

DRIVING INNOVATION BY ALIGNING CLOUD AND BUSINESS

If business is driving innovation, it is imperative to include them in developing a cloud strategy writes Yasser Zeineldin at eHosting DataFort.



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The role of cloud as an IT and business tool is now more than a decade old. Globally, IT departments are migrating their business applications from on-premises to public cloud platforms at a continuous pace. Gartner, a global market research player, expects this rate to pick up as legacy systems reach their end of life support and migration projects get underway.

However, on the flip side, many enterprise CIOs have still to announce and formulate a well-defined cloud strategy for their internal IT and business end users. If well thought out and articulated, a cloud strategy can become a blueprint for the roll out of revamped and forward looking, digital processes, job roles and change in organisational structure.

Here is a checklist of pointers on how CIOs can build their cloud strategies:

LIST THE EXPECTED BUSINESS OUTCOMES

The starting point for any cloud strategy is to get a complete picture

of the desired business outcomes over a short and medium term. At this stage it is important to focus on the benefits from the point of view of the business end users rather than IT end users. A successful cloud strategy sets up a culture of self-service across the organisation, adding in new business end users into the organisation's connected network, thereby fostering a culture of self-driven innovation.

IS YOUR CLOUD AND DIGITAL STRATEGY ALIGNED?

The biggest obstacle for a successful cloud strategy is to develop it without aligning with the digital innovation strategy of the organisation. The organisation's cloud platform enables the rest of the digital experience and digital work processes to be built upon it. Lack of alignment of the two strategies in terms of requirements of scalability, application workloads, reliability, geographic responsiveness will lead to the failure of the digital innovation strategy and lack of any business return from the cloud roll out strategy.

IS BUSINESS MORE AGILE THAN IT?

Who is driving innovation in the organisation? If it is the business that is moving faster than IT, then key business decision makers need to be involved during the formulation of the organisational cloud strategy.

A CLOUD STRATEGY THAT DOES NOT PLAN FOR BUSINESS FACING APPLICATION WORKLOADS WILL HAVE NO RETURNS FROM BUSINESS.

PRIME PURPOSE OF A CLOUD STRATEGY IS BUSINESS INNOVATION, AGILITY, IMPROVEMENT IN IT OPERATIONS AND COST.

By bringing business decision makers at an early stage into the development of the cloud strategy, it is more likely that the investments required for the cloud roll out can be justified against the investments required for the digital business innovation.

PLAN OUT YOUR CRITICAL AND SUPPORTING WORKLOADS

A cloud strategy is not meant to be an IT showcase of sorts. The prime purpose is business innovation, business agility, and significant improvement in IT operations and cost. A cloud strategy that does not include and plan for business facing application workloads will have no returns from business. It may be promptly shelved as yet another IT operational initiative that can wait for better times or forwarded to business pending further discussion on a rainy and dull day.

CLOUD IMPLEMENTATION IS NOT STRATEGY

A cloud strategy document that goes deep dive into the process of technology, platform, and supplier selection is going down the wrong side of the road. An implementation document cannot substitute for a strategic document that describes the business goals and the longer-term innovation benefits for the organisation. IT cannot follow a wild west approach, where all pending IT objectives and innovation goals are piggybacked onto the cloud roll out

project. This will lead to huge project and architecture overruns, associated with capital debt, and return on investment failures.

INTERNAL IT AND BUSINESS AUDIT

Like any IT project initiative, it is necessary to capture the states of the IT and business organisation before and after the start of the roll out. The internal audit should be able to determine answers to the following questions from various end users: what are the benefits you are seeking from cloud; why is the organisation implementing a cloud framework; what is the decision-making criteria for application workloads; what is the readiness of the application portfolio; as an IT and business end-user are you ready to use the cloud?

DO YOU NEED AN EXTERNAL SUPPLIER?

Lastly, the launch of a successful cloud strategy requires a trusted partner to ensure that the vision gets converted into reality. Cloud has various models of consumption and configuration and this is also driven by internal requirements and policies. Legacy data needs to be migrated and configured on whichever cloud platform is selected for implementation. Multiple cloud platforms may also need to be introduced into the organisation. Increasingly cloud brokers and managed service providers are playing an important role, at least in the early and middle stages of a cloud roll out.

By following some of these measures, CIOs may be able to formulate an effective cloud strategy. This will act as a bridge between IT and business and kick starts the organisation into digital innovation. ■

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Many enterprise CIOs have still to announce a well-defined cloud strategy for their internal IT and business end users.
- A cloud implementation document cannot substitute for a strategic document that describes business goals and innovation benefits.
- IT cannot follow a wild west approach, where pending IT objectives and innovation goals are piggybacked onto the cloud roll out project.
- A cloud strategy is not meant to be an IT showcase of sorts.