

# Seeing clearly in the cloud

Moving to the cloud can be a dizzying experience without the right partner to guide the way



More and more companies are seeing the adoption of cloud technology as critical to their long-term success. Within this trend, hybrid cloud, the combination of private cloud to retain data control and public cloud with its agility and cost-model advantages, is emerging as the environment of choice.

Data from IDG Research Services has shown that the delivery of IT services via hybrid cloud is expected to triple over the next three years. Across Europe, hybrid cloud adoption is already gaining ground.

Research carried out by multinational data management specialist NetApp found that 69 per cent of chief information officers (CIOs) and IT managers in Germany, 61 per cent in France and 58 per cent in the UK are using a combination of private and public cloud.

While moving to the cloud can deliver significant business benefits, it

is a journey fraught with challenges. In terms of data management, for example, companies need to think about how they will manage and secure their data as they move back and forward between various on-premise systems and cloud environments. This becomes even more challenging when the data is transactional and the data set changes frequently.

For many cloud-bound companies the solution to overcoming these challenges is to partner with an IT organisation with a breadth of expertise in cloud adoption and migration to steer them successfully across a hybrid landscape.

CDW is an IT solutions, managed and cloud services provider delivering modern seamless infrastructure that is aligned with business demand. NetApp enables agile and seamless data management across the hybrid cloud, complementing CDW's end-to-end IT solutions.

Working together, the two companies present a strong partnership with a formidable range of solutions and strategies: a shared strategy of providing flexible services and efficient cloud architectures. As enablers of cloud solutions they guide and support companies through their journey to the cloud and beyond, with CDW orchestrating technology solutions for companies across the UK and internationally.

Grant Caley, UK and Ireland chief technologist at NetApp, says: "We have seen companies transition from having on-premise data centres where they've previously held all their IT, to using software as a service (SaaS) and, more recently, to looking for platform or infrastructure as a service, for example. That transition momentum is relentless."

But as Jonathan Eyton-Williams, head of solutions at CDW points out, the scale and complexity of such a transition means many companies will only make it with the help and support of a trusted partner.

He says: "Over the past couple of years our customer conversations have changed from 'we might want to look at cloud' to 'we know that our direction of travel is cloud, but we need a significant amount of support in making sure we get there and we need a partner to guide us on the journey.'"

The tangible business benefits of hybrid cloud adoption have been well documented. It creates an environ-



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ment that enables organisations to scale up and down, using only the resources that are required at any given time, increasing efficiencies and, in some cases, lowering cost.

The NetApp study found that over half, (56 per cent) of surveyed CIOs and IT managers from Germany, France and the UK named security as a primary motivation for cloud adoption. All three countries also put flexibility (55 per cent) and cost savings (54 per cent) high on the list.

One of the biggest drivers of cloud adoption by businesses, says Mr Caley, is the need for agility to deliver services that a company's on-premise systems could not deliver. He says: "The compute element tends to be the easiest to move to the cloud because it can be rented on demand. Data is more of a challenge, because data has gravity, and you need to be much more focused on data management and the mobility of moving it into or near the cloud."

Within the organisation, it is the C-level executives, the CIO and chief executive, who are driving the cloud strategy, with the knowledge that the market is moving that way, but not always with the depth of understanding of what that strategy will be.

Mr Eyton-Williams explains: "C-suite executives often want to move to a cloud-first strategy, but don't have the knowledge of how it is done operationally. CDW can offer services such as CloudPlan and CloudCare designed to take a customer through a journey that involves more than

simply understanding where their data is and how it is accessed and being used. It also involves stakeholder interviews and establishing where they want their applications to reside, and what the restrictions are around moving some of this data.

"We find that customers want us to help them with that engagement. Companies face huge challenges in connecting and managing data across on-premise and cloud environments, while ensuring their data is well governed and protected. As trusted advisers in this field, we can ensure they are getting the best out of their adoption of cloud technology."

Having completed the initial cloud migration and integration, compa-

nies must keep pace with new developments to take full advantage of cloud, something that many simply have neither the skills nor the resource to do.

"You only have to look at the new releases that come out of Amazon, for example, 20 to 30 new products in the cloud every launch," says Mr Caley. "Trying to keep abreast of that rapid pace of development is extremely complex. Rarely do you see that customer capability to track that level of new technology and new services. CDW can add value because they are constantly looking at and assessing new technology as it appears. Equally, just because there is a new product doesn't mean it will be right for your company. Maintaining cloud data neutrality is one of the core benefits NetApp's Data Fabric can also bring to the equation."

Understanding the costs associated with cloud adoption presents another challenge for companies. Mr Eyton-Williams says: "Within that multi-cloud journey, spanning on-premise, hybrid and public clouds, customers have difficulty defining the cost of their current service and the cost of moving. There are cloud calculators that will tell you what it might cost if you move your workloads as they are or optimised in some way to run them on Azure, for example. What's less easy to define is what you will get back by doing it. It's not as simple as saying 'I don't need to run data centres in-house any more'.

"You need to factor in things like what service contracts are associated with the fact that you can relinquish doing that today and what connectivity changes you will have to make to enable it. It is often difficult for our customers to gain clarity in this area, but again it is something that we can help them with.

"It isn't just about the technology; it is about understanding the business case for a cloud-based journey, getting the best out of it financially, and creating opportunities for business expansion and innovation."

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**78%**

of UK enterprises said managing data seamlessly across cloud environments was very important



**45%**

of UK enterprises are now running hybrid IT solutions across on-premise infrastructure, specialist provider and public clouds



**82%**

of enterprises said that they had a hybrid cloud strategy, up from 74% in 2014



**69%**

of executives believe that the hybrid cloud should be one of the biggest areas of focus for their company

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