

White Paper

How To: Plan the Move to the Cloud





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Some businesses still head into the cloud conversation with the mindset that it's a one-size-fits-all solution. This is a common misconception and that's why having a cloud plan in place is so important. This plan will be different for every organization, but it should always make clear why the migration makes sense for a business. Is it about costs? Is it about business enhancement? Once this is established, a roadmap can be developed, which will address security, data volumes, the user experience, and more, and a business can get its cloud migration underway.

Your IT team will probably be the driving force in

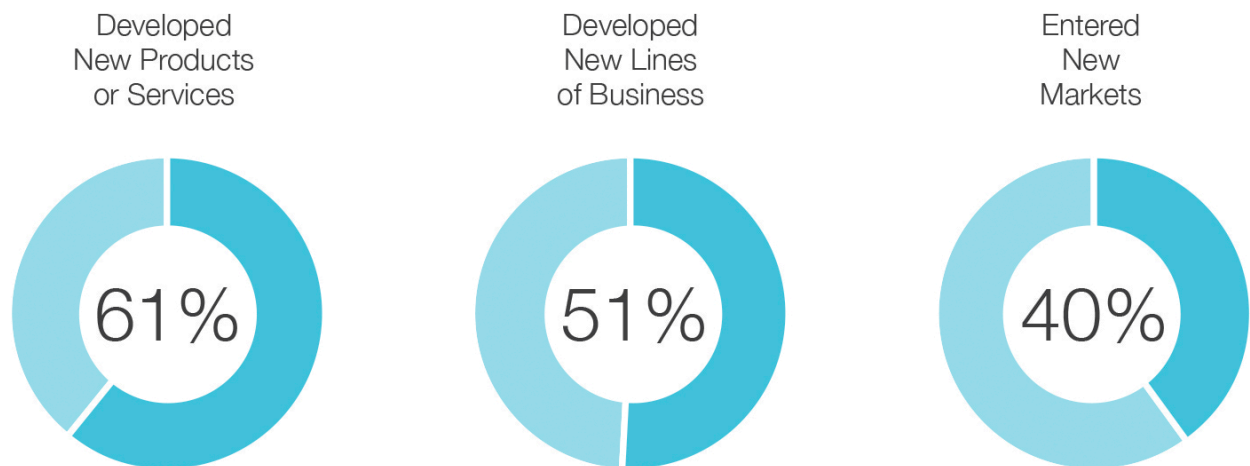
guiding the organization down the right cloud migration path. IT also helps establish how cloud computing can fit into the technology strategy, and overall business strategy.

Cloud adoption is only increasing in coming years. It's clear that it's an important direction to consider, but businesses have to approach it at the appropriate pace and in the right way - and these will differ from business to business.

The move to the cloud should include four key steps: Pre-Assessment, Planning, Migration and Post-Assessment.



Do you expect your company to have developed new services and lines of business, or tapped new markets via the cloud in the next three years?



*Oxford Economics and SAP

Pre-Assessment

A business shouldn't blindly pick a cloud service without first establishing if it will fit its needs and requirements. Completing the Pre-Assessment phase is vital to truly understand how the cloud might impact your business. When researching cloud ser-

vices, you need to assess your current business maturity, culture, applications, infrastructure, and IT team. You may also want to consider the following questions:

What matters most to your organization?

What are your business drivers, desired outcomes, and potential constraints?

What is your existing architecture and technology?

Which things have the highest urgency to migrate?

Where are the gaps in your business? Can cloud close them?

What are your capacity demands?

What are your existing costs?

What pieces of your business will benefit most from the cloud?

What cloud service best fits your existing tools and environment?

