Six tips to make your cloud journey successful

Initiating a cloud journey is a complex task and both business and IT need to work towards success, explains Sachin Bhardwaj at eHosting DataFort.

Today, cloud is a well-known buzzword with leading business executives and business decision makers. However, initiating an end-to-end cloud journey for an organisation, as a first step into digital transformation, is a more challenging task. An organisation's cloud journey involves strong interplay between heads of business and IT decision makers as well as senior management.

For business and IT decision makers, the question is no longer whether to enter the cloud or not. If an organisation is serious about competing in tomorrow's digital market place, adopting cloud technologies and cloud platforms is the best way to move forward. Such cloud initiatives bring about an alignment between business and IT yielding transformation with enhanced competitive differentiation, productivity, agility, and reduction of IT costs.

However, once the cloud decision does get a green light, the real challenges rear their heads. Where do you start, which applications and workloads do you push first, who are the right vendors, how do you tackle legacy processes, how do you get the teams to cooperate, how do you ensure your management gives you support to transform. The solution therefore lies in anticipating and planning for all these challenges to reduce the complexity of the cloud journey.

The cloud journey of an organisation is ideally built by both IT and business decision makers. In some ways, the cloud journey can be more transformative than an ERP implementation and needs equal executive management attention and support. Similar to any complex and challenging project, it may also demand expert management.

Some of these concerns can arise if the organisation is large, complex and spread across multiple geographies with different legislation, regulation, and compliance requirements. Other reasons can link to a pragmatic understanding of the organisational culture and anticipate resistance to change.

In general, here are some of the possible bottlenecks and triggers that can lead to failure of a cloud project:

1 *Internal support*
A cloud initiation project is transformative and tends to be complex. Ignoring this possibility in the beginning may be the single most important reason leading to inevitable failure down the line. It is important to set realistic expectations from the beginning amongst top executives, business and IT decision makers, as well as other end-users. It is imperative that across the course of the project, these sides support and work for the project rather than against it. This may also involve working with external specialists and suppliers. Any steering decisions taken during the project are meant to be with the objective of the best interests of the organisation.

2 *Making a choice*

There is no one-rule when it comes to which cloud solutions work best across the organisation, across departments and across applications. Flexibility is the best approach and an organisation may end up with more than one cloud model as the best-fit for a specific requirement. The choice can include, private, hybrid, public, on-site or hosted, multi-tenant or single tenant configurations. The organisation's cloud journey must offer flexibility and the ability to change going forward.

3 *End to end*

A comprehensive cloud strategy must lead to removal of silos between data, applications, end-users, and not create new ones. Any options selected as part of the cloud strategy and also with multiple vendors, must be able to work with each other or be interoperable with each other as they get deployed. A good integration approach is when the components can be administered through a common management dashboard and interface. A

testing ground is when workloads can be moved around between the various cloud options and when each of them works together in an effective hybrid fashion.

4 *Co-existence*

Bringing in a cloud strategy into the organisation cannot be on the basis of ignoring the existing IT infrastructure already in place. Any cloud strategy will need to recognise the need to work with the existing IT environment and leverage its functioning. This challenge may involve finding the right technology partner or vendor to make it possible. A cloud strategy built on the basis of including the existing IT environment and leveraging it forward is heading in the right direction.

5 *Market competitiveness*

A cloud strategy is unlikely to succeed if it is built on the assumption of moving away from best practices that have been incorporated into an organisation over the years and replacing them with more vanilla flavors. Every business is unique and a well

thought-off cloud strategy will recognise strengths that have been built across its business. The more successful a business is, the more likely that its best practices and procedures will be unique to itself in some way. Building a cloud strategy that assumes these would be disbanded or replaced is heading in the direction of failure. Again, selection of the right cloud vendor or partner can go some distance in ensuring this objective is met.

6 *Responsibility*

As a final pre-condition for the success of any cloud journey is the responsibility for making this happen end to end. A cloud project will almost certainly involve every aspect of the existing IT environment over time. And while the components of the IT environment, such as systems, networks, applications, security, may be managed by multiple vendors and partners, there must be only one cloud vendor or partner putting it all together.

As part of this role, the cloud vendor would propose service level agreements ensuring success and compliance for the organisation across the entire cloud environment. An understanding of these factors and finding ways to work around them will go a long way in ensuring success of cloud transformation projects. ■

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