

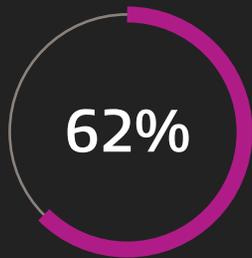
Coming Out on Top: Hybrid Cloud Strategies for Success

Choosing, adopting, and managing a hybrid cloud approach

Prioritizing transformation with hybrid cloud

When responding to unexpected challenges becomes a priority, it can be tempting for businesses to put transformation on hold. And while keeping the lights on may be the primary goal for some, many organizations are positioned to address their operational challenges with solutions that can drive lasting business impact.

The surge of concerns following the start of the 2020 global health crisis accelerated the push to cloud — including hybrid choices — for many organizations. Industry leaders have anticipated nearly universal adoption of hybrid cloud for several years, and it looks like we're getting close:



of ITDMs have already implemented or plan to expand their use of public cloud. ITDMs plan to implement or expand implementation of internal private cloud (51%) and hosted private cloud (48%).¹

Planned and supported correctly, hybrid cloud can help you succeed in addressing your critical priorities: business continuity, cost optimization, and continued innovation. Here, we present four strategies to guide you in making — and maintaining — the right cloud decision for your business.



Understanding cloud options

First things first: What is hybrid cloud and what are your options within it? Let's start with some definitions:



Private cloud

A model in which a business controls its own environment for virtualized computing resources through on-premises infrastructure (including owned, leased, or As a Service models).



Public cloud

The model by which business entities consume virtual resources and infrastructure owned and managed by hyperscalers such as Google, Amazon, and Microsoft (through virtual machines, a dedicated machine, or API).



Hybrid cloud

Combines the prior models, using both on-premises infrastructure and public cloud resources, sometimes from more than one public cloud provider (a model that uses multiple major public cloud platforms is also known as multicloud).

Traditional on-premises infrastructure was built around cost control and security, helping IT ensure resources are well-managed and well-organized. As developer tools and resources evolved in the last decades, public cloud emerged as an answer to the newer need for agility and easily scalable resources.



As public cloud has grown in popularity, organizations have had to find a way to balance the convenience of cloud resources with the security and cost control on-premises infrastructure offers. In response, many opt for a hybrid cloud strategy, applying a best-of-both-worlds approach to a wide variety of use cases, including:



Disaster Recovery (DR)
in the cloud



Developer testing



Storage needs



Spinning up Virtual
Machines (VMs)



Fast-build customer
applications



Tool expansion for existing
business applications



Surge or peak
demand periods

Your organization's approach to hybrid cloud will depend on your current cloud engagement and needs. Not everyone will find optimal value in a hybrid cloud approach. For instance, organizations that have matured within a public cloud environment, or that have their operations, development, and security all built out in public cloud infrastructure, may not find as much value in building out private cloud infrastructure for new applications because of a knowledge and skill gap that makes it difficult to bridge multiple platforms.

Similarly, organizations that have relied on private infrastructure for years are looking at a whole new world when it comes to consuming private cloud — or, more aptly, several worlds, as Chief Architect Juan Orlandini notes in our recent [LinkedIn Live session on hybrid cloud](#).

“It's not just one world, it's three or four worlds if you go hybrid, because the way you manage **AWS** and consume AWS is completely different than the way you do **Azure** and **GCP** and Oracle and IBM, and on and on...”

Strategies for strengthening your approach to hybrid cloud

To help support a hybrid cloud approach that delivers the best value for your organization, consider the four strategies presented below as part of your decision-making process.

1. Rightly position hybrid cloud decisions as business decisions

Hybrid cloud delivers a best-of-both-worlds approach to give your business:



