4 essential cloud project questions

Plan your next cloud project based on your current cloud results

Cloud-based environments and technologies like containers, edge, and serverless computing have become more common to IT strategies. However, the importance of the operating environment for these projects is often overlooked. Because the cloud abstracts so many of the basic infrastructure considerations like storage, networking, capacity, and integration, many organizations approach these projects individually without having a clear strategy or guidance on what the operating environment should be.

For cloud projects and IT projects to hit their targets for efficiency, productivity, and even cost controls, IT leaders should evaluate the assumptions that underlie their project planning. The IT infrastructure, starting with the operating system (OS) itself, needs to result from clear, intentional choices. There are four areas where IT leaders can start evaluating their current environment and choices and start defining an IT strategy that can help inform future projects and prepare for success in a way that is consistent and less difficult for teams to understand, and designed to achieve their specific priorities.

1 Is your cloud adoption stalled?

The plan for adopting new technologies frequently does not represent the reality.

Organizations frequently adopt new technologies slower than they initially expected or in ways that don't match their initial strategy. One interesting aspect of the 2021 State of DevOps report by Puppet[1] is that over 79% of organizations are largely stalled in adopting DevOps and related technologies—and have been for years.

To see if your cloud strategy is currently successful, first evaluate how your teams are implementing cloud projects:

- **Are you moving workloads from the cloud back on-premise?** Nearly a third of organizations do, either repatriating workloads (30%) or moving cloud workloads into a datacenter (28%).[2]
- **Are you multicloud or hybrid cloud?** Only 30% of customers have a planned hybrid cloud strategy,[3] but the average organization is using 5.3 different clouds.[4]
- **Are you using containers (and how)?** Containers are assumed to be used for microservices development, but about 52% of organizations are using containers as virtual machines (VMs) that host monolithic applications.
- **What criteria do you use to select an OS?** Standardization is the preferred method to maintain manageability in hybrid environments, however many organizations fall into having different systems for different environments, such as development versus production or in different clouds.

2 Are your current cloud projects successful?

About 65% of cloud projects fail to obtain expected project results.[5]

Failure does not mean that the projects were not launched or did not accomplish some goals. However, those projects missed some or all of the targets in key areas, usually falling short in the very reasons that cloud was adopted to begin with.

1 *Puppet, "2021 State of DevOps Report." July 2021.*

2 *Management Insights, sponsored by Red Hat. "2020 Linux Market Study." April 2021.*

3 *Red Hat. "2022 Global Tech Outlook." Jan. 2022.*

4 *Flexera. "2021 State of the Cloud Report." 2021.*

5 *Accenture research report. "Cloud Outcomes Survey: Expectation vs. Reality," Jan. 2020.*

Cloud projects are usually trying to achieve a better platform around key operational areas:

- Speed of deployment
- Cost management
- Improved access

It is easy for the failures of cloud projects to be overlooked because the resources and feedback loops for cloud differ from those of traditional infrastructure projects. For example, the upfront costs for cloud seem significantly lower than physical hardware, but unmonitored usage can cause substantial waste.

Look at the historical performance of your projects in those three areas (not just initial outlays or performance) and start trying to assess how successful your recent cloud projects have been—and potential reasons they could be less successful than expected.

3 What are your business requirements?

Be clear on your objectives.

The number one reason new projects fail is because of a lack of alignment about what matters, especially between business and technical teams.[6]

Your first goal should be to clarify what your business priorities are and how they relate to your strategic goals.

- What metrics matter for this specific project, and how will they be tracked?
- Do you have to maintain compliance with government or industry standards?
- Who are the end users for this project, and what experience do you want them to have?
- How does this project fit into your business strategy?
- How frequently will the applications for this project need to be changed or updated?

If you have clearly defined business objectives, it becomes easier to keep alignment between business and technical teams as the project is launched and evolves.

4 What is your technical starting point?

Your platform defines your infrastructure capabilities.

The OS—whether in a datacenter or a public cloud—is the foundation that brings in crucial capabilities like security and development tools. Standardization in the operating environment influences how easy it is for you to automate processes, deploy new systems, and manage application life cycles.

Assessing your current (not idealized) technical landscape will help you understand what your technical teams can do and can help identify challenges in either implementation or maintenance that can help keep cloud projects on track.

- Do you need to maintain existing systems in parallel with new projects?
- Do you have defined and well-understood workflows?
- Do you have a data management or data security strategy? How are cloud workloads storing or accessing data sources?
- Do you use multiple clouds or a mix of cloud and datacenter environments? How are these environments integrated?
- How will users or services access new cloud instances?
- Who are your stakeholders? What kind of communication or collaboration do you have between teams?
- Do you have consistent tools that you can use to manage instances in any environment?

6 *Thoughtworks. "Making enterprise modernization a reality," Feb. 2021.*

Why the OS matters

Your OS can be the foundation that solidifies and unifies your IT infrastructure and any environment it encompasses. Read the e-book for more information.

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