

Best Practices: Developing Your Cloud Strategy

When building a cloud strategy, proper planning is critical. An organization should concentrate on developing strategic initiatives and tactical execution.

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Focusing too heavily on today rather than what the future brings can hinder an organization's vision and future growth. When developing strategic initiatives, it is important to first understand and then construct a three year plan. Then, figure out what the five year plan would be. Consider what things need to be done as a company to help prepare. For example, what are the business drivers, and what challenges or obstacles are you looking to overcome? Then, take those challenges and determine what resources, both internal and external, you need in order to help with execution. Your strategy should be high level, but the tactics used to support it need to go deep and wide. Executing a plan without the proper resources in place to help you succeed is futile.

When selling the cloud, it's important to remember that you will get some push-back. Not all clouds are created equal. One of the most common concerns that organizations should be aware of when considering their cloud strategy is customer education. Chances are the customer has seen a commercial about Microsoft and the cloud, and they want to know what it is and how it works. An additional concern a customer might have is how well their existing infrastructure and current technology deployment compares with what you, the service provider, are offering. Many times, people aren't interested in replacing everything they have. For example,

a business might already have an on-premises Exchange server for email, and it does not want to buy hosted Exchange. This doesn't mean that they can't take advantage of the Broadworks hosted VoIP platform or a hosted OCS (Office Communications Server) solution.

Businesses may also be concerned that moving to the cloud will put their IT professionals out of a job. That is a misconception. In fact, utilizing a cloud solution should help their IT staff work more efficiently. As opposed to managing and monitoring a system that they don't have control over to begin with, the cloud communications concept will actually allow them to gain more control rather than lose it. Because a company's service is in the cloud, upgrades are provided automatically in the background. The service provider simply notifies customers that new capabilities are available as they are implemented. When your services are hosted in the cloud, the service provider will be responsible for the backend platforms, allowing IT to manage the vendor relationship.

At the end of the day, whether you are an SMB or a larger enterprise, your cloud strategy should not differ. Many people have a preconceived notion that big businesses are different than small businesses, but it's still the same strategy whether you are a 20 person IT team managing 1,000 people or one IT manager overseeing 100 people. ●



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