



The 'Cloud' spreads

MOBILITY AND Cloud will be the buzz words in 2013 for large enterprises in UAE and the region due to the high penetration of smart devices and technologies, say experts.

Cloud will gain relevance as integral information and data move to the new platform. Trillions of dollars in IT spending are moving from data centers and software licenses to cloud services.

Soon, companies with 10,000 employees will not have dedicated data centers. 2013 should be a time when investments in cutting edge technology will no longer focus on traditional PCs but on a raft of personalised devices and appliances connected to a cloud infrastructure.

Samer Abu Latif, Regional General Manager, Microsoft Gulf, said: "IT investments have increased in the region with a major focus on cloud. According to a recent report 66per cent of surveyed CEOs and other senior executives in charge of larger companies increased their IT investments in 2012. The investments are targeted to enterprise technologies including cloud computing (32.3per cent), enterprise mobility (32per cent) and big data initiatives (39.3per cent).

"The consensus across business decision makers is technology is starting to play a much larger role in business and will no longer be relegated to the backend of the business. We are seeing businesses look at IT as a way of improving their agility and ability to deliver best-in-class services. IT is evolving very quickly into a source of innovation and business amplification."

Cloud has also helped organisations consolidate investments utilising cloud technologies.

"With global takeovers and acquisitions, it becomes easier to integrate internal employee applications and avoid disparate investments. At least 43per cent CIOs are currently investing in cloud technologies in the Middle East and 92per cent are scoping virtualization projects this year," said Paul-Francois Cattier, Global Vice President-Data-centers, IT Business at Schneider Electric.

This trend will be reflected in both private and public sector. At a forum organised by eHosting DataFort in partnership with Emirates e-Government titled, 'Managed IT services for the Government', in his opening address, His Excellency Salem Khamis Al-Shair Al Suwaidi, Deputy General Director for Information and eGovernment, said: "Over the last two years, cloud services have captured the interest of the information technology world. We believe that integration of the cloud ser-

vices methodology is timely and as a natural response to the challenges imposed by the financial crisis. The technology allows significant reduction of costs and optimum use of resources. In this regard, the UAE e-Government has launched the cloud computing services and we are working to gradually expand these services to the federal government departments."

eHosting DataFort, Managed IT service provider, part of TECOM Investments works closely with Dubai e-Government and other government entities. "These services enable government entities to realign their IT functions to better serve government goals providing strategic, financial and operational benefits. Owing to budget constraints, businesses are now looking to consolidate and centralize their IT infrastructure to focus on core business objectives. More and more government entities are moving away from investing in upfront Capital Expenditure (Capex) to an Operational Expenditure (Opex) model, allowing them to 'pay-as-you-go' and reduce overall risks associated with their business operations," explained Yasser Zeineldin, CEO at eHosting DataFort.

Cloud will gain popularity as employees of various organisations can be mobile and access cloud services from their smart devices. BYOD (build your own devices) is a trend which started in 2012 but make an impact only next year. "Bringing your smartphone into the enterprise network is a change of usage showcasing digitization in offices. Businesses are encouraging this behaviour within networks and therefore getting more prevalent. This means that organisations have to prepare their networks and invest accordingly," added Cattier.

'Live to Work', will drive regional professionals to embrace mobile and cloud technologies in 2013. Employees in UAE will embrace the bring-your-own-device phenomenon increasing personal productivity compared to mature markets, according to business technology consulting firm Ovum.

As part of the study conducted into employee BYOD behaviour and attitudes, it was revealed that across 17 markets, 57.1per cent of full-time employees engage in some form of BYOD. Seventy-five percent of respondents in the emerging, "high-growth" markets (including Brazil, Russia, India, UAE, and Malaysia) demonstrate a much higher propensity to use their own devices at work, compared to 44per cent in more mature markets.

Zeineldin added, "The modern-day IT executive has become an integral part of business. Systems are now vital to revenue generation, and the ever-increasing demands for online and near-instantaneous access have stretched budgets and staff. Maintaining a competitive enterprise is becoming more difficult every day. One of the key ways to increase performance is to focus on your organisation's core value activities that produce the most value for an organisation. An IT department's time should be dedicated to the activities that provide the most value and allow resources to be focused only on those key areas."

THE TOP 10 STRATEGIC TRENDS FOR

- > Mobile Device Battles
- > Mobile Applications and HTML5
- > Personal Cloud
- > Enterprise App Stores
- > The Internet of Things
- > Hybrid IT and Cloud Computing
- > Strategic Big Data
- > Actionable Analytics
- > In Memory Computing
- > Integrated Ecosystems

Source: Gartner