



Embracing a Multicloud Environment

How to adopt a sustainable
multicloud strategy with success

Cloud and its many possibilities

Cloud has revolutionized business. It is a platform for innovative and forward-thinking companies, small and large organizations, government agencies and private firms, productivity applications and Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions — and everything in between.

We've entered an era where organizations are beyond using a cloud platform; they're using multiple public cloud platforms as part of a multicloud strategy. An organization may also take both a multicloud and hybrid cloud strategy, the latter of which includes the use of on-premises infrastructure and/or colocation facilities.

Multicloud strategies pervade the business landscape today. According to the Flexera 2020 State of the Cloud Report:



Organizations use more than **2 public and 2 private clouds** on average¹



93% of enterprises have a multicloud strategy¹



Organizations plan to increase cloud spend by almost **50% this year**, partially driven by COVID-19¹

Knowing that it is not uncommon for businesses to leap before they look, particularly in times of uncertainty and additional pressures, we aim to provide important context and considerations for business leaders as they continue driving multicloud strategies.



Major players and the fine print

Multicloud is possible because businesses have a choice of which cloud(s) to deploy.

The top three public cloud platforms in use today are [Microsoft® Azure®](#), [Amazon Web Services \(AWS®\)](#), and [Google Cloud Platform \(GCP\)](#).

Each provides their own microservices and approaches for application development, platform management, security, and billing. There are use cases better suited for each provider.



The worldwide Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) market **grew 37.3% in 2019 to total \$44.5 billion, up from \$32.4 billion in 2018,** according to Gartner, Inc.²

As of July 2020, Canalis reported the market share breakdown as: AWS (31%), Azure (20%), and GCP (6%). AWS' lead may be partially attributed to the fact that it had a seven-year head start over its competitors. The growth of Azure and GCP has been steady in recent months and years.³

In a [LinkedIn Live discussion](#) with several Insight executives, we discussed other cloud solutions such as [Dropbox®](#), [OneDrive®](#), and [iCloud®](#). Because these are public platforms, do they count toward a multicloud strategy?

The primary question to ask is whether these are acting as enterprise services or are being used via individual means.

Key considerations:



Who manages it, and how is it managed?



How is it being delivered?



How is it impacting enterprise IT?



Are there security or governance policies for it?

If the cloud solution is being offered as an enterprise service, it may be appropriate to include these platforms in the multicloud conversation. This is especially true if we're looking at core office applications such as [Office 365®](#) and [OneDrive](#).

An exercise in optimization

Part of having an effective multicloud strategy that delivers maximum benefits to the business is ensuring that workloads are in optimal locations. Beyond the public cloud, on-premises infrastructure options should also be considered for any organization pursuing or interested in pursuing a hybrid cloud strategy.

Regardless of where an application was built, there are a number of factors to consider:



Data

- What data does the workload produce?
- What are the accessibility and storage requirements for the data?
- Where else does the data flow, and how is it secured across locations?



Cost

- Is the platform the most cost-effective choice for the workload?
- How are costs being monitored and managed?
- Are there other ways costs could be controlled or optimized within the platform, or does it make sense to evaluate other options?



Dependency

- What other workloads does the workload/application interact with?
- What logical, infrastructural, or external dependencies exist?
- If a workload needed to be moved, what other actions would be necessary to ensure operational continuity?

Additionally, application rationalization is essential. With the expansion of cloud environments, we're seeing an increase in cloud management and cost challenges, with nearly 7 in 10 organizations reporting higher-than-expected cloud costs, and 84% outsourcing or planning to outsource cloud management to an external partner.⁴

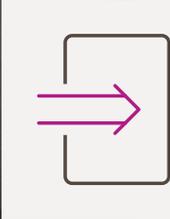
Having the right applications in the right places can greatly alleviate such challenges. For many organizations, this will require performing some kind of environment discovery and analysis. As part of our clients' cloud transformation initiatives, we often provide Consulting Services alongside our [SnapStart discovery engine](#), which finds and maps all IT assets and identifies ideal candidates for cloud.



The unavailability of moving workloads

Whether you're executing a multicloud strategy or changing one, at some point you'll need to move workloads, even if you have a fully cloud-native strategy today.

The key is "planning for the exit" or "planning for the end at the beginning." According to Senior Practice Director Peter Kraatz in the aforementioned LinkedIn Live session, when organizations do this kind of upfront planning, they end up consuming services more efficiently and therefore realizing a lower total cost of running in the cloud.



The irony is: By planning for the exit, you're actually reducing the likelihood that you'll need to follow that plan at all.

That said, we know that vendor lock-in is a commonly held concern among companies consuming the cloud — and one that we don't think needs to be as big of a concern with the cloud, specifically. As Kraatz notes, any time your business invests in a particular IT asset, it is making a commitment. This has always been true, long before the arrival of cloud, with storage, networking, and other IT infrastructure.

Best practice is to understand the complexity of the workloads you have and the new applications you're building, so that you can make an informed decision and select the optimal platform for each workload. Multicloud is perfect for this when used as a best-of-breed solution that accommodates diverse workloads and requirements, rather than as a way to avoid future price hikes that may or may not ever even occur.

Cloud strategy — got one?

Although we've used the term "multicloud strategy" many times already, it's important to note that many organizations have arrived at a multicloud approach without a lot of planning or forethought — i.e., without much of a strategy. In these scenarios, strategies often need to be crafted later and retrofitted, as part of cloud optimization initiatives.

What you'll want to discuss:



How the business wants to consume cloud services



The size, nature, and characteristics of your application portfolio



Alignment between cloud consumption and business profile, requirements, and objectives



Intended benefits of a multicloud approach, compared to what you would gain from utilizing other models (e.g., hybrid, single cloud platform, etc.)



Multicloud doesn't run itself

Who's managing your cloud environments? This question is especially relevant with multicloud approaches, wherein you are simultaneously managing wholly different platforms based on the same, shared set of high-level business and technical requirements, cost objectives, and security and governance policies.

The value of upskilling, Organizational Change Management (OCM), and focusing on culture cannot be overstated.

This is the “people” part of the transformation puzzle (people, process, and technologies), and critical to your multicloud success.



Ensure you have confident technicians and managers at the helm, versed in the latest cloud services and best practices.





Supporting your cloud journey

Chances are you are multiclouding, whether you've intended to or not. It's possible you also have a hybrid cloud strategy. Either way, why not make your IT environment the best it can be?

Insight brings a diverse skill set and wealth of resources to help you maximize the value of your cloud investments. We can help you design, build, secure, optimize, and manage your multicloud environment.

Learn more at solutions.insight.com.



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Sources:

¹ Flexera. (2020). Flexera 2020 State of the Cloud Report.

² Gartner Press Release, "Gartner Says Worldwide IaaS Public Cloud Services Market Grew 37.3% in 2019," August 10, 2020. <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2020-08-10-gartner-says-worldwide-iaas-public-cloud-services-market-grew-37-point-3-percent-in-2019>

³ Canalys. (2020, July 30). Cloud spending surged in Q2 2020, as lockdowns drove high levels of consumption. Canalys.com.

⁴ The State of IT Modernization 2020. (February 2020). Marketpulse Research by IDG Research Services, commissioned by Insight.