

South Africa: Our heads are finally in the cloud

By [Trent Odgers](#)

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Most strategic discussions in boardrooms around the world will include cloud-based offerings because the services offered have become fundamental to a modern, resilient enterprise. Last year, many organisations may well have been taking a wait-and-see approach, but the pandemic has forced everyone's hand and sped up digital transformation in all its guises.



Trent Odgers, cloud hosting manager at Veeam

Cloud computing is believed to have been invented by Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider in the 1960s with the idea of being able to connect people and data from anywhere at any time. Fast-forward 60 years and the various lockdowns around the world have made this idea an absolute and immediate necessity.

There have been winners and, sadly, there were losers during the pandemic. Some businesses thrived and others paid the ultimate price. The key criteria for many businesses' success was their ability to pivot and adapt to new ways of working.

In many ways, we have entered the age of the pivot: large, complex organisations have to make rapid, if not radical, changes fast in order to survive and adapt to changing needs. While this has always been important to prevent being disrupted, today it is an existential consideration.



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No need to be a guru

The cloud enables a business to pivot faster with less stress. You no longer need to be the guru, or hire the most expensive IT staff. Rather, choose a reputable partner and give them your requirements. This is particularly true for many industries, from financial services, automotive, healthcare and manufacturing to small and medium-sized industries, where there is a high cost of managing their own data and security via costly data centres, so offloading this and adopting cloud services

becomes more effective for their business. Without a doubt, this is one of the main reasons there is such a positive attitude in South Africa toward cloud-based services. Some of the biggest attractions of these services is their ease of use and consumption-based model.

While many South African enterprises have a cloud-first strategy, the most accurate description of the local market is that it is a hybrid-cloud environment. At its most basic, this means that there is a strategic mix of services spread across on-premises, private cloud, managed cloud via local cloud providers and public cloud providers.

Financial and reputational risk

All of these services that are being consumed are generating data and that data needs to be backed up, recoverable, secure and compliant. If the service is disrupted, it needs to be restored rapidly because downtime or breaches carry a large financial and reputational risk for an organisation.



Many words have been written about shifting workforces off-site to comply with government restrictions. Beyond the cybersecurity threats, remote working has meant there is more data at the edge than in January, simply because many people had to take their devices home, or use their personal devices for work.

It is obvious, then, to see why it is non-negotiable for organisations to find partners that are able to manage this data in an integrated and compliant manner.

South Africa is going to feel the full weight of compliance in 2021 when the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act comes into force. No longer a concept, compliance now has teeth. The complexities of managing so much personal information are huge, meaning compliance can no longer be an add-on, it has to be front and centre of digital transformation strategies.



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SA is on par with the best

Cloud services that are offered by both public and private organisations in South Africa are world class. It's not uniquely a South African trait, but we tend to be our own biggest critics. We see first-hand that South African offerings in our partner network are delivering managed services across Africa, Europe and the US with great success. Companies such as AWS and Microsoft, have already made significant investments in Africa that improve the standard across all elements of cloud-based services, as they require a very high standard which has a positive impact on the entire industry and country. We will continue to see this trend gain more momentum into 2021 as the growth of these services are growing exponentially.

As connectivity and electricity stability improves, the potential for the cloud to change the country and continent is limited only by imagination. With a high-end smartphone, relevant sensors and a fast, stable internet connection, telemedicine could change the face of our continent's health systems forever.

Education could also be drastically transformed. Harnessing the power of the cloud could bring world-class education to entire communities - no matter where they are - and change their current and future prospects.

New opportunities, new industries

Of course, this country and continent has unique challenges, but as improving connectivity unlocks the full power of the cloud, we could be unlocking new opportunities and entire new industries.

What is abundantly clear, though, is that Africa's time in the cloud is well and truly here. In South Africa, this is being embraced - which bodes well for our global competitiveness and prospects.

The industry on these shores is maturing, and with proper cloud data management, organisations can ensure their data is secure and compliant with little to no down time. The world will continue changing at breakneck speed thanks to the vision of Licklider all those years ago - organisations need to change with it.

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