ROLE OF CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDERS IN
CLOUD MIGRATION

Sachin Bhardwaj, Director Marketing & Business Development, eHosting DataFort discusses how a cloud service provider can play an important role in helping end user organizations migrate their workloads from on-premises to the cloud through jointly engaging in a proof of concept.

Migration of data to the cloud is the process of moving business processes, business elements, data and applications, from an on-site, premises to a cloud environment. Similar to any migration process, transitioning an IT environment from onsite environment to the cloud has its share of project management and change management challenges.

However, migrating to the cloud has a unique challenge of its own. Once successfully migrated to the cloud, the end user's IT environment and its data are no longer under the direct control of the end user. The cloud environment remains under the control of the cloud service provider and hence needs to be managed remotely by the end user.

Amongst the other operational considerations that need to be overcome are concerns around privacy, interoperability, data and application portability, data integrity, business continuity, and security. Migrating to the cloud has its share of benefits and hitches and end user organizations should work with their cloud service provider to identify what is in their best interests.

The cloud is meant to provide environments that are scalable, reliable, and highly available, amongst others. Migrating workloads to the cloud brings with it various benefits. The cloud platform can scale with the demands of user access and the connectivity is much better than an on-premises installation.

This means end users do not need to depend on investing in internal resources to manage performance as the demands scales up. And as the demands scales down, the investment does not become idle and suffer a loss in return on investment opportunity.

Migrating database, applications, and data to the cloud is therefore highly effective in managing the costs of organizational IT operations, while anticipating the demands of seasonal periodicity, and geographic and business expansion.

Increasing demands in terms of compute and storage resources linked to business expansion and increasing application workloads is another strong driver for end user organizations to bring in a cloud service provider. End users and business decision makers are increasingly impatient for the IT organization to produce these resources on demand and drive adoption of the cloud.

Application development cycles being managed by internal teams also need to be shortened to match business expectations in terms of time to market. Adoption of cloud helps to reduce application complexity and reduces time to market.

On the other hand, migrating to the cloud does raise its fair share of questions, primarily whether the move is justified or not. If the application manages sensitive, confidential, and country specific data, that is controlled by highly governed procedures of risk and compliance, it may not be possible to move such data and applications to the cloud. An end user organization that has outsourced a significant portion of its hardware and software operations to a third-party will find it increasingly challenging to move those parts to the cloud in the early phases of migration.

Similarly, those applications that are proprietary or have undergone significant customization on-premises will be challenged in the initial phases of cloud migration. If the applications being used on-premises are not cloud-ready, there will be similar obstacles in the initial phases of the migration.

The older an application has been in use in an end user organization, the more likely it will have multiple, complex points of integration, with other applications and third-party solutions. Also, the older the application, the less likely that a complete set of documentation or the skilled resources behind its deployment, will be readily available on-site.

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A cloud service provider can play the role of a trusted partner by assisting in the process of migration to the cloud. This can be done by setting up a proof of concept in partnership with the end user organization. While not a perfect substitute, this will give the end user organization an idea of the following: comparison of application performance between on-premises and in-cloud; possible points of complexity and failure during migration; network bandwidth required for end-to-end data transfer; and hands-on evaluation of the capability of the cloud service provider, amongst others.

A healthy partnership between the end user organization and a cloud service provider can therefore go a long way in ensuring success of the cloud migration journey.