Agility



Scalability



Workload flexibility



Affordability



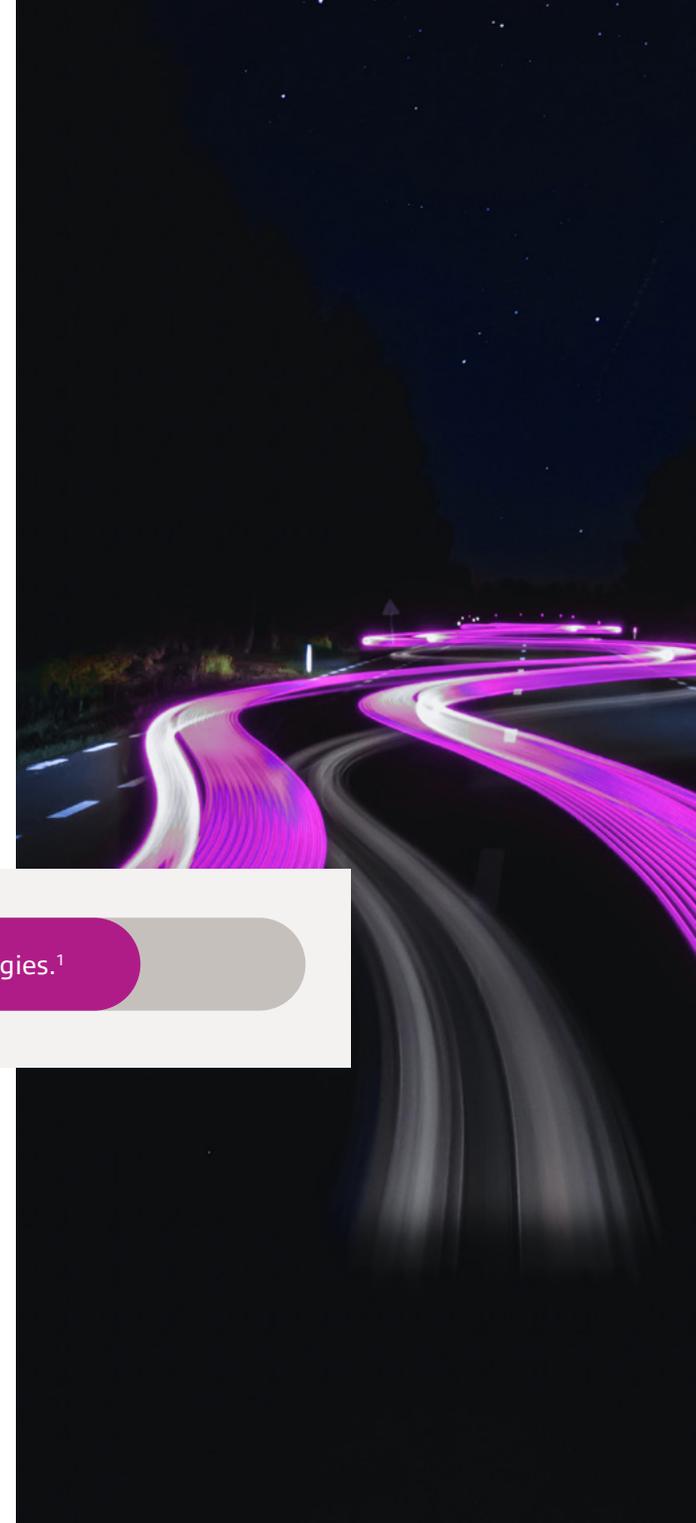
Security

For IT decision-makers, wondering whether hybrid cloud could be the answer for improved agility with reduced risk, the answer is, in most cases, yes. But it first requires careful strategy for matching the available vendors, solutions, and configurations to your business's unique needs. Many organizations have rushed to cloud without carefully weighing how to best use technology to meet specific use cases, resulting in a vast majority moving workloads away from public cloud to alternative or non-cloud locations.



85% agree that on-premises infrastructure is a critical part of their firms' hybrid cloud strategies.¹

Insight Principal Architect Chris Kapusta said in our recent LinkedIn Live conversation that business leaders are rightly asking, "How can I use public cloud resources to out-innovate my competition?" His answer to that question is to think of your hybrid cloud decisions as both business decisions and technology decisions, understanding that the time to innovation is measured from a business level. To best leverage cloud services for innovation, first define your top business priorities, then use those to create use cases to help guide and justify the right technology investments.



2. Embrace the discipline of workload alignment

Businesses making hybrid cloud decisions ask questions like, “Should my data storage be in the cloud?” or “Should I keep the data local and use cloud computing?” To answer those questions, you need a set of preceding questions (and answers) about your workloads.

