Are You Ready for the Cloud? 8 Key Steps for Cloud Enablement Success

It's 2020. There's very little chance that your organization isn't already using cloud technology in some form or another. Have a Microsoft Office subscription? You're using the cloud. Does your team use Salesforce? Slack? Congratulations, you're already a cloud user. But creating an account on an existing service can be a lot less intimidating than the prospect of cloud migration.

Fortunately, transitioning to a new cloud platform doesn't have to be nearly as daunting as it sounds. With the help of the right cloud enablement services expert, you can reap all the benefits of the technology — and trust me, there are a lot.

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1. What Is Cloud Enablement?

You probably already know what cloud computing is. Cloud computing comes with a wide array of benefits that vary between users, but there are a few that are pretty consistently cited.

Cost Savings
- Less hardware spending
- Predictable pricing model
- Lower IT budget

Availability
- Accessible anywhere
- Guaranteed uptime
- Facilitates remote working

Disaster Recovery
- Saves time spent on on-site backups
- Data and applications available remotely in an emergency

Scalability
- Unlimited storage capacity
- Scalable to meet changing needs

Security
- Protected 24/7
- More secure than on-premise
- Monitored for new threats or vulnerabilities

But what are cloud enablement services?

Cloud enablement includes everything it takes to help you acquire and use your very own cloud solution. It includes everything from figuring out what cloud platforms and services your business can leverage to optimizing and maintaining your solution once you've migrated.

Check out "What is Cloud Enablement and Why Should You Care?" for more on cloud enablement services and what they could look like for your organization.

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2. Are You Ready for a Cloud Migration?

Cloud sounds great and all, but is it right for you? How can you tell if your organization is ready to make the move? A cloud readiness assessment is a simple, data-driven way to determine which parts of your operations can move to the cloud, and which might need some extra preparation.

Make sure you examine which applications are prime candidates for migration, what's driving your migration plans, the resources you already have and the potential impact of migration on them.

Candidates

- Need to scale
- Aging infrastructure
- Business-critical
- Lacking backup
- Flexible architecture

Motivation

- Business growth
- Efficiency
- Improve agility
- Need for innovation

Resources

- Staff
- Clients
- Technology
- Processes

Understanding which processes would most benefit from a move to the cloud can help you identify where to start.

You'll find everything you need to start planning your transition in "How to Conduct a Cloud Readiness Assessment".

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> "To overcome the challenges of this workforce shortage, enterprises looking to migrate workloads to the cloud should work with managed service providers and SIs that have a proven track record of successful migrations within the target industry"

Gartner

3. Finding Security in Azure

The number one barrier to cloud adoption today is trust. Organizations are concerned about the security of their data and applications and are reluctant to put them in the hands of a third party. Choosing a cloud enablement services partner you can trust can help alleviate concern — but so can choosing the right platform.

Encryption
Look for a service that protects your information in transit and in storage.

Control
Make sure you retain full control over where your data is stored.

Compliance
Find a solution that guarantees compliance with industry and government standards.

Microsoft's Azure cloud is the top choice among businesses that prioritize safety and security in their cloud solution. Azure solutions rely heavily on industry-leading encryption and compliance standards, and make sure control stays where it belongs — in your hands.

Did You Know?
85% of Fortune 100 companies use Azure cloud.

Learn more about the benefits of Azure in "What You Need to Know About Azure Cloud Enablement".

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4. Developing Your Strategy

Once you've conducted your readiness assessment and determined that a move to the cloud would benefit your organization, it's time to start strategizing. A well-developed strategy can mean the difference between a smooth transition and a disruptive, complicated move when your migration begins.

As you start developing your cloud migration strategy, take time to understand:

❯ What you hope to achieve by transitioning to the cloud

❯ Any challenges that might hamper your progress

❯ What type of cloud(s) you need

❯ How the transition will affect every part of your architecture

❯ What kind of cloud enablement services you'll need (and how to get them)

Check out "4 Things Every Successful Cloud Enablement Strategy Needs" for more information on developing a strategy that ensures success in your cloud transition.

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💡 **Did You Know?**
The global cloud computing market is expected to reach $623.3 billion by 2023.

5. What's Standing in Your Way?

It's never a small undertaking to adopt a new technology or make a major change to your processes or operations. As with any major transition, cloud migrations can come with pitfalls. Fortunately, if you know what to watch out for, you can generally avoid them.

Common challenges include:

Candidates

Not understanding your cloud migration goals, requirements or challenges can be a serious problem.

Underestimating cost

Make sure you understand the time, financial and staff costs of your migration plan.