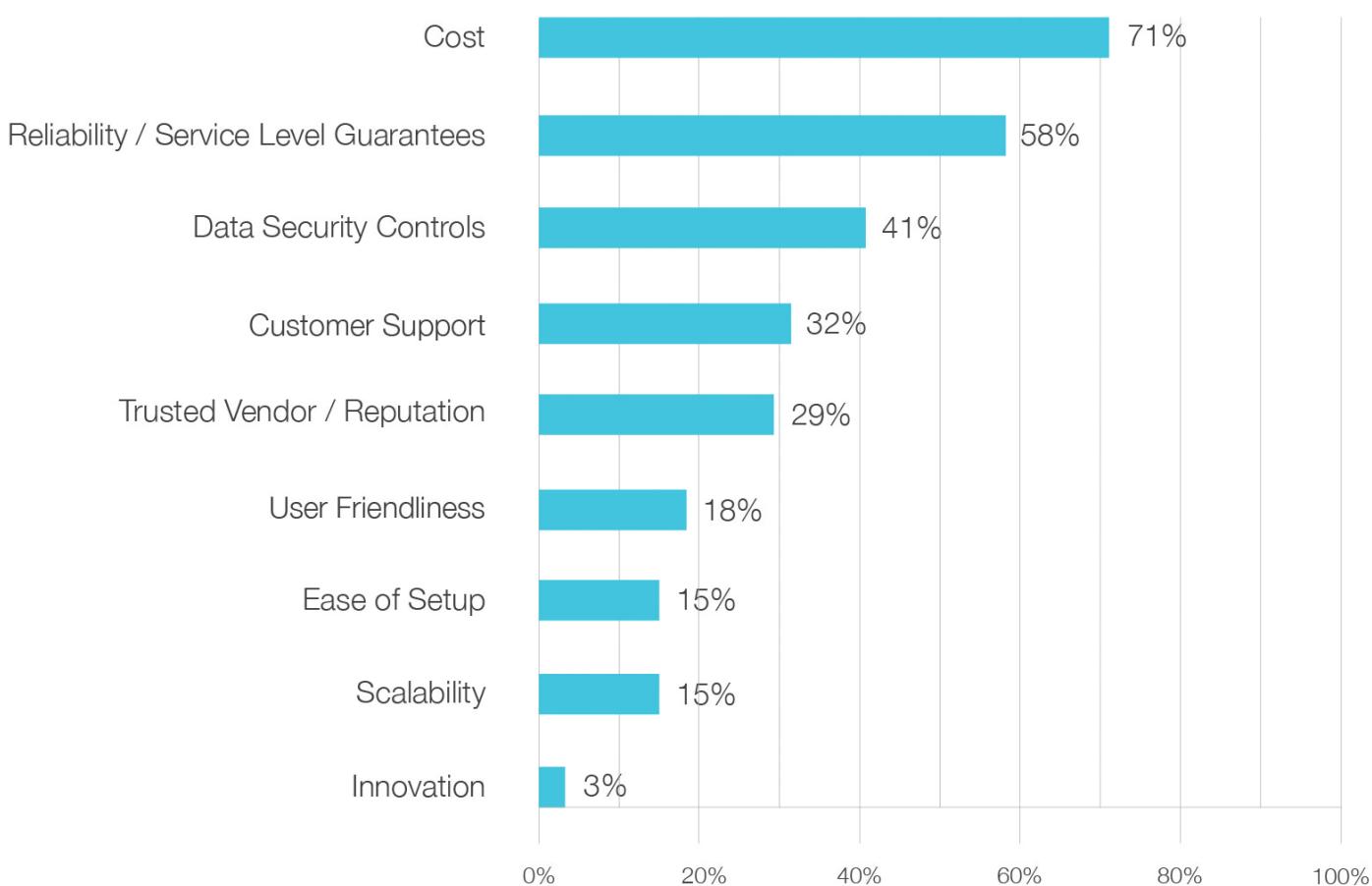
Beyond self-assessment, an overall assessment of potential cloud solutions is important - this is all about knowledge gathering. Once you've established the key issues that cloud will address, you can investigate the various cloud models and services. It

will require some research, and it's always good to have options. Once you've completed a thorough self-assessment and determined the cloud solution for you, you're ready to get planning.

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Important Factors When Evaluating Cloud-Based IT Services





Planning

Now, the planning phase may be the most important, and a business cannot skip this if it wants to experience a smooth and successful transition. Planning is less about determining your strengths and weaknesses and how the cloud can fit in, and more about establishing the actual, practical steps that will be taken for the cloud migration. This means determining exactly which applications, workloads or environments you'll be moving - and for the first-timers, these will probably not be the most business-critical, tricky ones. Small steps are okay!

But beyond that, planning includes how you will inform and train your team. Which users in your organization actually need to be part of the transition, and which need to be simply trained once it occurs? Depending on the level of your migration,

you may need to define new standards or develop training materials to help guide your users into this new cloud environment. If you intend for your entire business to truly make the transition with you, they'll need to be familiar with the new service and informed on why it was necessary in the first place.

And finally, you should consider what it will all look like once the migration has occurred. You don't simply stop thinking about the cloud. How will your internal procedures be impacted? How are you dividing up management responsibilities with the provider? When an environment change or troubleshooting is necessary, who is responsible? Who monitors and maintains the underlying cloud infrastructure? You don't want to make the migration without having these questions answered.

Migration

If you've thoroughly completed the Planning stage, the cloud migration itself should be pretty uneventful. There is always room for the unexpected, but a business that has planned is a business that will be equipped to handle anything.

The migration itself completely depends on your or-

ganization's cloud plan - one business' first cloud project can differ wildly from another's because it is reliant on the organizational aims and the IT landscape. The migration also depends on what drove an organization to the cloud in the first place.

Post-Assessment

The work doesn't just halt once you've completed the cloud migration. It's important to verify that all aspects of the move are now performing as expected. Can you reach your apps? Can users access everything they need? Are functions working without error? Did all the intended data make it's way to your new environment? Are your management tools working successfully? These are some short-term items to look at during the Post-Assessment phase, but you should also remember to do a long-term

assessment too, which may occur a year or so after the migration. The sort of things you'd look for here will revolve mainly around value, cost and risk. Did the move help you sell more? Did you lower errors in key processes? Have you seen savings as a result of the migration? These details will reveal where your organization is seeing the most value from the cloud solution, and which areas should be improved. You may find that some things are better in the cloud, while others should simply remain in-house.

About RapidScale

RapidScale, a managed cloud services provider, delivers world-class, secure, and reliable cloud computing solutions to companies of all sizes across the globe. Its state-of-the-art managed CloudDesktop platform and market-leading cloud solutions are the reasons why RapidScale is the provider of choice for leading MSOs, VARs, MSPs, Carriers and Master Agents throughout the United States. RapidScale is not only delivering a service but also innovating advanced solutions and applications for the cloud computing space. RapidScale's innovative solutions include CloudServer, CloudDesktop, CloudOffice, CloudMail, CloudRecovery, CloudApps, and more.

For More Information Contact Us Today

(210) 651-5977

rubenjr@a1bizcom.com