



WHITE PAPER:

Unlocking the hybrid cloud data advantage

Accelerate business growth with cloud
innovation and hosted IT

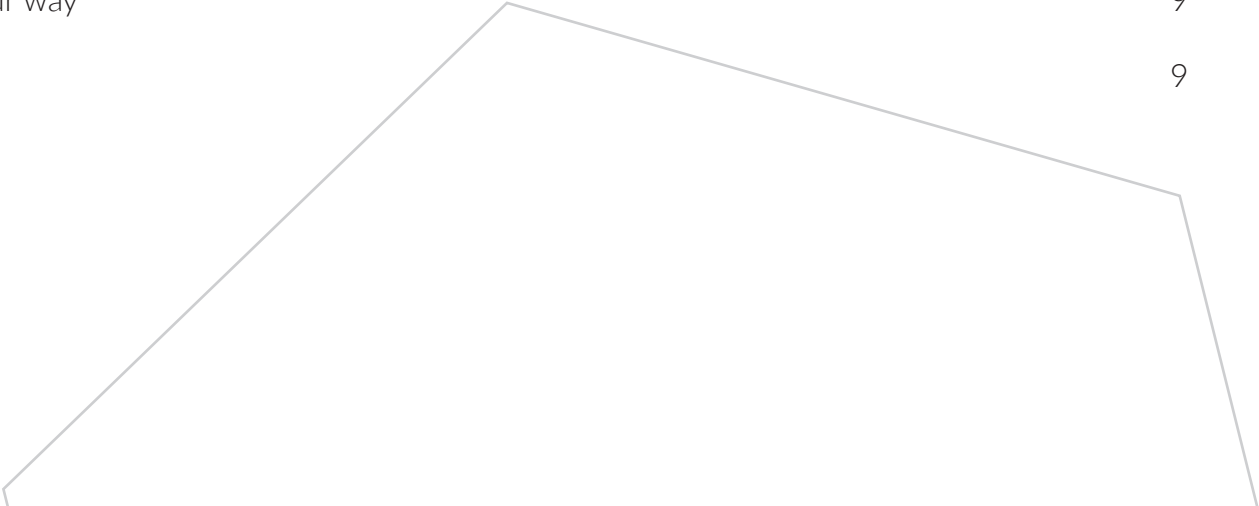
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Date
5 April 2017

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Overview

From Sydney to Perth, the cloud is transforming the way Australians do business. State and territory governments are grappling with cloud-first policies, while forward-thinking companies have moved intranets and email servers into the cloud. While some businesses have remained entirely on-premises, many are wondering if the benefits of a cloud approach are too great to ignore.

Gartner analysts predict that within three years, a corporate no-cloud policy will be as rare as a no-internet policy is today. They say cloud will become the default option for software deployment, and that a no-cloud policy position will be “increasingly untenable.”¹

While the cloud offers significant benefits, many organisations are not in a position to move everything off premises. The hybrid cloud, therefore, presents a practical alternative for those that seek the security, reliability and performance of on-premises with the flexibility of the cloud.

This white paper will:

- Outline the key benefits of adopting a hybrid cloud data solution
- Identify and address common barriers to adoption
- Provide practical advice for starting your hybrid cloud journey

Traditional IT meets Microsoft cloud innovation

The hybrid cloud strikes a balance between staying on-premises and migrating to the cloud. It recognises that while the cloud has numerous benefits, it often makes sense to keep some applications and data on-premises. With a hybrid cloud data solution, organisations have control over how and where they run their applications, whether on-premises or in a private or public cloud.

Why Microsoft?

Antares recommends Microsoft’s hybrid cloud offering. Built on trusted, secure technologies including Azure and SQL Server, Microsoft’s hybrid cloud solution is the best choice for organisations that want to:

- Unlock more value from existing Microsoft investment
- Seamlessly extend infrastructure into the cloud
- Use products and services built on industry-leading standards for compliance, privacy and security

1 <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3354117>

The business case for hybrid cloud data solutions

The numbers don't lie: Microsoft research shows 82 percent of organisations have adopted a hybrid cloud strategy. Around 75 percent believe using a hybrid cloud will grow their business.² These figures suggest many are familiar with hybrid cloud benefits such as:

- Reduced total cost of ownership compared to fully on-premises IT
- Smaller capital investments than using a private cloud solution
- Faster application deployment that supports innovative development

What many might not realise is that the hybrid cloud can also help organisations to accelerate growth, make strategic gains and inform decision-making. Some Microsoft functionality, for example, is only available in the cloud. This includes: machine learning, real-time data stream processing from IoT devices, smart API capabilities, self-service data source discovery, distributed analytics and data modelling.

A hybrid cloud data solution provides access to these technologies so organisations can gain a competitive edge. Here's how.

