

Five things Cloud customers will want to know

By [Gary de Menezes](#)

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Although the cloud is continuously growing as a market, many companies still struggle with the concept or the reasons why it can benefit their business. This presents a great opportunity for resellers, not only to increase revenue but also to be seen as a trusted partner that can help your customer's business grow.



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For resellers, there are five key areas to consider when discussing the possibility of cloud solutions with customers:

1. How does cost impact your customers' decision-making process?

For customers, most conversations around cloud technology start with the cost. While the decision to move company data to the cloud should not be based on one factor alone, it's worth reminding customers that the cloud can lower operational costs by managing performance peaks. In addition, it does not require an investment in infrastructure, which eliminates capital expenditure. While this equation will, in theory, resonate well at the CXO level, cloud models tend to be "pay as you go", which can add up over time, particularly as the business is growing.

It's important to remind customers looking to move to the cloud at a rock bottom price that many providers and hyper-scalers communicate price reductions aggressively, nurturing the impression that the cloud really is all about cost reduction. To persuade them that your partner is right for them, it's necessary to help them work out how high their usage will be to ensure that they have the right package to minimise overall cost.

Often, a combination of on-premise and cloud - the so-called hybrid cloud - makes most sense as it delivers flexibility and agility, as well as the stability of the data centre. The more complex a business, the more it has to rely on partners' expertise to make the right decisions. While the conversation with customers often starts with cost, it should quickly move on the agility, scale, flexibility and growth, and how you can help your customers grow and expand.

2. Growing security concerns and how to handle them

The questions of "how secure is the cloud?" versus "how secure is my data in the cloud?" require slightly different answers.

Some organisations are still concerned about unleashing sensitive company data into the cloud, as they perceive that it will then cease to be secure. In fact, generally, service providers operate with very high levels of security, however, there can sometimes be perceived mistrust as to how data is handled once it's in the hands of the service provider.

Organisations with security concerns should ensure that when choosing a cloud provider they establish up-front what the security agreements are with that provider. Secondly, they should agree on a level of service that's right for them and the level of sensitivity of data involved in the form of a written, enterprise level service level agreement (SLA) from the provider. When working on a long-term storage solution, it's vital that the relationship will safeguard data from a legal perspective.

Customers concerned about data security often opt for a solution such as NetApp Private Storage, where the data is held at a secure colocation data centre and is connected via a low-latency link to a provider such as Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, or IBM SoftLayer for computing. That way, organisations benefit from the cloud economics and flexibility

of the computing power, but the data itself is stored securely 'next to the cloud,' rather than in it.

Over the next year or so, the industry is set to develop further still with changes to EU data protection law, which will look to give individuals more control over their data and a "right to be forgotten". For your customers, it will be necessary to rigorously evaluate the risks of any data handling and to guard against accidental loss of data.

As a result, there is going to be an increasing need to remain compliant and to ensure that data is backed up with the appropriate measures, which will bring security to the top of the agenda for anyone buying.



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3. Should your customers keep their data close to home?

While the dream may be a full migration to the public cloud, for some customers, compliance requirements can sometimes dictate that data must be stored on-premise and as a result, it may be that only some applications can be migrated to the public cloud. In these cases, a hybrid cloud solution can be preferable. With this, your customers can retain business-critical data securely in an on-premise data centre, while storing broader company data in the public cloud at a lower cost.

Even so, hybrid cloud technology has its limitations. As the majority of enterprises still deploy an on-premise infrastructure in addition to their cloud solution, IT teams are still subject to the same procurement issues, namely expense, lengthy build times, and the on-going costs required to maintain, manage and update equipment when necessary.

Similarly, there is a requirement to fully integrate public and private IT solutions with legacy on-premise infrastructure, so that they can work seamlessly together. This can be somewhat of a headache for IT teams and can result in a siloed situation if not architected adequately. When advising any business to move to a hybrid cloud solution, it's key to fully explore the legacy IT infrastructure in place and discuss the possibility of architecting new cloud technology.

4. Ensuring data is managed tightly and effectively

When customers look to move data, applications and workloads to the cloud, it's going to be important to ensure that they have their data in the right format to do so. Some workloads will be easy to migrate and a natural fit in terms of behaviour, while others are going to be more difficult to transition. When advising customers on the best approach for migrating data to the cloud, it can make sense to suggest that they start with applications that already exist in a simple, compatible format.

Through a data management platform, such as NetApp OnCommand Insight, your customer can analyse network behaviour and probe the system to make it work harder for them, giving them an overview of which resources are being used. These data management platforms act as a data fabric across the entire IT landscape, which can help customers ensure that data transportation is optimised for operational efficiency. This ultimately reduces costs and improves business output, while

remaining compliant with regulation.

5. Find a partner you can trust

A trusted relationship is the driver of any decision-making process, especially when it comes to buying behaviour. For your customers, proximity matters. It's all about really understanding the customer and their needs. Ultimately, understanding your customer is key to delivering a personalised solution that can really address the underlying business needs without breaking the bank.

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