Inadequate staff training

A lack of training can lead to improvised solutions that are less efficient instead of more.

No stakeholder buy-in

Everyone at all levels must support your migration and have their specific needs considered.

Make sure you consult stakeholders in various positions to get a complete picture of the impact of cloud migration on your organization and secure buy-in from teams that matter most. It's also essential to budget resources appropriately — including time, money and staff — for the transition and subsequent training.

In "How to Avoid 4 Common Cloud Migration Pitfalls", you'll learn how to sidestep some of the most common issues associated with a move to the cloud.

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> *"The mobile-first, cloud-first is a very rich canvas for innovation – it is not the device that is mobile, it is the person that is mobile."*
>
> **— Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft**

Microsoft

6. Making the Move to Cloud

You've assessed your readiness and identified goals and potential challenges. At this point, your cloud enablement services partner is architecting a solution customized to meet your needs, and it's time to work on what the actual migration will look like.

From start to finish, your migration plan will include:

Readiness Assessment

Planning and Architecture

Strategy and Prioritization

Migration

Testing and Optimization

Operations Maintenance

Working in partnership with cloud enablement experts and all the relevant stakeholders from your organization, you can put together a team to oversee the migration process. This critical step helps ensure that nothing gets overlooked as you begin moving data and applications to their new cloud home.

Did You Know?

Analysts predict 28% of key IT spending will be cloud-related by 2022.

"[What You Need to Know for Your Cloud Migration Strategy](#)" will help you put together a team for a smooth, successful cloud transition.

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7. What Happens After Your Migration?

Your cloud enablement services partner shouldn't disappear once the transition is complete. If anything, their role in your operations is just beginning. Once migration is completed, a good partner will optimize and maintain your solution.

Look for a cloud enablement services partner that will:

Optimize
Work to improve uptime, performance, security and more

Report
Provide you with an inventory of your cloud assets and their performance

Secure
Proactively work to secure your platform against threats and vulnerabilities

Maintain
Regularly update and patch for continued security and compliance

Support
Provide you with support during outages or issues

The right cloud partner will have helped you at every stage up to this point, but this stage is where they can really shine. Cloud enablement services can go well beyond basic maintenance. Your partner can continually optimize your cloud platform to address problems, leverage new technology and meet your changing needs.

But where do you find a partner like that? Check out "[How to Get the Cloud Enablement Services You Really Need](#)".

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8. Common Cloud Enablement Use Cases

Backups and Disaster Recovery

The amount of information businesses generate and use each day is increasing exponentially — and so are the [costs associated](#) with losing access to your data or applications. A rigorous system to protect your data from harm and recover it if and when the worst happens is a necessity.

But how do cloud backup and disaster recovery solutions stack up against their traditional, on-premises competitors? While internal servers and hard drives still have their merits, there is definitely a case to be made for the security that a cloud solution can offer.

💡 **Did You Know?**

1.89% of hard drives [failed](#) in 2019.

Check out "[Cloud Backup vs. Traditional Backup: Which is Better?](#)" for a closer look at how cloud solutions stack up.

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Cloud Computing in Accounting

Accounting firms are always handling their clients' sensitive data and provide critical services that their customers can't be without.

Cloud solutions offer benefits that accounting companies shouldn't be without:

- Automating data entry to save time
- Ability to adapt and respond quickly to disruption
- Improved communication between departments and with clients
- Improved security
- Strengthened backup and disaster recovery options

Did You Know?

94% of enterprises are already using some form of cloud.

Explore what you stand to gain from a cloud migration in this post on the "Benefits of Cloud Computing".

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Standards Compliance

Many institutions and organizations bound by government or industry compliance standards mistakenly assume that a cloud solution is not an option. In fact, the developments in cloud technology and security often make the cloud a much better option when faced with aging infrastructure.

But not all cloud solutions are created equal. If you are constrained by specific regulations or contractual obligations that govern how you must protect your data, it's crucial that you choose carefully — an experienced cloud enablement services partner can help.

Did You Know?

Microsoft employs 3,500 cybersecurity experts to ensure security and compliance.

Take a look at "How to Get FERPA-Compliant Cloud Service" to learn more about compliance and cloud solutions.

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A Partner You Can Trust

At AISN, we don't believe that "one size fits all" is the way to offer cloud solutions. Our business model is built on the belief that our clients deserve customized cloud platforms designed to meet their specific compliance, security and operational needs.

If you have questions about the cloud or cloud enablement services, we have answers. Our experts are always happy to discuss your needs, so get in touch with us today.

www.aisn.net | sales@aisn.net | 888-401-AISN