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Manage the transition to cloud...
And focus on the business

Cloud will probably be the biggest transformation programme an IT team undertakes, but it must not distract them from enabling business advantage

By David Smith, Darren Ratcliffe and Mark Poley, Fujitsu

CIOs and business leaders are united in their eagerness to gain the benefits of cloud computing. But while cloud services can be scaled up or down in a matter of hours, their actual establishment across the IT estate requires a considerable investment in time and effort – time that IT teams need to enable business advantage. The move to cloud computing could be a major distraction, that damages rather than enhance business, if not carefully managed.

Setting up a cloud service for a single use is beguilingly simple. Working out how and where cloud will be used across the whole IT estate is more challenging. The adoption road map for each part of an enterprise's application suite, middleware and infrastructure, as well as for the data centres and system management centres, adds up to a complex plan that looks more like 3D chess.

The shrewd way to maximise asset value and ROI is to change over from IT ownership to cloud at the end of

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each IT asset's life. But each IT asset reaches the end of its life at a different date, and each asset has a dependency on other IT assets. Perhaps 4D chess would be a better analogy.

Cloud is probably the largest disruption facing IT since the changeover from mainframe computing to PC-based client/server computing in the '80s. That profound change took over a decade to implement. The switch to cloud will be faster – four years or less

– driven by the IT replacement schedule and accelerated by business demand for new systems.

Cloud integration
Moving an application to the cloud requires effective integration with existing applications. For example, customer relationship management (CRM) systems may be an excellent candidate for migration to the cloud. However, if the sales executives need the system to check an order against inventory levels or, on securing a deal, send invoicing details to the finance systems, the CRM cloud will require seamless integration with specific core business systems.

When confronted with such challenges, many companies are turning to "cloud integrators" to supply the required specialist skills for the implementation phase.

Cloud causes other changes in established IT roles. "Cloud advisors" are used to determine where cloud can be used for best effect; "cloud administrators" to deploy workloads to the cloud, monitor the service performance and manage resolutions; "cloud vendor managers" to ensure performance to contract, oversee improvement programmes and source new, alternative cloud providers; "cloud brokers" to select and evaluate new cloud services.

These new roles can be performed by an organisation's IT team supplemented by contractors or by appointing a service partner to take responsibility for the whole journey to cloud. But it is important to find one that is not blinkered by its own products and services. The cloud presents a wide array of offerings; restricting the selection would be counterproductive.

A managed cloud transition enables IT to stay focused on what it does best: working out how technology enables the business to thrive. The key is to focus on current business advantage and engage a service provider to manage the transformation plan for both now and the mid-term.

Start with quick wins that make good business sense right now, and have a broad plan for subsequent years. It is impossible to know now what new cloud services will emerge in the mid-term. Such new services could change the plan substantially, so create an outline plan with built-in flexibility. Have a road map showing which applications, middleware and infrastructure are appropriate for migration to the cloud – and the order for adoption. Establish continuous capacity planning to ensure adequate resources without too much spare

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capacity. Miscalculations here can lead to expensive consequences – a risk that can be better mitigated through a service provider.

Cloud is liberating for both the IT department and business. However, it means a whole new way of thinking. Using a provider as part of the team makes the cloud journey manageable, and ensures that the changeover does not impact IT's core mission of enabling innovation for sustainable business advantage.

Managing cloud *and* traditional IT
The journey to the cloud is made easier by exploiting the skills of others and made manageable by delegating responsibility not just for the successful adoption of cloud, but also for its successful integration

with traditional IT systems as one hybrid service to the business.

In recent years, Fujitsu customers have chosen to outsource their IT and cloud journey to gain business advantage without having to perform the cloud transformation themselves.

One global construction consultancy required a fast transformation and outsourced its entire IT estate to Fujitsu. Within a year, the infrastructure was transformed, with 70% of applications virtualised and hosted on a trusted cloud with the core databases hosted on new enterprise servers. Their IT now flexes in line with business demand – essential for a sector notoriously prone to business fluctuations.

The biggest gains of all have come in terms of business innovation. A smooth cloud transition, handled by trusted third-party experts, liberates CIOs and their teams to focus on the business. They can escape the distraction of cloud transformation and management and focus on business matters.

With the right partner, organisations have much to gain when the IT department is relieved of the burden of cloud changeover. IT management can devote its energy to using technology to enable business advantage, eliminate costs, better serve customers – and thrive as a result.

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