Use data to make smarter decisions

Microsoft's Azure data platform provides intelligence and analytics services that help organisations make informed decisions, anticipate problems before they occur and take advantage of hidden opportunities. With access to powerful, cloud-only tools, including machine learning, stream analytics, cognitive services and more, organisations can create and execute advanced analytics both on-premises and in the cloud. They deliver deeper insights and predictive results that support effective decision-making.

In the finance industry, for example, cloud-based analytics is transforming the way that banks manage risk. Data is pulled from isolated systems, converted into a usable format, and translated into models using machine-learning algorithms. The models are used to predict future events and build recommendation engines.³

Realise strategic gains

The hybrid cloud provides access to flexible, adaptable resources to support business growth. Organisations can quickly adapt their approaches to acquire customers or address new markets, which makes them more responsive than their competitors.

In retail, for example, businesses are using a range of Microsoft cloud-based tools – such as HDInsight and the Microsoft Analytics Platform System to increase revenue. By combining real-time data analysis of event schedules and weather with historical store sales and order data, retailers have been able to proactively move more inventory.⁴

² <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/cloud-platform/hybrid-cloud>

³ http://download.microsoft.com/download/B/D/A/BDA4B1BE-1604-4237-A3A8-B67C8D1CBE42/Microsoft_Advanced_Analytics_Financial_Services_Overview.pdf

⁴ http://download.microsoft.com/download/0/7/6/0768EB58-6CF7-4653-BEFC-3868A93706F9/Microsoft_Advanced_Analytics_Retail_Overview.pdf

Overcoming barriers to adoption

Considering the benefits that organisations experience when they adopt hybrid cloud data solutions, the business case for moving to the cloud is compelling. However, if the improvements are so significant, why haven't all organisations taken the leap?

Time and time again, organisations cite security and potential job losses as barriers to cloud adoption. Accenture warns some may be exaggerating the impact of these risks:

There are indeed numerous challenges that exist when it comes to adopting cloud technology. However, in many cases, organisations make out these challenges to be much more significant than they truly are. With the proper advice and strategy, you can overcome these challenges and successfully adopt cloud solutions across the enterprise.⁵

Addressing these concerns, grounded in fact or otherwise, is key to feeling confident and ready to adopt a hybrid cloud solution.

Misconception #1: The cloud is not secure

If you have concerns about cloud security, you are not alone. Accenture's 2015 Enterprise Cloud Report found that security concerns have prevented the adoption of cloud technology in 59 percent of organisations.⁶

However, is the cloud really less secure than on-premises? Not if you choose a Microsoft solution. As a cloud-hosting provider, Microsoft uses its economies of scale to monitor data, manage backups, isolate data, automate operations, maintain a secure network and encrypt data.

In real terms, this level of security surpasses that of nearly all organisations - including those with specialist IT security teams. Microsoft must meet the security needs of thousands of users every day - a mammoth task that few organisations could replicate.

Microsoft offers a tailored cloud offering with dedicated security teams. In turn, this leads to well-protected data and information. If information security is a concern for your organisation, don't look away from the cloud. Look closer and you may be surprised.

Misconception #2: Embracing the cloud means reducing IT headcount

While cloud technologies have ushered in a new era of enterprise IT, concerns about the death of the IT department are largely unfounded. Information technology professionals continue to play a critical role in organisations that embrace the cloud.

For example, instead of spending time on repetitive tasks such as installing infrastructure, maintaining

⁵ [https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_25/Accenture-cabu-position-paper-cloud-concerns-us-web%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/Accenture/Conversion-Assets/DotCom/Documents/Global/PDF/Dualpub_25/Accenture-cabu-position-paper-cloud-concerns-us-web%20(1).pdf)

⁶ "Enterprise Cloud Report." Cloud Sherpas. April 2015.



services, replacing outdated systems and repairing infected devices, the cloud allows IT professionals to become trusted business partners.

Professional opportunities expand to include tasks with a more strategic focus. These include assisting teams with new applications and projects, managing services as business needs evolve, and planning across the organisation. In this way, the cloud opens the door to developing new skills and career advancement.

Transition to the hybrid cloud at your own pace

The beauty of the hybrid cloud is that it does not require an all-or-nothing approach. Organisations move workloads between platforms when they are ready. In fact, it is often better to start small and increase workloads in the cloud over time.

For those starting their hybrid cloud journey, Antares recommends beginning with low-risk, high return activities. These may include unlocking cloud-only functionality, leveraging data and analytics, moving backups to the cloud and reducing on-premises workloads.

1. Extend infrastructure into Azure to leverage data and analytics

As discussed earlier, several Microsoft features are only available in the cloud. These include:

- HDInsight
- Machine learning
- Stream analytics
- Cognitive services
- Data catalogue
- Data lake analytics
- Data lake store
- Data factory
- Power BI embedded
- Analysis services
- Azure bot service

Therefore, extending infrastructure into Azure is an ideal first step for organisations running on-premises Microsoft data warehouses or analytics.

In this scenario, all data remains on-premises except analytics. Teams have access to more accurate forecasting, and an improved ability to drill into data with familiar tools.

