Thanks to automation tools and self-service Web portals, the cloud is largely a do-it-yourself effort—and many providers save costs by limiting their customer service support. But enterprises rely on such support, especially since they do not have the time and expert staff to optimize their use of the new cloud

13 reasons to choose Cloud Computing

With more than 800,000 laptops disappearing every day, your data aren't safe on a local device. If you as a company have concerns regarding security, it is not reasonable to avoid cloud. I cannot emphasize it enough – shifting to the cloud is the safest path to choose for most companies!

However, there are many more advantages when choosing the cloud path. We here describe the 10 most important reasons for why you should highly consider it.

1. Economies of Scale

You can increase your output with fewer employees. You no longer have to use one IT resource for supporting and helping your employees with their technical questions or problems. When you no longer have to support end users, you can use your resources strategically for increasing the business value for you.

2. Technical infrastructure costs will be reduced

With Cloud Computing, you typically pay for what you need, and you can scale up or down according to how many users you have right now and without any long-term costs. It means that the tied-up capital in IT goes away. Additionally, the start-up costs are becoming surprisingly small.

3. Predictable economy

Cloud solutions are often based on a subscription, where you pay a smaller amount every month per a User. Based on the Opex model, and the pay as you go patterns, cloud computing holds much potential to help you cut a lot of your regular costs, and eventually, help you perform more financially.

4. Mobility and globalization

With a cloud solution the employee gets the opportunity for working everywhere in the world when it suits them. And it's a tall tale that it always requires internet access. You can access from anywhere and use any device to perform whatever you want to. You have a vast list of gadgets available, and you can seamlessly move from one device to another without worrying about the resources. Cloud processes it accordingly.

5. Streamlined processes

With a cloud solution, you get a standardized system, which simplifies the work processes and makes it easy for the employee to get started. The learning curve is not steep in cloud solutions. This means that you save a lot of money on training of your employees.

6. Get a better overview

As a manager an overview of every project is crucial when it comes to making the right decisions. With Cloud Computing you have the opportunity for gathering a lot of knowledge in one place, and from there you can keep an eye on the development. Then you can analyze the knowledge and process the data you get.

7. Optimize the collaboration

The implementation of a cloud solution will change the way you collaborate internally in your company. While you are in a corner of the world, and the other guy at the other one, if you both have Internet access, you have access to all the information you need regarding a project you are working on. So, it keeps the employees collaborated

The way in which you share and work together on documents are different from what you have worked with before. Files can be accessed from anywhere and can be edited simultaneously by more than one, and you can see what others are editing at the same time as you. Since everything can be done at the same time and doesn't just end up in a vast amount of attachments, which has to go through several iterations, you will become more efficient. Of course, you control whom can see what in your documents, and together you will achieve even better results with contribution and insight from several people.

8. Scaling

Hopefully, your business will grow continually. The majority of cloud services have remote servers, so when you need more bandwidth or more users, you can buy it. You decide what you want to pay for the resources. The on premise systems have a contract, but in the case of cloud, whenever you find something better at a better price, you go for it, making you the king of the time.

9. Automatic updates

Traditional approach lies around waiting for something to break down, and then spending time fixing it. In case of cloud, there are regular and automatic software updates, which promote the policy of prevention better than cure. When the entire IT solution is stored with a provider, who is also the producer who knows their product well, they also know what ought to be updated. The provider continuously receives a lot of feedback and adjusts according to that. The updates also include increased security, which takes into account the latest threats. And with a cloud solution, you no longer have to pay extra for these upgrades.

10. Backup your knowledge

If you lose your phone, computer, or the office burns down (yes, it can actually happen!), then your data are lost if they are stored on a local server. With Cloud Computing everything is accessible on your different devices. But if your laptop ends up getting stolen, you can change the password so the thieves cannot access your data.

11. Security

While your on premise systems have the security protocols promised and developed by your network administrator, the cloud servers have security protocols developed by the best security analysts in the world! So, you can very well judge what is more secure.

12. Competition

The cloud is a new rising platform. There are more start-ups than you can imagine, offering cloud services, which has made it a competitive market, which has made it cost effective, and better than anything else.

13. Ecological Benefits

As a CEO of an organization, or the president of United States, taking care of the mother earth is as important. Cloud protocol is much greener and better. This is as important as anything, to take care of the natural imbalances not taking place.

If you haven't tried cloud solutions, it might seem immense. How do you get started and should you even consider shifting to it? You are more than welcome to contact us on support@sys-gear.com with any questions you might have.