



Data Centre and Virtualization

On-Ramp to Cloud: The Business Perspective

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Biography

Darren began his career as a graduate Military Officer in the RAF before moving into the commercial sector. He brings over 20 years experience in telecommunications and managed services gained at BT, MFS Worldcom, Level3 Communications, Attenda and COLT. He joined the VIRTUS (<https://virtusdatacentres.com>) team from euNetworks where he was Head of Sales for the UK, leading market changing deals with a number of large financial institutions and media agencies, and growing the company's expertise in low latency trading.

Additionally, he sits on the board of one of the industry's most innovative Mobile Media Advertising companies, Odyssey Mobile Interaction, and is interested in all new developments in this sector. Darren has an honours degree in Electronic and Electrical Engineering from University of Wales, College Swansea.

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Abstract

Having promoted cloud computing technologies for more than a decade, IT experts could be forgiven for thinking that the industry has reached the peak of maturity. But, as the author of this article explains, while IT professionals may be buoyed by an environment which recognizes the need for cloud-first policies, there is still an urgent need to better understand the business issues surrounding cloud computing.

Introduction - What do CXOs know now?

Business leaders have long recognized that one of the major benefits of moving to the cloud is the cost. With no need for upfront technology investment in hardware – which may not even be fully utilized during its lifetime – a company can redirect funds to other parts of the business. Any money allocated for upgrades and replacements is freed up for other purposes too. This move from CAPEX to OPEX has clear benefits of financially accounting for technology purchases, and the business case is, for many, compelling.

The truth is that business leaders are still in the early stages of their engagement with cloud computing. For some, 'cloud' remains an IT issue – the burden of another department. For others, while the efficiency and flexibility benefits are attractive, the risk associated with unreliable connections and a dependence on third parties is just too great.



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Why now is the right time

If cloud computing is to achieve its potential, it must move away from being ‘just’ an IT issue – to being recognized as a business critical operation which sits squarely at the C-suite table.

For UK organizations, who are competing on a volatile and uncertain global stage, the time to reap the benefits of cloud computing must be now. Indeed, the biggest risk associated with cloud computing is in not engaging. Digital disruption means that companies can no longer be complacent – they can either seize the opportunity, or see their business disappear.

How to start – a little closer to the ground

Some have argued that cloud platforms will replace the need for physical infrastructure. That the cloud now provides businesses with all the computing power they may need without the hassle and expense of maintaining their own infrastructure. But here’s the reality: every cloud application will reside somewhere, and most likely in a data centre. Data centres are where the cloud lives and the gateway to cloud-centred IT; they provide colocation to extend or support cloud services.



We are an example of this at work – VIRTUS is a colocation specialist whose facilities are crucial intersections for major networks. Our experience tells us that every business who wants to benefit from the cloud should start its journey a bit closer to the ground. Together with choosing the right mix of public, private and hybrid cloud services to meet their individual (and changing) needs, organizations must look for cloud service providers who have the right data centre capabilities to provide crucial security, connectivity and quality guarantees.



On-ramp to cloud: the connectivity factor

In a hybrid model, companies need to reach multiple cloud providers and other enterprises, exchange traffic and connect systems, platforms and applications. So, connectivity to the right carriers is critical if the cloud is to work. As businesses consume and connect more and more geographically dispersed devices and clouds, their appetite for network connectivity and bandwidth becomes even stronger.

Connectivity starts in the data centre too. Companies should be aware that whilst some data centre providers can build the best high performance computing platform and a facility that is cost effective to run, without connectivity provisioning on-ramp to other clouds, businesses simply won't be able to adopt a hybrid cloud strategy.

Specialist data centres will provide on-ramp to cloud services, so customers have direct access to multiple clouds that can work for them to provide increased computing power and performance. Colocation providers are already designed to be connected to multiple carriers, in a network neutral environment. This means that cloud providers can trust and rely on them – and, in turn, the businesses they serve can be assured that their connectivity challenges are met.

In Conclusion – find the right partner for long-term success

A natural area of expertise for any CxO is in building stable, strong and long-lasting business relationships. Moving to the cloud is no different. Few organizations can afford to invest in advanced networking capabilities themselves - so access to operator and interconnected networks comes hand in hand with third-party relationships.

So, it is vital that businesses build effective partner ecosystems, from cloud services providers to the colicators and data centre firms that power them. We tell all organizations to begin any relationship by asking the tough questions: for guarantees around network connectivity, data security and uptime. It is important to look for assurances that they can support businesses' rapidly evolving, and growing needs.

Ultimately then, we are asking CXOs to do two things. First, to shift the cloud discussion up the agenda – working hand in hand with IT experts; and secondly, to begin their journey a little closer to the ground – in the data centre. Success begins by looking to the experts to help overcome connectivity issues such as ensuring reliability, and promising adequate processing power.

Many commentators talk about meaningful cloud adoption being a journey – an iterative process that allows organizations to move faster and devote their resources to the things that matter. For us, though, it's clear that, for all but the most technically adept businesses, assistance and advice is vital in this. Guidance, support and partnership is crucial for a successful cloud future.