

Designing a cloud that meets your business requirements

 By Sumash Singh 7 Sep 2015

As cloud technology matures, IT organisations are increasingly rethinking their cloud strategy in order to deliver optimal value versus cost to the business. As a result, the discussion around cloud has moved on from the public versus private debate, with the majority of enterprises looking toward a hybrid approach to achieve this requirement.

In addition, data management is becoming a growing concern, particularly in South Africa as compliance with the Protection of Personal Information (PoPI) Act is now required. A service-based cloud design with a focus on data management is now coming to the fore, addressing a number of crucial cloud challenges while effectively addressing requirements and maximising return on investment.



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Tackling common cloud challenges

One of the most common challenges for businesses looking to move into the cloud is defining what the cloud is, as the CIO managers and even IT staff may describe it differently. This makes deployment difficult, as it is a challenge to reach consensus on what the solution is, let alone what it should be doing for the business. In addition, this lack of consensus leads to concerns from various stakeholders about the cost of private cloud and public cloud integration, transitioning to the new system, a lack of in-house skills and more.

A common cloud definition throughout an organisation is essential in ensuring it can be designed, deployed and operated successfully. All stakeholders, both business and technology focused, must therefore first and foremost reach an agreement about their cloud implementation and what the appropriate outcomes will be in the short, medium and long-term.

The next step is for the IT department to understand their customer by discovering, documenting and prioritising their business requirements. Without this vital step, business users are dissatisfied with the solution provided, as it does not meet their needs or requirements. Clearly defining these needs is essential before services can be developed and solutions procured to support service offerings around these requirements.

Effective cloud services design

Essentially, there are five processes to be followed that ensure cloud services design aligns to business requirements, customer needs, and technology. The service strategy is the first process that must be developed, and the principles within

the service strategy must be aligned with business values. This will provide a foundation for designing services and guide procedures for when any issues or roadblocks arise.

Once the service strategy has been developed, the service design can be addressed, which includes aspects such as service offerings, billing and cost models, reporting, and the service pipeline. The service transition is then developed, with the checks and balances that are a critical component of service design and deployment. This includes integration into change management, the release cycle, and a transition readiness assessment to ensure the successful launch of the service.

Service operations must also be addressed such as new roles, tasks and potential organisational changes will be required support new services. All recurring and necessary tasks must be outlined and mapped to specific roles, to ensure that staff and management understand how tasks will be accomplished. Finally, continual service improvement must be addressed to ensure cloud services remain agile enough to meet changing business and technology climates. Defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that align with service strategy are an essential part of this, and must be reviewed periodically. In addition, service strategies must be adjusted to continually align with business needs.

The importance of the service catalogue

The output of these five processes should be captured in a services catalogue that serves as a reference point for both IT and the business. Documenting processes is essential, as it is not possible to develop a single solution that meets 100% of requirements 100% of the time. Therefore, any design decisions and tradeoffs must be included in this documentation so to clarify why services have been deployed in a certain way. The services catalogue is also a valuable reference for articulating value and capturing the feedback necessary for continual improvement.

Designing a cloud solution that meets your business needs is essential to the deployment of cloud services. Engaging with the services of an expert consultancy will help organisations to ensure that they are able to accurately define their cloud service needs, design efficient and flexible data management capabilities, as well as implement and manage a modern, cloud-based environment. This will ensure the best positive outcomes for both IT and business, helping to realise the full value and necessity of the cloud in your business.

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