FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS WITH A CLOUD STRATEGY

A Proven Solution: Migrating Microsoft Applications to the AWS Cloud

Many CIOs see the cloud as a key platform for succeeding with their digital transformation. They are looking to modernize applications and migrate current business systems, especially those based on Microsoft technologies, according to a new survey by IDG Research.

In fact, one in four survey respondents are already fully committed to the cloud. These organizations have adopted a "cloud first" strategy where new applications are evaluated based on their availability in the cloud, or an "all in" strategy where they plan to eventually move all applications to the cloud.

For the remaining respondents who are actively exploring cloud migration, the question becomes how to mix on-premises or collocated data centers with hyperscale cloud infrastructure such as that offered by Amazon Web Services (AWS). A hybrid approach can be a bridge between the old and new worlds of corporate IT infrastructure.

The Move Is On

More than half (52%) of the IDG survey respondents say they plan to answer this question by adopting a hybrid cloud in the next 12-24 months.

In addition, more than half (54%) of respondents say they plan to adopt and use AWS to help them execute on cloud strategies, according to the survey. This number is even higher (64%) among organizations that plan to use a hybrid cloud model, indicating they find particular value in AWS.

Most organizations surveyed begin their cloud journey with a few key migration projects. Typically, web applications and development/test workloads move first, as they offer a relatively low-risk way to gain experience with cloud deployments. Once the initial migration is deemed successful, IT can be more confident about moving critical production applications such as collaboration and communication, file servers, data storage, and line-of-business systems. (See Application Rankings for Moving to Cloud Services, right).

Early Adopters Seeing Benefits

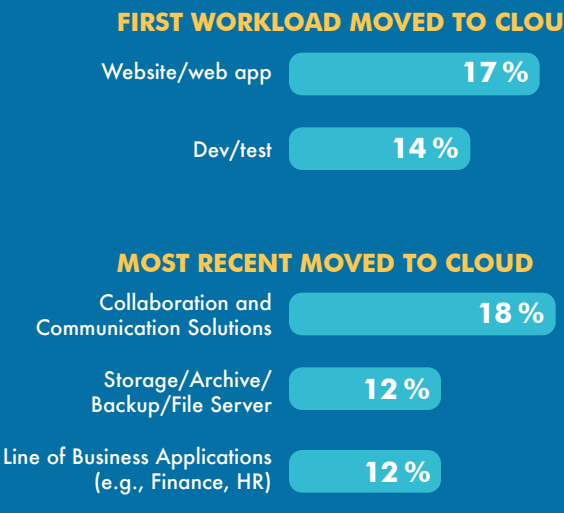
Organizations that have started migrating applications to the cloud already see positive benefits. Nearly half (48%) of respondents say they have gained improved agility and responsiveness to business demands.

Cost savings is another common benefit of cloud adoption. Savings can be substantial, according to 39% of respondents. One AWS customer, agricultural company Dole, illustrates this point. "We can grow anytime we want [because] we don't have to buy new hardware. By not having to make a capital investment, we saved at least $350,000," says Joanna Dyer, director of IT solutions for Dole. Dole is also seeing agility benefits, as the company can now launch a new SharePoint site within minutes.

Early cloud adopters have seen several additional benefits, including the flexibility to keep pace with growing data storage demands, strengthening disaster recovery resources, enabling faster time-to-market for new products, and making better use of staff time for important IT and business initiatives. (See Benefits Gained by Early Cloud Adopters, page 3).

