



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Mapping your cloud migration strategy

Organizations that have waited to move their applications to the cloud now have more insights to help them develop a plan and guide their strategy. They also have more choices to make in defining their approach to the cloud thanks to increasing options from cloud solutions providers. This range of options allows each business to choose the path that best serves its strategic needs and risk profile. But, identifying the right path for your business will require your teams to do their homework before considering all the alternatives, in order to make sure they find a strategy that best matches your objectives.

Identifying and prioritizing business and technology objectives

Mapping your current ecosystem and identifying the gaps that must be addressed is key to any cloud strategy. Legacy software often requires expert users to manage and create workflows that require near-manual handoffs between organizations that use different applications to manage their business. In addition, your legacy software might be considerably behind current versions due to customizations that were needed to adapt software to your business. Because of these customizations, this software would need to be updated in order to work with new versions.

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While considering these changes may be daunting, there's tremendous value in modernizing your technology ecosystem with cloud technology, including the ability to more easily keep your capabilities current and reducing the load on your internal resources. Or as **McKinsey puts it**: "By viewing cloud computing as a starting point for IT automation, companies may be able to have it all: scalability, agility, flexibility, efficiency, and cost savings. But that's only possible by building up both automation and cloud capabilities."

To prioritize your migration phases, you should consider the time to return on the upgrade investment. Begin by considering the functionality that serves focused business silos; this can be a good way to start your cloud journey without requiring alignment and effort from large numbers of people across departments. This option works well when you can visualize the potential for significant costs savings with a business process.

Organizational culture change can drive an analytics-first attitude. This can be achieved through leaving applications in place but moving data to the cloud, enabling insights across data silos and accurate monitoring of enterprise KPIs.

For businesses that have the capacity to take on more substantive change, moving to a modern, cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) or digital operations platform opens up a wide range of potential, including more inclusive and consistent workflows, a common user experience across the organization, and mobile access to critical tools and data to support work wherever employees need it. "These next-generation digital operations platforms (DOPs)—spanning finance, customer operations, supply chain, product, and people/talent—play a critical role in powering modern business and delivering customer experience," **observes Forrester**. Additionally, many modern ERP systems can also be fine-tuned to your specific industry, reducing the time to implement as well as customizations to meet all your company specific requirements.

Assembling a team to drive change

Teams that execute successful transformations are inclusive. These teams bring together business and technical stakeholders to develop a holistic set of requirements for both the near term and the long term. Mapping these needs shouldn't be confused with creating detailed requirements—specifics will change over time during your different migration phases.

“ Our lifeblood is the front line of the retail store. By providing our front-line workers with reporting at their fingertips, sales and customer service have improved. All our employees, including executives, look at the same numbers and make better decisions as a result. All of this value has definitely contributed to a positive ROI.”

DAVID CLOTHIER

Vice President of Finance, Treasurer & Controller, CPA, Pilot Flying J¹

Rather, the goal should be to consider a comprehensive set of needs to incorporate how certain functions work with each other, how the applications need to interact with external entities such as suppliers and partners, and how business strategies and market dynamics may affect requirements over time.

The team should include an architecture function that can identify critical needs for integration, scalability, performance, and technology maintenance. This sub-team should be maximizing the future agility of the new platform for ease of extension and provide options for future requirements that may develop.

Detailing the business case

After developing the basic approach, your team should work with financial planning to determine the ROI model for the initial phase(s) of the migration. It's always a good idea to choose initial projects that can provide a strong tangible contribution to the business once implemented.

By focusing on time to value, the early stages of the migration effort can create resource availability and productivity to support future projects that might be necessary for overall goals but have a longer horizon to return.

The business case KPIs should be shared with potential partners and vendors to make sure that they also target the correct metrics in their implementations. Starting with a pre-project baseline, be prepared to continuously review progress on business KPIs as the project proceeds to help maximize ROI and prove the success of the project.

Preparing your data for the cloud

Bringing data together from disparate systems can be challenging, but it is an essential step to realizing cloud value. By aggregating data across the enterprise, businesses can gain the visibility to align operations and employees.

The first step for most organizations is to assess data cleanliness and try to address data quality through improved input and archiving unnecessary data or data that cannot be trusted to aid future decisions. Bringing data together for application integration and analytics requires a clear and strong approach to application integration, including the definition of data exchange standards and semantic maps to contextualize data once it's been aggregated. For ongoing management of data exchanges, API-driven interfaces should be prioritized to maximize scalability and flexibility.

Selecting your tools and partners

Cloud migration requires you to consider different kinds of complexities. During implementation, applications might be running in parallel and need to work with other applications both in the cloud or on-premises. Applications from different cloud vendors will still need to be integrated to accommodate cross functional workflows.

Identifying platform technologies for integration, user access management, data aggregation, analytics, and reporting should be done in concurrence with your initial application selection. These essential technologies will help keep your business moving forward as applications are migrated and also provide reporting and insights that will help improve decisions both in the near term and on an ongoing basis.

Choosing the right partners to help you design and implement your cloud strategy is essential. Most businesses don't have the capacity or expertise to do it themselves.

† Pilot Flying J, case study



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For your cloud project to succeed, you must look beyond achieving a successful implementation and instead look at how you can drive cultural evolution by identifying better ways to collaborate.

Your partners should recognize that time to value will dictate a phased approach with clear milestones for tangible business contributions. They should focus on business KPIs during the implementation and post-deployment phases of the project to demonstrate the business case.

Planning for the next phases

After the initial phases of the project, the value you achieve should be shared across the enterprise to socialize your benefits and drive support for your next cloud project. For your cloud project to succeed, you must look beyond achieving a successful implementation and instead look at how you can drive cultural evolution by identifying better ways to collaborate, perhaps by leveraging an analytics-driven approach to making business decisions. Ultimately, as **Grant Thornton notes**: “Competitive advantage will not be about which organizations can move their applications to the cloud the fastest and in the most cost-effective way, but rather which organizations understand that maximizing the cloud investment requires being effective at managing a constant state of change.”

By making change orientation a key element of your organizational DNA, you can not only set up your project for success, but you can also create a more agile organization that is better prepared to take on future challenges and opportunities. The future is in the cloud, but that path doesn't need to be cloudy.

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