

5 steps you can't skip if you're thinking 'cloud'

By [Sonja Weber](#)

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Cloud is here! It's happening. The question should not be whether or not you are prepared, but how prepared you are, and what you can do to ensure that you are ready when the time comes to migrate your business.



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A recent report from Gartner on the Top Challenges Facing I&O Leaders in 2018, says that despite mainstream adoption of the cloud, the biggest challenge most Infrastructure and Operations (I&O) teams have faced over the past six years is the successful formulation and implementation of a hybrid cloud strategy – a challenge that Gartner believes will extend well into the next two to three years.

Despite its hype and inevitability, migrating to the cloud is simply too complex an endeavour because everyone else is doing it.

Here are five steps you need to take to ensure that the cloud is right for your business, that your migration is a success and that cloud continues to work for, rather than against you:

Step 1: Establish if cloud is right for you

Cloud advertises itself as a proponent of digital transformation and the panacea to all your business challenges, however, without a proper, real and tangible business case, shifting to what is most simply just a different platform won't solve your challenges or offer real digital transformation.

Many businesses spend a veritable fortune investing in cloud technology, only to be disappointed because their reasons for shifting were skewed or not in line with business requirements. It is critical to ask yourself whether the cloud will either increase your business' revenue or decrease its costs in the context of, and without impacting your core business deliverables.



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In the process of building a business case, it's imperative to assess current business processes and examine whether or not they will benefit with the shift to the cloud, or if the cost of modernising making these processes 'cloud ready' will be higher than the returns yielded by a cloud service.

It's equally important to evaluate what resources you have, or need to acquire, to manage the same or new processes in the cloud. Ensure you are interacting with a partner who can help you identify use cases and realistically show you where the cloud fits into your business strategy – and not where your business strategy fits into the cloud.

Step 2: Sell the cloud

You've done the assessments and decided to move some, or all, of your business processes to the cloud. Now you need to convince the business and sell the cloud to your executive team.

This requires a three-pronged approach with three different discussion points: discuss optimisation benefits with the COO, financial savings with the CFO and the go-to-market benefits with the CEO.

One of the biggest mistakes that businesses make when attempting to drive a shift to cloud is to make the discussion a technical one. However, as the decision to move to the cloud is determined by the business case, or need, the motivation should also revolve around this.

Within each of these discussions, it's important to highlight the business process changes, modernisations and resource requirements that will need to take place, as well as their impacts across the business. It's equally critical to showcase how the cloud will drive the business's digital brand and ultimately service the customer.

Step 3: Plan for every eventuality

Planning the migration is where most organisations reach their first real stumbling block, however, most businesses don't realise this until actual implementation, when they discover everything they didn't plan for.

Shifting technology to the cloud, even when modernisation of the environment is taken into account, is but a small part of cloud migration. The larger, more challenging part is managing the change, driving adoption and engendering stickiness of the new platform and tools. Although the cloud is essentially just a different platform to operate on, it requires an entire mentality alteration across every single user within the business.



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Cloud service providers who have completed successful cloud migrations and have experience in managing the process from beginning to end are best equipped to help you write out a plan that is more likely to succeed.

Step 4: Don't rely on your plan

This might seem counterintuitive, especially when I have just explained the need for a plan that takes all eventualities into account. However, experience has shown that plans need to be flexible as they often change during implementation. Which is why it makes more sense to subcontract the implementation of a cloud migration than to undertake this yourself.

A cloud provider will be able to align a migration according to your plan, but will also be able to identify, often beforehand, exactly where changes happen or need to happen along the way. An expert cloud provider will also be able to highlight any new benefits that emerge, which may have been overlooked and could well become the primary motivator for making the shift.

Finally, a cloud provider who understands your business and goals will ensure that migration occurs in such a way that ongoing processes and environments are not broken during the change, but that your business continues to deliver on its commitments while digitalising.

Step 5: Make the change

Once you have successfully made the move to the cloud, after a long, educational and exhausting yet rewarding process, take a moment to congratulate yourself and your business: you are a digital organisation now. And now you need to change.

“But haven't I just done that?”, you may ask. Yes, you have. However, you need to look at your original plan and your solution and compare the two to assess if the cloud has met all of your goals, if new goals and outcomes have been realised, and if there is more that can be achieved with what you have.



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I have mentioned that plans need to be agile and will shift along the course of a cloud migration. At this point, it's essential to see where these changes have occurred and what additional business value may have been unwittingly achieved.

Often, unplanned use cases go unrealised simply because a business is too quick to assume that their original goals were met and do not assess their full solution.

You may find that, once you have shifted to the cloud, an entire world of possibility opens up to you, if you only take the time to explore it.

View the report from Gartner on the [Top Challenges Facing I&O Leaders in 2018](#).

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