Enabling Cloud as a First Step to Business Transformation

Any business transformation exercise begins by enumerating and detailing the Cloud road map, explains **Yasser Zeineldin, CEO from eHosting DataFort**

Moving a business to a Cloud platform or a Multi-Cloud platform requires preparation, thought, and a list of objectives, to remain focused and accountable. While the Cloud buzzword has now become a familiar term, many businesses have adopted it as a tool, and not so much as a strategic exercise to help the organization move to a much higher level of digital agility, flexibility, and revenue.

Mapping the Cloud journey before executing it, is imperative, since it can be the backbone for a much larger organizational change covering end-user job roles, departments, and an end-to-end work culture. Here is a possible structure that small, medium and large businesses can follow to reach a much higher goal and end-point in business and digital transformation.

Detail Your Business Objectives

Businesses should start by taking a look at their regional markets and evaluating how many of their competitors have adopted Cloud as a business strategy. This will give them an idea of how far ahead or behind they are from the rest of the pack.

Next it is important to make a complete and exhaustive list of what are the primary business objectives of moving to the Cloud. It could be about making available selected business applications to a much larger number of employees based on a more economical cost of Cloud-based software. If the business is expanding geographically, it may be about enabling end-users to go-live in a cheaper, more effective, more connected and more rapid fashion manner, by going all-Cloud.

On the other hand, the Cloud migration exercise may be based entirely on various IT objectives of reducing maintenance and upgrade costs, due to availability of Cloud-based software. Software available from a Cloud platform is automatically upgraded and kept secure by the software vendor from whichever part of the world it is accessed. Data saved while using such a Cloud platform can be accessed from which-ever part of the world the end-user moves to next, while they work outside office or work at home.

Migrating to the Cloud also offers longer term stability by allowing the business to replicate itself across many more Cloud platforms, therefore making it disaster proof. But it can also add more complexity in terms of service level agreements, security responsibilities and vulnerabilities, and country level data compliance requirements. These need to be taken into consideration in the planning exercise.

Next, the business needs to evaluate whether the end-user experience of using the Cloud software is superior to whatever it is using at present. The longer its end-user community has been using a particular business application internally, the longer it will take for them to adapt to the new environment. This resistance to change needs to be planned for during the migration exercise, in terms of change management and mentoring.

Relook at Job Roles

Adopting and migrating to the Cloud empowers the overall organization and its employees. By default, an IT department usually wields the clout, by having central control on the delivery and support of IT resources and business applications. By migrating to the Cloud, the control of the delivery of business applications has now moved outside the organization. This outsourcing initiative, frees up more resources inside the IT department, allowing them to spend time looking at more strategic and longer-term initiatives.

This could be about how to use automation to remove manual and repetitive tasks from an employee's work time. It could be about how to use better analytical tools to enable higher levels of business insights for customer facing teams and senior management executives. It could be about how to manage larger volumes of data being generated through larger number of end-users now accessing cloud-based business applications.

The organization also needs to identify its Cloud champion. Is the CIO a logical and suitable choice or is a business head more suited to lead the organization in its Cloud journey. The Cloud offers a myriad of choices in terms of availability of business applications and adoption of best practices. This needs to be mapped into the organization's core competence.

Therefore, a business head, with multi-departmental experience, and good people skills may be a more logical choice. On the other hand, business heads may primarily look after their own interests and targets. They may not necessarily execute a holistic picture of a pan-organization wide Cloud strategy in a balanced manner. Selection of a Cloud champion needs careful consideration using a number of internal pros and cons.

While technology continues to change how we run our businesses, a planned approach to transformation can provide visible benefits in terms of productivity, service and profitability. It can also provide a sound basis for convincing the rest of the organization to get onboard with larger transformational campaigns. When it comes to the Cloud, the right pace and process are key to finding success. Those that get it right will drive business impact today and be ready to adapt to whatever tomorrow holds.

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