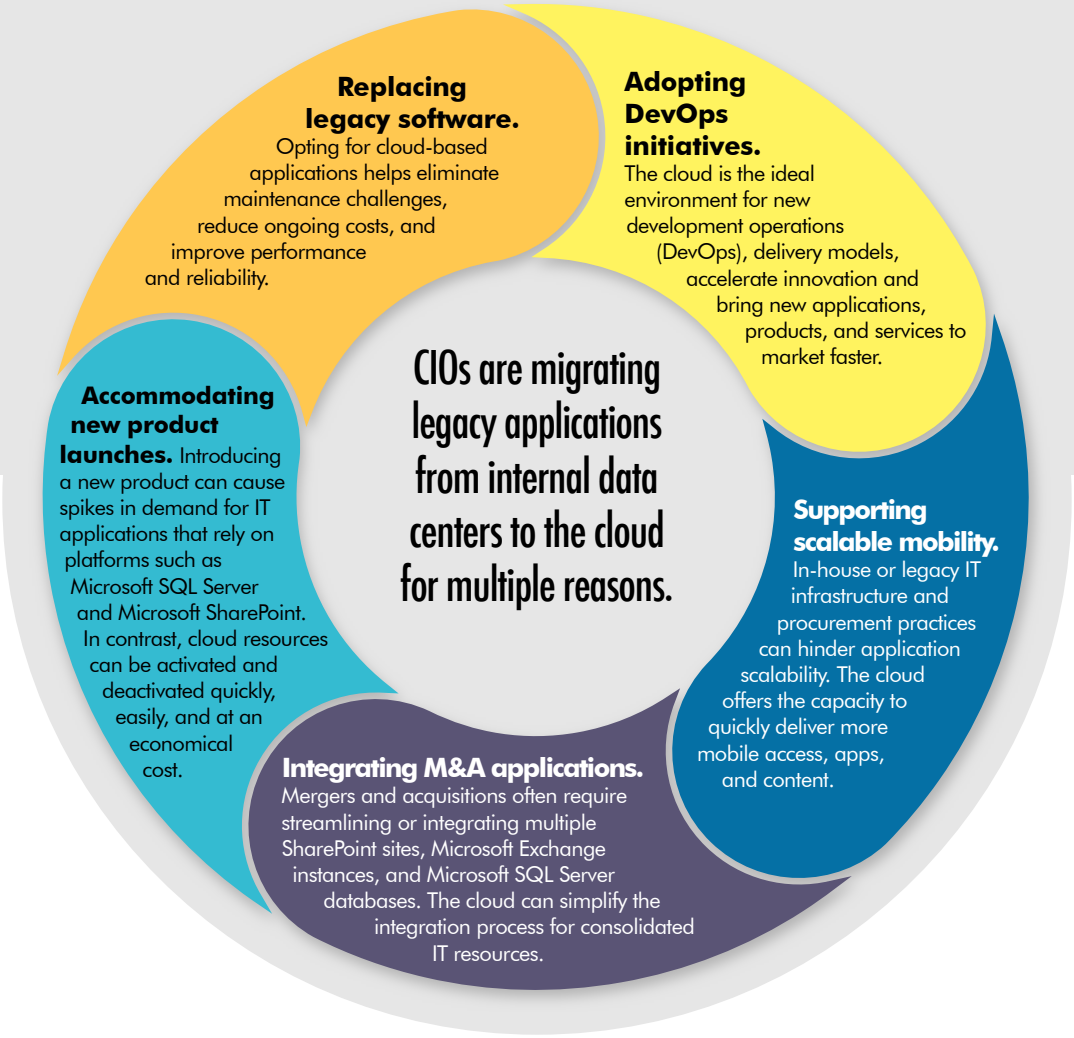
In general, those with a "cloud first" or "all in" approach report a higher likelihood of having already seen each benefit.

Application Rankings for Moving to Cloud Services



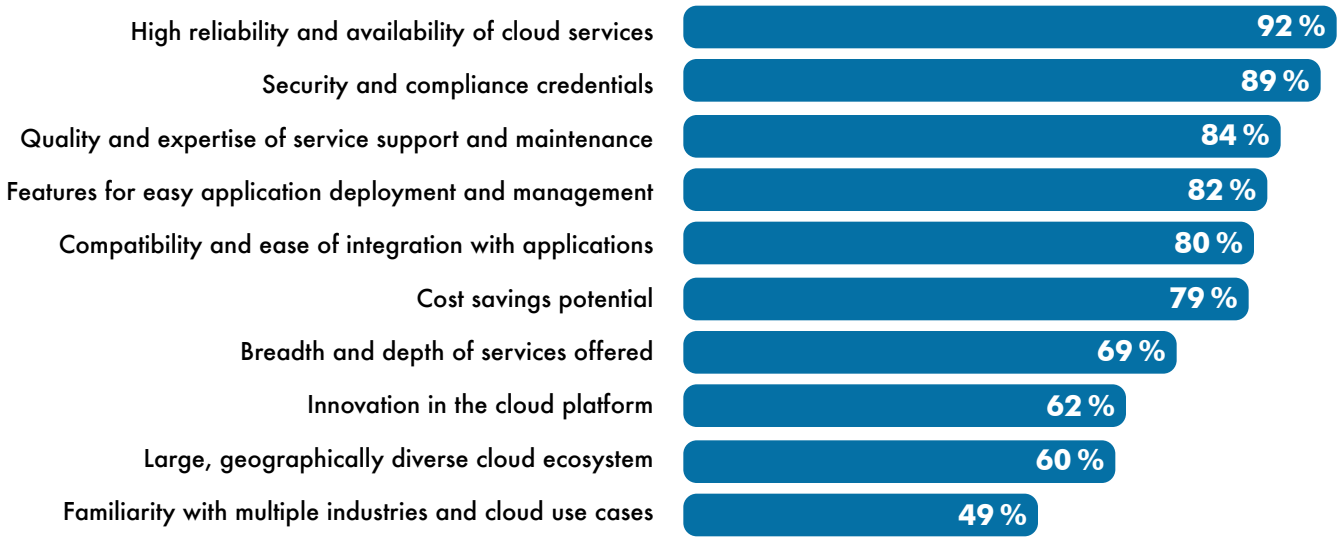
Source: IDG Research, July 2016

Critical Drivers For Modernizing Microsoft Applications



Checklist: Key Criteria For Evaluating Cloud Providers

IDG asked survey participants to rank criteria for selecting a cloud provider. As the list below indicates, while reliability and security are critical, support and ease of deployment are also essential considerations.



