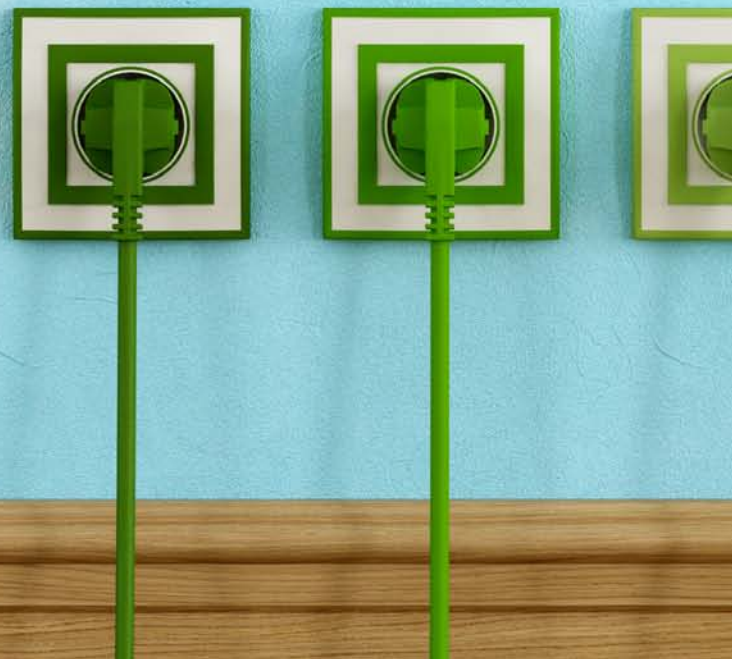


BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

As enterprises deploy more and more applications in the cloud, the complexity of deployment, integration and management increases. Many CIOs are finding that integrating cloud services with existing architecture is more difficult than anticipated. CNME throws the spotlight on cloud integration strategies that reduce complexity and IT oversight.



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n agile hybrid cloud promises seamless integration between on-premise and cloud applications, and many people in the IT industry will argue that the

future of the enterprise will be defined by hybrid cloud technology. Corporations have many enterprise applications installed on-premise, and find it preferable to deploy solutions in the cloud thanks to its benefits. With already-existing investments in traditional hardware, companies are often concerned about how their on-premise applications and cloud can co-exist. However, hybrid cloud can allow organisations to embrace and leverage old and new technologies in a single IT structure.

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25%

of organisations say concerns with technical aspects of integrating cloud applications is their greatest problem

Nonetheless, a variety of impeding factors halt the adoption of cloud, and should be considered by systems integrators when embarking upon a cloud application integration. Over 46 percent of organisations have reported concerns over the security of proprietary data and applications as the greatest barrier to adoption, with 32 percent naming concerns over cloud services performance as their greatest worry.

When undertaking a cloud to on-premise integration strategy, CIOs must consider long-term business and infrastructure needs and consult with financial directors on IT budgets to avoid the time and financial costs of reversing systems further down the line. Compliance issues must also be addressed, particularly in terms of where the data is stored, and recovery and backup tools.

“The first thing that CIOs need to consider as part of their cloud strategy is what functions in the organisation can be hosted as business applications in the cloud, and what functions must be kept in the data centre,” says Deniz Kilyar, Director, Cloud and Line of Business Applications, SAP MENA. “Secondly, they should plan for the transformation of their IT capabilities. In the era of cloud, we anticipate IT teams to be smarter in the service delivery to the internal organisation, and to act more like service brokers, leading the organisation through innovation by bringing all of what the company needs to develop into the digital age. Connectivity and data security are additional items that CIOs should take into account.”



