WILL BUSINESSES THAT AVOID THE POWER OF MULTI-CLOUD TODAY STRUGGLE TO CATCH UP?

F5 Networks has unveiled EMEA's first ever *Future of Multi-Cloud* (FOMC) report, highlighting game-changing trends and charting adaptive best practice over the next five years.

The F5 commissioned report was conducted by the Foresight Factory and features exclusive input from influential global cloud experts specialising in entrepreneurialism, cloud architecture, business strategy, industry analysis and relevant technological consultancy.

"The *Future of Multi-Cloud report* is a unique vision for how organisations can successfully navigate an increasingly intricate, cloud-centric world. The stakes are higher than ever and businesses that ignore the power of the multi-cloud today will significantly struggle in the next five years," said Vincent Lavergne, RVP, Systems Engineering, F5 Networks.

The FOMC report comes at a time of significant cloud receptivity.

According to the figures cited in the FOMC report, 81% of global enterprises claim to have a multi-cloud strategy in place. Meanwhile, the Cisco Global Cloud Index estimates that 94% of workloads and compute instances will be processed by cloud data centres by 2021.

"The multi-cloud is a game-changer for both business and consumers. It will pave the way for unprecedented innovation, bringing cloud architects, DevOps, NetOps and SecOps together to pioneer transformational services traditional infrastructures simply cannot deliver. The outlook for the coming years is bright and full of potential," said Josh McBain, Director of Consultancy, Foresight Factory.

A new era of business innovation

The *FOMC* consensus is that those delaying multi-cloud adoption will become increasingly irrelevant.

New levels of service specialisation will increasingly allow enterprises to find the best tools for their specific needs, enabling seamless scaling and rapid service delivery innovations. Technologies set to drive this transition include serverless architectures, as well as Artificial Intelligence-powered orchestration layers and configuration tools to aid data-driven decision-making. Fear of vendor lock-in is expected to continue as a key justification for multi-cloud investments.

"The multi-cloud ramp-up is one of the ultimate wake-up calls in internal IT to get their act together," said Eric Marks, VP of Cloud Consulting at CloudSpectator and a *FOMC* contributor.

"One of the biggest transformative changes is the realisation of what a high-performing IT organisation is and how it compares to what they have. Most are finding their IT organisations are sadly underperforming."

Plugging the skills gap

The *FOMC* report cautions that the multifaceted logistics of monitoring multiple cloud services, containers, APIs and other processes can be daunting and inhibit technology uptake. A significant skill gap also exists to handle this added complexity both now and into the future. Across the world, available workforces are not keeping with the pace of innovation, with potentially damaging results to business productivity and Digital Transformation capacity. Knowledge silos or lack of collaboration within businesses may further exacerbate multi-cloud apprehension.

Looking ahead, the *FOMC* report urges the business community to do more to "tap into the kaleidoscopic potential of youth and promote industry diversity." It also calls on the IT industry to better promote the use of smart, context-driven and automated solutions that can spark attractive new career opportunities and free existing workforces to focus on more strategic and rewarding work.

SACHIN BHARDWAJ, DIRECTOR MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, EHOSTING DATAFORT

When you look around and observe the pace at which organisations are moving towards the cloud for scalability, flexibility and efficiency, the numbers are only increasing. To stay competitive, businesses need to be agile and the cloud provides many tangible benefits. According to the Cisco Global Cloud Index, it projects that Middle East and Africa cloud data centre traffic will grow 440% by 2020. It also suggests that by 2020, 95% of all workloads in Middle East and Africa will be processed in the cloud, compared to 78% in 2015.

From being able to go to market quicker, to applying the mechanics of Big Data and AI, or ensuring that there is a continuous process for higher IT security, multi-cloud and its benefits are entering every single realm of businesses. And those that lag behind will most definitely not be in a position to brace themselves for growth and innovation.

There is also an influx of technology trends that are setting the growth path for data centre operations as well as cloud computing. These include aggressive digitisation, connected devices and the high penetration levels of mobility into the work force which makes it critical for companies to ready themselves for multi-cloud adoption. Any slow-down in implementing the right systems and process will have a negative impact on their ability to stay competitive.

Many companies are working towards market expansion to grow their business. However, several laws and regulations as well as organisational policies determine the way they conduct business. In order to circumvent any negative impacts, it is necessary to have their data located in designated locations which can be addressed by adopting a multi-cloud approach. Failure to do this limits the possibilities of geographical expansion and lowers the service options for end-

users who are looking to achieve optimum performance. Some organisations find it a daunting task to move to the cloud, however, they have the option to partner with a cloud service provider who can analyse, implement and manage their needs. Service providers help in reducing operational costs and also align the business expansion with multi-regional services. Many of them are also equipped to provide Disaster Recovery services which helps in reducing down-time.

Simultaneously, the pay-as-you-go option is particularly relevant to small, medium businesses as well as start-ups and the service providers help them move away

from CAPEX to an OPEX model. It is also very important that organisations keep their data and systems safe, ensure timely security updates, have real time monitoring and trace and respond to incidents. Service providers are equipped to provide infrastructure, manpower and skills that are needed to remain secure.

To summarise the benefits and adoption of multi-cloud, it provides a much more efficient IT infrastructure, enables greater flexibility, avoids vendor lock-ins, reduces IT costs and improves security and compliance and organisations must move quickly to ensure that they reap the benefits.