Making your hybrid cloud strategy work well requires intimately understanding your workloads — what each one affects, where it resides, and what processes are dependent upon it. This process of workload discovery will illuminate where to place them, enabling you to answer the questions of which type of hybrid cloud solutions to implement where.

While **workload alignment** is critical to your initial decision-making, it’s just as critical to ongoing hybrid cloud performance. Evaluating and determining optimal placement remains a crucial procedure as new workloads are created, helping to maintain efficiency in cost and performance.

“People in IT aren’t valuable to the organization because they know the layers of the OSI model or how to capture packets — it’s how they understand the business.”

3. Increase focus on your internal customers

A modern approach to hybrid cloud should also reflect awareness of your internal customers. Create an infrastructure environment that meets the needs of individual teams and business units to improve continuity, control, and efficiency throughout the organization.

IT responsiveness to the internal customers’ needs and insights can drive improved internal collaboration and higher value outcomes. In our recent LinkedIn Live, Insight’s National Director of Network and Cloud Security Jason Rader says, “People in IT aren’t valuable to the organization because they know the layers of the OSI model or how to capture packets — it’s how they understand the business.” Leveraging the value of your IT teams for recommendations and strategy to meet internal need, regardless of technology involved, can help your organization deliver on the service, speed, and capabilities that your business units need to empower innovation.

IT organizations are also increasing focus on their developers. Understand the developers’ role as the driver behind your business’s user experiences, applications, and capabilities, and use your hybrid cloud approach to give them tools that make their job simpler. This helps organizations unify understanding and purpose between internal teams and create efficiencies closer to where business value is being generated.



4. Play to the future within your IT spend strategy

When it comes to making IT decisions in today's challenging economic environment, businesses tend to fall into one of three spend strategies:

Preservation: Doing whatever it takes to keep the lights on, sometimes to the detriment of innovation for the sake of sustaining the business

Cautious innovation: Reducing expenditure where needed while trying to innovate where possible to maintain competitive equilibrium

Acceleration: Finding areas of need in the market and pouring resources into innovating to fill those gaps and create new business success

Hybrid cloud strategies that align with each of these three spend strategies can be developed. Doing so requires productive communication between IT leaders and key stakeholders to make sure decision-makers understand which of these categories your organization currently falls under.

When times get tough, new priorities emerge and old priorities fall in rank. Recent global uncertainty shifted priorities for most businesses, making way for the emerging top priorities of reducing CapEx outlays and supporting supply chain continuity.² Despite that, certain areas of IT spending have retained priority status, including:



Migrating applications to the cloud



Innovation and automation



Customer-facing applications²

Certain areas of spending remain a priority despite economic challenges on a global scale because innovation is a need. Regardless of where a business sits in the current economic situation, transformation is key for business success in the modern economic landscape. For example, a manufacturing business may need to consider immediate changes in staffing, production, or product lines. But if they neglect ongoing R&D investment, they may miss out on potential innovation that could put them ahead of the competition when the economy restabilizes.



In conclusion

Even in a challenging business landscape, the question isn't, "Should transformation be a priority?" Orlandini tells business leaders, "It's imperative to transform. The question is really how to do it, and the answer depends on your workloads, your developer experience, your end-user experience, and your position in the economic landscape." Hybrid cloud delivers an excellent option for meeting your business priorities in a way that enables future innovation.

When you're weighing your options for a hybrid cloud strategy, here are some final reminders to help guide your decisions:



All-or-nothing is almost never the right call; pick and choose solutions that serve your business and tailor every solution to specific business needs.



Every IT choice is an opportunity to support innovation; optimize every choice for maximum positive impact.



You don't have to know it all; trust the experts for decision-making guidance and strategic and technical support.

Remember, the more thought and planning you put into making your decisions, the better your outcomes will be, wherever your organization lands in the matrix of hybrid cloud options.



solutions.insight.com | insight.com

¹ A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, The Key to Enterprise Hybrid Cloud Strategy, January 2021.

² Bhatia, A., Fabbri, F., Kaiser, J., Mayer, A., and Schlotter, B. (2020, June 26). BCG IT Spend Pulse: How COVID-19 Is Shifting Tech Priorities. Boston Consulting Group.