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4 Keys to Successful Azure Migration for Large Organizations

Today cloud adoption is all but universal, with most sizable organizations utilizing cloud services in some manner. But many are unable to completely transition from legacy systems because migration can present financial and operational challenges. The effort can be most daunting for larger and long-established organizations. By implementing four crucial keys to migration, enterprises can more quickly use Microsoft's trusted Azure cloud platform to realize digital transformation goals and increase efficiencies of business operations and productivity.

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“Cloud will continue to play an ever greater, and even dominant, role as the IT industry focuses on delivering greater efficiency, flexibility, and faster innovation.” –IDC

Cloud enables organizations to build automation into nearly everything they do, but the complexities of breaking away from legacy systems often lead more-traditional organizations to approach cloud migration in a disjointed, piecemeal fashion that, at best, delivers incremental improvements that fall short of transformation goals.

Adoption of cloud technologies and services is driving considerable cost optimization benefits while supporting expanded business agility and the ability to scale as needed. “The cloud is core to any digital transformation, but many enterprises still lag behind in deploying a modern cloud architecture tuned for business impact,” *CIO.com* concludes in an analysis of [tech priorities for 2022](#).

With its ability to continually drive cost optimization and support automation of virtually any business processes, cloud technology provides great business agility. Connecting all data sources empowers digital transformation and enables the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to unlock hidden data gems. AI models can process data in seconds, not weeks or months.

“As businesses pivot to a digital-first economy, cloud will continue to play an ever greater, and even dominant, role as the IT industry focuses on delivering greater efficiency, flexibility, and faster innovation,” says market intelligence firm [IDC](#).

Meeting the cloud aspirations of many larger organizations is hampered by the technical debt involved in operations that are linked inextricably to legacy systems and outdated applications that are rigid and inferior to current offerings. Fears about the complexity of reducing reliance on systems with so many dependent critical business processes can result in a “don’t break it” mentality that derails the effort to meet broad strategic goals.

“Often the cloud strategy is set at the C level, but because execution involves so many different parts of the organization, the effort can become fairly disjointed,” says Emily Lewis-Pinnell, NTT DATA Vice President, Cloud Practice.

“Many times business units will go off on their own and tap into the self-service model to create net-new applications. That’s easier than transforming and trying to modernize older applications but can result in different units’ not moving in the same strategic direction.”



Larger organizations’ cloud efforts sometime stall over concerns that long-term costs for cloud services and retraining employees on new applications and processes might offset any promised savings. With multiple cloud options available to them, they are often mired in analyses of the risks and challenges of each.

Rapid evolution of cloud technology and services can often lead an organization to continually revisit decisions with each new technology advancement, so that nothing ultimately moves forward, says Lewis-Pinnell. “Organizations really do need to just start down a transformation path and incorporate new things that are adding value as they come along and as they make sense to add in.”

Seamless Transition

SHI International needed to migrate its core e-commerce application from its on-premises infrastructure to the cloud to speed application development and reduce downtime and maintenance.

It partnered with NTT DATA Services to containerize the application and [migrate it to Microsoft Azure](#). That enables automation workflows for application deployment, reducing deployment lead time from hours to minutes. SHI can operate a hybrid model where microservices can run either on-premises or in the Azure cloud with a seamless transition from one to the other, improving application resilience.

With an agile cloud platform, IT can support the business with greater automation and the ability to respond swiftly to rapid market changes.

Azure migration benefits outweigh risks

The benefits of cloud today far outweigh the risks and challenges. Cloud environments built on a zero-trust model remove fear and provide a secure end-to-end view of user behaviors to monitor activity and enforce policies. With an agile cloud platform, IT can support the business with greater automation and the ability to respond swiftly to rapid market changes.

Delivering software, platforms, and infrastructure as a service over the internet is no longer revolutionary. Microsoft's Azure was [previewed in 2008](#) and formally released in 2010 as Windows Azure. Today Azure provides services for building and running any application in the cloud, providing enterprises with the flexibility to move existing workloads or develop new applications – using the language and platform of their choice – while taking advantage of efficient and economical data storage, backup, and recovery.

With more than 200 products and cloud services designed to help build, run, and manage applications across multiple clouds and on-premises or at the edge, Azure makes it easier to build applications that span both on-premises environments and the cloud. Organizations can take advantage of a flexible, reliable platform hosted in their own data center, Microsoft's secure data centers, or a combination of both.

Microsoft's Azure Stack provides Azure's public cloud capabilities in a hands-free on-premises solution that enables applications to be easily moved or extended from on-premises environments to public cloud with ease. With Azure Stack, organizations can deploy servers, containers, database as a service (DBaaS), and PaaS web services in a consistent manner, so developers can write the code once and deploy it across multiple locations. Organizations can also implement Azure on-premises and prepare for future public cloud adoption.

