Adapting to the "Next" Normal: 5 Advantages of Migrating to Cloud

Why shifting to the cloud is worth every organization's consideration.

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The pace of technological change has always been a challenge to keep up with.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that organizations that have kept pace with change have been able to adapt to this "new" normal. The most prepared organizations had disaster recovery plans that anticipated just such a scenario, where a virulent disease could force us to redefine how work gets done and business operates.

But let's be honest for a moment. Chances are that most organizations did not foresee the increased demands that IT would be put under supporting a 100% remote workforce in the wake of a global pandemic. Businesses had to adapt in a matter of days to quickly to ensure that our businesses could continue to operate.

In those early days back in March of 2020, ProArch had several conversations with our clients asking for support getting them reconfigured to support a remote workforce. What became obvious was that the lift to transition to a mostly remote workforce was a much easier task for our clients that had migrated at least part of their infrastructure to the cloud. Those that were still tied to on-premises infrastructure had a more challenging time of making a quick transition.

Most organizations have navigated through how to make the "new" normal work for them but that doesn't mean it hasn't stressed both IT staffing and budgets. And it also hasn't guaranteed that service to end users hasn't suffered.

If your organization still finds itself struggling with how to provide an acceptable remote workforce experience using your on-premises resources, now may be the time to consider how the cloud can put you on sounder footing, now and for whatever the "next" normal brings.

In this guide we are bringing to light 5 reasons why shifting to the cloud is worth every organization's consideration.

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Contents

Secure Remote Access

Internet hackers and their criminal networks have exploited the fact that many organizations threw the door open to remote access for their employees.

Mistakes with remote access have cost organizations loss of capital, operational efficiency, and sometimes even their reputations. The attackers knew to expect that mistakes would be made in the haste to keep things running.

Organizations that already had cloud-based solutions were in a much better position to anticipate threats. In many ways they were already operating in a remote access capacity.

Their infrastructure was protected by born in the cloud security features like Azure Security Center that can identify misconfigurations and known vulnerabilities. They were also able to minimize their attack surface area by offloading some of the infrastructure components to the cloud management plane.

A perfect example of this is Microsoft's Windows Virtual Desktop (WVD) offering.

Unlike traditional Remote Desktop Services, WVD is a platform as a service (PaaS) offering that shifts most of the components of remote access to Microsoft. Azure handles the gateway, web access, load balancing and brokering of sessions. All you need is the desktop images.

This type of model allows Microsoft to focus on securing the perimeter defenses while your organization focuses on delivering an optimized desktop to users.

74%

of companies expect some permanent shift to remote working[1]

1. Gartner

Adaptable Scaling and Accelerated Time to Deployment

Budgets are tight and markets are volatile. Infrastructure needs to be elastic so it can shrink and expand based on demand.

Many organizations are suffering bouts of anxiety not knowing what the global financial status is going to look like in the next six months to a year. Even more organizations will be tested to their limits. How they manage their budgets could mean life or death for their business.

Decisions need to be smart and timely. And on-premises environment that is already paid for seems like the clear winner but if organizations are going to survive and even thrive, they made need to make some strategic short-term investments.

Cloud is the perfect vehicle for these types of efforts. For example, ProArch has built an application from open source code that can aid organizations with COVID-19 screening and health reporting for employees. We saw a problem in need of a solution and decided to use cloud resources to bring a product in a matter of weeks.

The traditional IT model would have required a significant investment in infrastructure just to pilot an idea like this. With cloud, the investment was small and as demand increases the resources to support it can be scaled accordingly. If the idea didn't pan out, then only a small investment would have been lost.

> We have seen two years worth of digital transformation in the last couple of months. — No industry has been left untouched by the global health crisis of 2020. Change is happening—along with innovation and lessons for progress.
>
> Satya Nadella,
> CEO, Microsoft

Built-in High Availability and Redundancy

Businesses can't afford to operate at anything less than their full potential. It is crucial to keep revenue flowing. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the U.S. economy stands to lose $17.9 trillion over the next decade from the global pandemic.

