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MAKING THE MOST OF A HYBRID CLOUD STRATEGY



Statistics on cloud computing indicate most companies have either already adopted or are quickly adopting hybrid cloud strategies. They are embracing this approach to remain competitive in the current technology-driven era of digital transformation.

Last year's [RightScale State of the Cloud](#) report, which surveyed nearly 1,000 technology professionals at large and small organizations, revealed 51 percent of those organizations implemented a hybrid strategy. According to Gartner, [the number of organizations with a hybrid strategy overall will increase to 90 percent by 2020](#).

“Organizations that adopt hybrid infrastructure will optimize costs and increase efficiency,” said D. D. Mishra, research director at Gartner. “However, it increases the complexity of selecting the right toolset to deliver end-to-end services in a multisource environment.”

Making the most of hybrid cloud requires organizations to first know what hybrid cloud actually is. Otherwise, it is easy to approach its adoption from a completely misdirected angle and waste a lot of budget dollars without realizing even a fraction of the benefits hybrid cloud offers.

WHAT IS HYBRID CLOUD?

Even though the majority of technology professionals say they adopt hybrid cloud strategies, they seldom agree on what hybrid cloud really means. This leads to confusion and strategic misalignment among technology team members.

In its report entitled [“Top 10 Facts Every Tech Leader Should Know about Hybrid Cloud,”](#) industry researcher Forrester Research points out each organization differently understands hybrid cloud. When Forrester asked what “hybrid cloud” means, the most popular answer was “multiple public and private clouds.” That was followed by “integrating public cloud with our non-cloud, on-premises infrastructure and data.”

“Hybrid cloud means very little,” commented Lauren E. Nelson, the lead author of the report and principal analyst at Forrester. “Hybrid cloud, as the market defines it, is the use of cloud in parallel with other technologies—cloud or non-cloud. It’s cloud, plus anything. Essentially, it describes every organization, but with absolutely no specificity.”

To bring clarity to the confusion surrounding hybrid cloud, many vendors now use the term multi-cloud instead to encompass any cloud strategy involving more than one cloud. [“Multi-cloud is one wherein you mix and match cloud services from different providers,](#) often to meet specific workload needs, but not connected or orchestrated between them,” explained Radhesh Balakrishnan, general manager of OpenStack at Red Hat.



By real definition, hybrid cloud uses a mix of private cloud and public cloud services with a composition between them, making it possible to share applications and data. As such, hybrid cloud is ideal for organizations of all sizes with a goal to achieve high-operational agility needed to deal with dynamic or changing workloads, while prioritizing security.

BENEFITS OF HYBRID CLOUD

Because there is so much confusion surrounding hybrid cloud, many technology professionals and business leaders are unsure how to leverage its benefits and turn it into a competitive advantage. The good news is, leveraging the benefits of the hybrid cloud is not nearly as difficult as it may appear. But, there are some items to keep in mind.

1. Avoid Hybrid-by-Accident Approaches

Hybrid-by-accident approaches are found in organizations using a mix of private cloud and public cloud services. This comes about without any initial and intentional creation of a hybrid environment. Instead, it happens from looking at the technical components, business strategy and organizational plan that all go into the process.

“Cloud strategies are often a compilation of the best tools available at the time that organizations select them,” Nelson said. Hybrid-by-accident approaches are typically chaotic and can easily lead to serious security and governance problems, because they make it difficult for IT to gain visibility into these disorganized environments.

Organizations can make the most of their hybrid cloud plan by avoiding the use of a mishmash of cloud-based tools and services. Instead, their approach to a hybrid cloud strategy should be looked upon as a journey consisting of multiple stages or steps.

Every hybrid cloud adoption journey must begin with an assessment of the current IT strategy. This allows tech teams to better understand how the business looks today and what opportunities hybrid cloud offers. Instead of implementing everything at once, typically, it is best when organizations deploy parts of their overall plan in phases, spanning months or even years.

2. Never Underestimate Security and Governance

According to Guy Peer, vice president of research and development and co-founder at Unbound, “[There is no denying that hybrid cloud infrastructure is part of the new business reality.](#) Therefore, IT leaders must make hybrid cloud security a priority, if they haven’t already.”



One of the most prevalent hybrid cloud security issues is the lack of data redundancy. Whereas public cloud providers go out of their way to ensure the same piece of data is always held in at least two separate places, organizations often fail to do the same when it comes to their private clouds. This greatly compromises their business continuity plans.

With data breaches becoming increasingly common and costly, organizations must pay special attention to their data security. They must protect themselves against hybrid cloud security threats, including data leakage, inadequate security risk assessment, weak security management, lack of data ownership, unprotected APIs, malicious employees, and many other dangers.

Hybrid cloud can make it more difficult to maintain and demonstrate compliance, because the coordination between individual clouds must also be compliant. For example, organizations working with payment card data are expected to demonstrate compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) both in regard to their internal systems and their cloud providers.

3. Partner with a Managed Cloud Services Provider

Managing a hybrid cloud environment is difficult, and making the most of it is even more challenging. Often, internal IT departments lack the skills to effectively monitor and maintain even a relatively simple cloud environment, let alone a complex hybrid cloud environment consisting of a mix of private cloud and public cloud services with orchestration between them.

To leverage the hybrid cloud to its fullest potential and reap its numerous benefits, many organizations partner with managed cloud services providers to help them with their hybrid cloud strategies. By doing so, these organizations earn cost savings, the ability to handle dynamic or changing workloads, greater accessibility to business-critical applications, improved security capabilities and better opportunity for innovation.

Managed cloud services providers offer expertise, proven guidance and processes to best position organizations for growth and take their business to the next level, regardless of their industry. A partnership with a managed cloud services provider like [Vology](#) can be the difference between becoming a hybrid cloud success story and a warning for how cloud adoption goes wrong.

ABOUT VOLOGY

Vology, a leading Managed IT, Security and Cloud Services Provider, positions companies for growth by powering digital transformation and delivering custom solutions. Vology currently monitors, manages and maintains 260,000 devices at 32,000 customer sites, providing 24/7/365 support through its U.S.-based Network and Security Operations Centers. Vology is ranked as the No. 21 Managed Services Provider in the world on the 2018 MSP 501 list with access to 2,200 fully vetted field technicians nationwide.

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