"Many of our clients are driving their cloud adoption journey with Azure and its ability to move workloads, migrate existing applications, and extend on-premises applications," says Lewis-Pinnell. "They leverage all of the investment that Microsoft has put into the Azure platform, which is far beyond what any company can do [itself] in terms of scale, functionality, and capabilities."



Four keys to faster, successful Azure migration

The incentive to pursue large-scale Azure migrations grows ever stronger as digital leaders take the marketplace by storm. But moving services to the cloud without the right strategy and plan can be complex and disruptive, creating more and more components that must be analyzed and managed.

Migrated, Without Disruption, During Pandemic

Wacom, a global leader in pen displays and tablets for creative users, had a corporate objective to move all its IT services to the cloud to reduce complexity and improve scalability. NTT DATA architected and delivered a comprehensive migration and modernization plan that [moved Wacom's global SAP instances to Microsoft Azure cloud](#).

Wacom reduced both OpEx and CapEx, will enjoy payback in two years, and will see a 41.5% ROI by year 5. All 30 servers and database instances were migrated on time, without any impact to the business and during the global pandemic, which required all work to be done remotely.

Organizations aiming to reap the full benefits of cloud migration should take a holistic approach to migration and develop a plan to empower the entire organization. Here are four keys to success:

1 Align technical and business needs

Simply lifting and shifting existing systems to Azure doesn't automatically lead to cost savings and performance enhancements. To make the most of Azure's potential, the migration team should work closely with business units and support functions to gain perspective on what they hope to achieve, so that technical solutions can be prescribed to directly address those requirements. It's equally important for every aspect of IT — development, operations, security, and support — to have a voice in the migration process, to ensure that these teams are aligned on a shared set of goals and not working with competing agendas.

2 Acquire the right knowledge and experience

Although moving to Azure eventually produces opportunities to do more work with fewer resources, the migration effort itself requires specialized expertise. Whether the skills come from inside the organization or from a cloud migration partner, a professionally managed, measured approach will pay off in the form of a well-structured and cost-effective cloud architecture. A poorly planned and executed migration will likely do more harm than good.

3 Stay the course

A comprehensive Azure migration can demonstrate short-term results, but it is also a long-term journey. Variables may arise that make it tempting to put the initiative on hold or change direction. For example, an exciting new technology might emerge that could change everything, or a new executive with strong opinions and new ideas might join the company. But, as with most other major business initiatives, too much deliberation and not enough execution eventually lead to outright failure. The winning strategy is to create a well-thought-out migration plan, commit to its principles, and get the job done. The beauty of the cloud is that — once you're there — it is adjustable to changing needs.

4 Develop a culture of constant transformation

For all the potential benefits of Azure, none of them can be fully realized if the organization's employees don't accept the change. The modernization and optimization effort may be seen as unwelcome tampering in the eyes of people who use those applications every day. Organizations must focus on fostering an internal culture that embraces the idea of technological progress. The more people understand how Azure will deliver better results, the more eager they will be to engage in a cycle of continuous learning and improvement.

Azure expedites operations, disaster recovery and improves usability

At a large government agency, the NTT DATA Team moved a mission critical case management system to the cloud, which included .net and SharePoint apps. Moving the case management solution to the cloud has made disaster recovery take only minutes as opposed to the hours it was taking previously. The new user-friendly application has received high praise for its ease of use, speed and user-friendly GUI. This is the first app to utilize a new data connector layer as the backend data communicator between disparate data systems. Switching to this new data layer has decreased the time it takes for users to get responses to queries from minutes to milliseconds!

The Bottom Line: NTT DATA helps accelerate Azure migration

NTT DATA has been working with Microsoft for more than a decade on helping clients move to the Azure cloud. NTT DATA delivers and supports multiple platform technologies, hosting options, and business needs, based on best practices for cloud infrastructure and management. It provides a consistent and standardized set of Azure solutions and services and the experience to help enterprises adopt the crucial keys to successful Azure migration.

Microsoft and NTT DATA have forged an alliance to accelerate enterprise digital transformation with Microsoft Azure. NTT DATA is a leader in Microsoft Azure services for large and midsize accounts, plus SAP on Azure, with more than 100 clients on Azure. Recognized as a top Azure managed services provider, NTT DATA employs 4,300 specialized Microsoft consultants and 3,500 cloud architects and engineers.

Cloud may not be the answer to every technology problem, but arguments in favor of maintaining legacy systems get weaker by the month. Today most companies would be well advised to move a substantial percentage of their IT functions to the cloud. By taking NTT DATA's four keys to successful Azure migrations to heart, enterprises will be better prepared to compete in a future defined by rapid innovation and constant change.

To learn more, visit www.nttdataservices.com/azure.