Any way you slice it, that is more money than any of us can even fathom. **To remain viable and competitive, organizations need to be operating at their full capacity with operational efficiency as a top goal.**

Costly downtimes and service outages eat into the bottom line. Supporting high-availability (HA) and redundancy in the on-premises datacenter is complicated, not to mention very expensive. Organizations that choose to move to cloud find that HA and redundancy is typically built-in and often is a matter of toggling a check box.

Azure offers features such as geo-redundant replication for storage, availability zones, storage replication, VM scale sets, software-based load balancers just to name a few. These features afford organizations the ability keep the enterprise operational at a lower costs and greater uptimes.

Business plans resulting from COVID-19

36%

plan to improve IT operations & systems performance[1]

44%

have already or plan to accelerate digital transformation[1]

1. Spiceworks 2021 State of IT Report

Reduced IT Administrative Burden

Remove the burden of managing and maintaining the entire infrastructure stack. Focus on what the business truly cares about. Let the experts handle the rest.

Far too many things that we task our IT team to do have little to do with running the business and more to do with general housekeeping.

Many organizations don't maintain a cleaning staff on the payroll. We outsource that responsibility to experts that are equipped to sneak into our buildings under cloak of darkness to tidy up and sanitize our workspaces while we sleep soundly in our beds.

Many of the same principles can and should be applied to IT. Do we really need to hire, or attempt to hire, experts in every aspect of technology to keep our organizational operational? It's already a struggle to find qualified individuals understand our businesses.

Cloud allows businesses the ability to concentrate technical resources on supporting our core functions, maybe developing, or managing a new ERP system or building those process workflows we have always wanted to have.

There will always be some aspects of your infrastructure that we will want to keep in house but now's the time to consider what does and does not need to be managed by your IT team.

Skills shortages are at an all-time high with 67% of CIOs and technology executives struggling to find the right talent. [1]

The top three scarcest skills are[1]

1. Big data/analytics
2. Cyber security
3. AI

1. Harvey Nash / KPMG CIO Survey 2019: A Changing Perspective

Enterprise Monitoring and Analysis

Good information can lead to better and quicker business decisions. Today more than ever having the right information can mean the difference between success and failure.

One might even argue that just having the right information is not enough. Given the pace of change and the economic turmoil that we are experiencing, it is just as important to have that information quickly so that we can pivot our business plans and objectives.

Cloud providers, like Microsoft Azure, AWS, Google, and IBM, have spent billions of dollars on their cloud platforms investing in big data, analytics, and artificial intelligence.

They understand that to remain competitive they need to make your organization competitive as well.

That means having access to business intelligence and insights that allow organizations to view information in ways that they would never be able to do with their own tools and internal teams. There is certainly a cost associated with having access to such powerful tools, but it would be difficult to be able to match the capabilities and expense of the cloud providers if you attempted to handle it yourself.

Cloud empowers companies by democratizing data and rewarding the innovators.

70%

of organizations believe their data is not used to its fullest extent

IDC Big Data Survey

Transitioning a business from a traditional way of operating by shifting the paradigm through modernization, can be uncomfortable for organizations. It carries risk and can require short-term expenditures. Remaining static also carries an inherent level of risk and cost as well.

Every organization, no matter the vertical you are in, should be taking a hard look at what makes sense for them.

The question is not when you will make the jump to cloud but what will your strategy be when you move? Where can you benefit the most? How can you leverage the technology to remain relevant?

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ProArch was founded on the belief that a future where change is 'business as usual' is fundamentally more exciting than one where it is not.

As top certified Microsoft Azure consultants, solution architects, and engineers with advanced specializations, ProArch helps companies design and execute their most challenging digital transformations in the cloud.

ProArch covers the full Azure ecosystem: infrastructure, DevOps, application development, data, analytics, and security.

Our Azure Consulting Services are tailored to fit your needs – either as a one-stop shop or acting as an expert sounding board and trusted consultant throughout your cloud journey.

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