2. Move backups into the cloud

If your organisation is struggling to keep pace with the growth of business data, start your hybrid cloud journey by moving backups into the cloud. Cloud backups are secure, reliable and can be scaled up or down to meet demand. Organisations that move backups in the cloud also save money provisioning on-premises storage.

3. Manage workloads

The cloud is ideal for managing large workloads due to its scalable storage, computing power and elastic resources. Sending complicated data processing tasks to the cloud is a safe and secure way to reduce on-premises workloads.

What to look for in a solution partner

Almost any organisation can take advantage of hybrid cloud's potential. However, the transition from on-premises to hybrid cloud can be more complicated than it appears. To get the most from a hybrid cloud solution, an organisation must understand its own computing capabilities and infrastructure. It should know including how much data it has, and how much it plans to store in the cloud. And finally, it should be aware of how the solution will complement its strengths.

A misstep in any of these areas can hamper hybrid cloud success, which is why every organisation should work with an experienced implementation partner. Expert advice and support are essential for harnessing the full power of the hybrid cloud. Consider asking the following questions when assessing potential solution partners:

Do you provide end-to-end hybrid cloud data solutions?

Your chosen provider should manage all aspects of a hybrid cloud data solution. They should be able to set up hybrid architecture, implement Azure, build applications and configure services in the cloud. It is rare for a solution partner to have all of this capability in-house, so look for a provider with robust partner relationships. Antares, for example, works with industry leaders to ensure every cloud project is delivered seamlessly, professionally and without the hassle of interacting with multiple providers.

What are your data capabilities and experience?

The hybrid cloud presents opportunities to understand data in new ways, but only with the right expertise. Check that your hybrid cloud partner has experience across data management and data analytics - both in the cloud and on-premises. Well-rounded capabilities in these areas will ensure data is captured, stored and consumed in the best way.

How do you approach new projects?

Your chosen partner should build long-term partnerships through continuous and successful projects. Seek a provider that:

- Clearly articulates your business challenges before making technology considerations
- Conducts extensive pre-engagement to understand core problems and opportunities
- Develops practical solutions that deliver tangible business value
- Facilitates ongoing engagement that lasts beyond implementation

Are you a Microsoft Gold partner?

The leading hybrid cloud data solutions are built on Microsoft technologies including Azure and SQL Server. It makes sense, then, to work with a partner that has unrivalled Microsoft product knowledge and expertise. Microsoft Gold is the highest level of accreditation possible within the Microsoft partner network. It represents continued investment in training and a commitment to results.

Why act now?

When television was first introduced in American homes in the 1940s, the studio head at 20th Century Fox, Darryl Zanuck, predicted it would be a short-lived novelty. “Television won’t be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night,” he said.

Like television, the hybrid cloud is more than just a fad. As business and IT leaders realise the competitive advantage the hybrid cloud affords, adoption rates are rising fast. Around 48 percent of IT professionals in a recent Microsoft survey said their organisation plans to adopt hybrid cloud infrastructure in the next 12 to 18 months - more than public or private cloud alone.⁷ In addition, 75 percent of executives believe the hybrid cloud will allow them to focus on core growth opportunities.⁸

These findings, and countless others like them, have galvanised decision makers to stop debating whether they should move to the cloud, to when. They understand that delaying the inevitable may place their organisations at a disadvantage.


Businesses in your industry are already using cloud to reduce cost, identify and act on data, and respond to change faster. Are you ready to take action to stay competitive?

Your cloud, your way

The hybrid cloud data revolution presents enormous opportunities for organisations of all sizes, across

7 <https://ncmedia.azureedge.net/ncmedia/2016/11/Elevating-IT-with-Hybrid-Cloud-Infographic.png>

8 https://www.avanade.com/~/_media/asset/research/hybrid-cloud-global-study.pdf



all industries. While it is not a new beginning - cloud infrastructure has been around for some time - hybrid solutions are creating new opportunities for organisations to move to the cloud on their terms.

From accelerating growth to positioning IT as a strategic business partner, the hybrid cloud's potential to drive agility and innovation is obvious. Leveraged in the right way, with best practice security, proven technologies and the expertise of trusted implementation partners, organisations that adopt hybrid cloud data solutions stand to gain a competitive edge.

Those who are open to embracing what the hybrid cloud has to offer are well placed to unlock valuable insights to boost business performance, improve revenue and increase efficiency and productivity.

For more information about transitioning to a hybrid cloud data solution, contact Antares today: info@antaressolutions.com.au.

About Antares

Established in 2006, Antares is a highly accredited Microsoft Gold Partner that specialises in three practise areas: productivity, data solutions and custom application development. Its innovative business solutions help clients develop efficiencies and drive value across the private, public and not for profit sectors.

Antares solutions help businesses reach their full potential. It delivers solutions that add value by focusing on improving the systems that enable people to work better in all areas of their job. <https://antares.solutions/>

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Date
5 April 2017