Source: IDG Research, July 2016

A "No Cloud" Strategy Presents Risks

Even with the well-recognized advantages of cloud, some IT organizations are hesitant to move away from a completely on-premises application infrastructure. Their concerns include loss of control and difficult integration with existing infrastructure, especially core applications.

But avoiding a move to the cloud can have serious implications, such as hindering the agility for responding to new opportunities. AWS customer GO energy, for example, found that cloud applications have enabled business flexibility.

"The scalability of [our application] in AWS means we can support forecasted customer growth without increasing employee numbers," says Ben Thomas, operations manager for GO energy, a clean-tech energy retailer in Australia. "If we tried to continue with the manual billing system, we would need to triple our headcount—or more."

Survey respondents cited several other potential impacts of not moving business applications to the cloud.

The Downfalls Of Not Moving To The Cloud:

- Higher maintenance and support costs for data center applications
- Increased security risks and inability to keep pace with new threats and protection measures
- Inability to capitalize on the potential business value of data and analytics because of inadequate storage
- Limited ability to capitalize on new applications or use cases
- Limited capabilities for implementing modern applications, expanding mobility, and supporting new technologies
- Missed opportunities to attract a digitally savvy, mobile, and/or global workforce
- Poor or declining customer experience

Benefits Gained By Early Cloud Adopters

Improved agility and responsiveness to business demands	48%
Cost savings	39%
Ability to meet increasing storage demands	39%
IT staff free to pursue important initiatives	38%
Improved disaster recovery plans and a more proactive approach to redundancy and recovery	38%
Faster time-to-market	36%

Source: IDG Research, July 2016

AWS: Future-Proofing Your Microsoft Applications

AWS offers advantages for applications in each of the top five use cases for cloud migration cited by survey respondents:

#1: Corporate communication and collaboration applications. AWS helps run Microsoft applications such as SharePoint, Dynamics, and Exchange with greater security, easier management, and higher performance, respondents say.

"Using AWS makes it easy for us to resize [Microsoft Exchange] instances and increase storage without having to go through a lengthy procurement cycle," says Tom Bentzen, director of information systems for Choice Logistics, a global warehousing and parts logistics company.

#2: File servers and backup, data storage, and archiving. AWS offers a complete range of storage services to support both application and archival requirements.

#3: Development and test environments. Organizations can adopt a DevOps methodology with automated package installations, database setups, and code deployment services from AWS.

#4: Web applications. AWS provides a flexible and agile development platform that is deeply integrated with Microsoft Visual Studio and .NET technologies. Additionally, developers can complete and deploy application code faster and with lower risk by taking advantage of elastic infrastructure resources in AWS.

Kevin Bodie, director of SAS platform strategy at Pitney Bowes, says his organization benefits from these resources. "We're trying to rollout [new applications] much quicker than we've done in the past and AWS is behind us, reviewing our architectures so that as we move into the implementation stage everything will be optimized," says Bodie.

#5: Databases. AWS supports a fully managed database service for SQL Server that delivers high performance, durability, and availability.

Specific cloud features are also important for supporting these use cases. For example, AWS integrated networking includes options for virtual and physical isolation, with a dedicated connection that cannot be accessed by the public Internet. Businesses can integrate storage systems with AWS, and leverage features for identity and access control, such as a service that supports Microsoft Active Directory. To reduce the complexity of a hybrid cloud, AWS offers deployment and management features that control both on-premises and cloud resources.

The Bottom Line: The Cloud Movement Is Real

As the IDG study confirms, enterprises have already started moving key Microsoft applications to the cloud, and the benefits are already visible.

Luc LaFontan, chief information officer for the Goodman Group, a property management company, reflects this perspective. "The cloud is the next step in our strategy of outsourcing commodity IT so that our internal IT team can focus on our business, create efficiencies, and drive competitive advantage," he says.

Additional Resources

Visit these locations for more information on AWS and its hybrid IT solutions.

https://aws.amazon.com/what-is-cloud-computing
https://aws.amazon.com/security
https://aws.amazon.com/premiumsupport
https://aws.amazon.com/devops/
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