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Sadi Aweinat, Chief Technology Officer and Global Services Lead, Gulf and Pakistan, EMC

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Sadi Aweinat, Chief Technology Officer and Global Services Lead, Gulf and Pakistan, EMC, believes it is important for CIOs to keep their options open when it comes to choosing vendors, “In order to leverage maximum benefits from a hybrid model that treats all data and applications equally, no matter where they're based, CIOs must make sure they avoid any vendor lock in,” he says. “They must look to leverage open platforms and standards to keep maximum control of their operations and infrastructure, avoid any single vendor solutions or strategies to avail the maximum benefit of choice and flexibility, no matter how appealing the call from a vendor may be.”

The shift to a hybrid environment will require an architectural change, as on-premise and cloud integration need to be built. Kilyar, however, does not see this as the greatest challenge for the CIO, “The biggest impact is not the changing landscape, but rather the way the IT services value chain will function,” he says. “This includes delivery from the vendors to system integrators, the ongoing relations between the hosting vendors and system integrators, and providing the services to companies. Overall market dynamics will change. Since the IT services value chain will become ‘leaner,’ value will be created by eliminating waste. For example, investments that will be written off

within two-to-three years will be shared between the customers and suppliers, both vendors and SIs.”

Although it may be hard to envisage, there is software in existence that can enable real-time and seamless transfer of data, at optimal costs. These are able to bypass a complete architectural transformation, as there are various benefits to a hybrid approach. Integration can be carried out through public cloud and on-premise platform mechanisms.

“In order to move to the cloud, enterprises do not have to discontinue their on-premise systems,” says Rajesh Abraham, Director, Product Development, eHosting DataFort. “By implementing hybrid integration, on-premise applications can be seamlessly incorporated into cloud systems. By leveraging technology, enterprises can drive new business models through hybrid integration as a bridge between legacy and cloud systems.”

Enlisting a third party to manage a cloud application integration is generally seen as wise, as experts who have a comprehensive knowledge of specific requirements are able to consult CIOs through the process. They are able to put the correct solutions in place to reduce TCO, and the risk of migration. Crucially, they are a useful asset in terms of delivering a project on time while meeting implementation objectives. This allows SMEs to achieve scalability, and for enterprises, security offered through multiple channels. It also frees up in-house IT teams to focus on internal business functions and data maintenance, rather than additional integration issues that may arise.

“There is no ‘one size fits all’ policy when it comes to creating a hybrid cloud environment. Organisations need to take into consideration their existing infrastructure and where they want to, choose the right solution sets that emphasise business value, rather than IT optimisation.”

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Integrating cloud applications with existing infrastructure is an important consideration. Rapid deployment solutions, which standardise integration services between on-premise and cloud solutions, facilitate the process, and using tools provided by the vendor – a form of middleware for cloud solutions – is ideal.

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This integration with existing infrastructure naturally brings challenges. When shifting from an on-premise system to a hybrid landscape, CIOs must be aware of procedural and policy differences between their enterprise and external companies and software vendors. “For some organisations, hosting the data off premise or outside the data centre may cause compliance and privacy related issues,” Aweinat says. “This has to be taken into consideration when designing the architecture and executing the implementation for critical industries such as finance and healthcare where data compliance and regulations regarding the movement and transfer of data are extremely stringent.”

Cloud application integration can bring technology, upgrade, master data and a variety of



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other challenges, so ideally, integration technology that is used will bring real time bi-directional process integration, with centralised monitoring and compatibility with the existing enterprise service bus.

According to Forrester, there are two main challenges when merging on-premise and a cloud-based platform within an enterprise IT space. These are the interoperability of different integration technologies, and maintaining the consistency of business logic and data structures in the heterogeneous environment.

“IT managers may find themselves trying to standardise multiple user interfaces, custom codes and programming languages when implementing integration tools,” Abraham says. “We recommend consulting a managed services provider to achieve the promised benefits of cloud, its lower costs and accessibility of data. A provider should be able to choose the best platform to unify IT systems seamlessly. To successfully combat these challenges, the hosting services provider can utilise Application Program Interfaces as the primary mechanism to assist with interoperability. The stronger your APIs, the easier the complementary functionality across platforms.” ■