The Journey to the Cloud: Challenges and Pitfalls

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Your company wants/needs to modernize its technology infrastructure. Moving away from legacy systems to the cloud offers you the potential to deploy applications faster, reduce costs, and gain new capabilities. However, the change comes with potential challenges. So, what does a Caribbean business need to do to prepare for the transition?

The potential benefits of moving applications to the cloud are significant:

- Simplify service deployments and updates
- Unify ecosystems
- Reduce CapEx
- Increase infrastructure coherence
- Streamline technology support
- Support Internet-centric digital exchanges

Yet, organizations encounter barriers as they move from the old to the new. Such initiatives can become bogged down, require additional expenditures, and not meet expectations. Here are ways to avoid such headaches.

Acknowledge Your Shortcomings

Most firms migrating to the cloud lack practical experience with it. Deploying and maintaining these systems has some similarities but stark differences compared to existing systems. Corporations need to supplement their staff with cloud experts but how?

Independent third parties who specialize in this area are available. They have deployed other cloud systems and have firsthand experience understanding the differences between how the process is supposed to unfold and how it typically occurs. They leverage their expertise and apply it to customer's needs, find the best match, and help businesses understand what the process requires, so they avoid common mistakes.

Look at the Big Picture

Interest in cloud often starts with a department that usually has a very acute business problem. However, eventually, cloud tentacles extend throughout the business. Therefore, the possibility arises that cloud applications will sprout up in the enterprise haphazardly, resulting in unnecessary duplication, waste, overhead, and confusion.

To avoid such outcomes, businesses need to examine their options at the beginning of the transition and form a cross department team. The group examine how current workloads run, if the cloud makes sense for them, novel ways to operate, and the challenges in migrating applications to the new computing foundation.

Taking a broad view helps a company better prepare for the eventual changes, which often are dramatic. In many cases, businesses reallocate workloads and slowly lower the number of servers running in their data center – sometimes eliminating them completely.

So, the organization should start their journey to cloud with a well-defined, long term adoption strategy, one aligned with its business outcomes. This step ensures that the journey to cloud is not just a short term technology initiative but rather a strategic objective, one continually delivering dramatic, tangible benefits to the business.

Do Not Ignore the Enterprise Network

Cloud becomes possible because of the flexibility, bandwidth, and reliability that enterprise network services deliver. The Internet allows businesses to move bits of their data processing operation offsite to remote locations but still have all users access the application like it is sitting in headquarters.

But with the change comes new, often dramatically different, network traffic patterns. So when examining their cloud options, organizations need to take a close look and ensure that they have a strong network foundation in place. The network has to be able to scale as the business grows. Maximum reliability is required because applications have become fundamental in how companies function. When the network is down, work essentially stops.

Attain Executive Support

Cloud provides the entire organization with a way to transform how it operates. Consequently, it requires senior executive support in order to thrive. Failing to secure buy-in and a clear mandate from key executives impacts the project in many ways. The amount of visibility across the organization diminishes. Needed manpower resources are not allocated. Attaining project funding becomes difficult.

So, the cloud team needs to find a senior sponsor – and ideally more than one. That person is valuable in spearheading and promoting the initiative, communicating its rationale to others, outlining the potential business benefits, and clarifying both this project's and the company's strategic goals.

No Need to Go All In

Some Caribbean organizations are under the mistaken impression that a journey to cloud requires an all-or-nothing approach. Not true. In fact, organizations typically opt for a hybrid model where part of an application remains on premises while other pieces move to the cloud.

Taking that approach avoids the risks that come with moving critical workloads too quickly and too dramatically.

If an enterprise tried to move them all at once, the process may become overwhelming. The phased approach provides them the ability to move at a comfortable pace, one that can quicken as they gain more experience with the technology.

Underestimating Costs

Cost savings is what all cloud providers tout and has been a big attraction. Long term, cloud helps enterprises reduce data center costs. They cut Capex because they no longer procure new pieces of hardware on a regular basis. Maintenance activities shift and sometimes are lowered because the vendor maintains the physical infrastructure.

However, corporations can incur unexpected expenditures. These agreements come with a base level of service and charges rise if the client exceeds them. Consequently, it becomes important to perform due diligence up front and then check their calculus early in the deployment. Over provisioned services, unused licenses, duplicate cloud service all drive up the cost.

Also, a business needs to put tools in place to monitor its cloud usage patterns. If unmanaged, they can overshoot even the best initial estimates. Centralized dashboards, alerts, and processes for visibility and transparency on cloud resource usage are required to manage the cloud expenses for organizations with multiple projects, teams, or business units. In summary, having a centralized strategy and the right tools to track cloud expenditures is essential to keeping costs under control.

The cloud offers businesses the opportunity to upgrade their technology infrastructure and become more agile. The process of migrating from the old to the new can be challenging because the two are so different. Recognizing your limitations, garnering top management support, ensuring the network is strong, and putting the right tools in place ease the transition.