



FIVE OPERATING MODEL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MOVING TO A MULTI-CLOUD ENVIRONMENT

A multi-cloud strategy enhances business flexibility by giving users the option of addressing their needs using a combination of public cloud, software as a service (SaaS) and in-house IT resources with the active support of the IT organization.

When moving to a multi-cloud environment, organizations need to rethink their operating model and evolve roles and processes to manage and support new technologies including converged and hyper-converged infrastructure, software-defined infrastructure, SaaS and multiple types of clouds.

Roles and processes must also adapt to the use of agile software development practices like DevOps, platform as a service (PaaS), containers and continuous integration and delivery pipelines, with both infrastructure and software functions exposed through application program interfaces (APIs).

This shift requires cultural change as well as new ways of working. IT needs to partner with multiple vendors, foster collaboration with application development teams and lead the process of creating new governance standards that take into account the interests of many stakeholders. Here are some considerations that will make your journey to a multi-cloud operating model smoother and more effective.

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1. GAIN STAKEHOLDER AGREEMENT

Many different parts of the organization have a stake in IT decisions in a multi-cloud environment creating a need for new governance practices. The needs of all stakeholders—including business units, enterprise architects, finance, security, legal and application developers—must be addressed.

For example, business units are typically focused on service catalogs and application development priorities. They must agree with IT on the services and APIs to be built or contracted. The finance organization and IT need to reach consensus on cost guidelines that keep service use within budget. The legal department will want to define acceptable licensing provisions and data compliance standards. Security needs assurance that all access controls are consistently applied across all environments.

Stakeholders must also be in alignment on such issues as where to locate workloads, which development platforms to use and how services will be selected for the services catalog. A common set of tools should be defined and governance standards created around such factors as metadata, security and compliance. It may also be necessary to create new job functions such as multi-cloud architect and service architect, adjust organizational structures and provide for additional training.

Defining a new governance model requires uniting these different points of view into a shared vision, taking business objectives, benefits and risks into account. This is a negotiating process, and IT usually can't drive it alone. Partnering with business stakeholders and securing executive sponsorship is important for success.

2. ESTABLISH MARKET-COMPETITIVE SERVICES

A multi-cloud strategy introduces additional choice into the business because users may provision services internally, externally or in combination. The IT organization must have a full understanding of the services the business requires and what options are available both internally and externally. IT leaders can then make informed choices about which services to build and which to broker.

When choosing to build, IT needs to determine the functionality required and provide service definitions, costs, service levels and expected benefits. Non-financial variables such as compliance requirements and quality of technical support should also be taken into account. Pricing may be aligned to recovering IT costs or to making internal services cost-competitive with external services, depending upon the company's IT financial policies and objectives.

It's also essential that any services that IT chooses to build provide a cloud-like consumption model organized around service delivery in which standard services are provided through an automated self-service portal. This enables users to get their infrastructure services in hours or days instead of weeks or months. Applications and APIs should also include IT governance, security and compliance standards.

When choosing to broker, IT needs visibility into the actual costs, service levels, support charges and licensing terms of cloud providers so that users can make a well-informed decision.

Whatever services IT provides, whether built or brokered, provisioning and reporting need to be automated for fast consumption. Standardized procedures should be established for automated self-provisioning, ticketing and reporting to enable users to choose the most effective combination of resources.

By providing services that are equal to or better than those available from external providers at a competitive cost, IT can deter shadow spending and improve its operational agility.

3. ENSURE BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

The operating model must be aligned to business needs. For example, the service management function may include roles for business relationship management and service portfolio management. The business relationship manager works with lines of business and developers to identify needs and ensure that appropriate infrastructure as a service (IaaS) and PaaS options are offered. The service portfolio manager defines the required IaaS/PaaS services and APIs.

The objective is to understand what the business wants, manage the relationship, make sure IT is aligned with business needs, review and determine if the services delivered are being used and track usage to see if anything being requested is outside of the services offered.

Regardless of the business drivers, an overarching goal of a multi-cloud initiative should be to give users more control over provisioning, using and accounting for the services they choose without violating well-defined service management guidelines. Involving users closely in technology decisions will improve business alignment by default.



4. CRAWL, WALK, RUN

The scope of the operating model can be daunting, but there is no need to take on the entire enterprise at once. The operating model should provide for an incremental approach that expands in scope as successes are achieved.

Start with the roles and processes needed to deliver and support IaaS services, such as Windows and Linux hosting, backup and recovery. Provide an end-to-end view of those services. Identify milestones, show success at different stages, create small wins to gain support then add and extend roles and processes. Determining which roles and processes to execute, and at what times, may be a function of your overall multi-cloud infrastructure and application roadmap. This approach reduces risk and builds incrementally on success.

5. START WITH A “FRIENDLY” BUSINESS UNIT

Most IT executives know which people in the organization have a history of constructive engagement with the technology group and enthusiasm about new ideas. These are the best allies for defining a new operating model.

Choose a business unit that understands the value of IT and is open to working with the IT organization. For example, of several development teams across business units, some are likely to be more aware of the value IT can bring, and open to developing shared roles and responsibilities, co-developing APIs and the like.

Problems are inevitable, but when working with a “friendly” business unit there is greater built-in forgiveness, understanding and collaboration, and less chance for an “us against them” dynamic to develop.

THE SERVICE MANAGEMENT OFFICE

Perhaps the most important factor in a successful transition to multi-cloud is to have an overarching program management office in place to guide, oversee and synchronize the transition to a new operating model. This office ensures that the right stakeholders are identified, the right meetings are held, and activities and communications are coordinated. The program management office establishes overall governance, drives stakeholder collaboration and ensures effective management of change in scope or direction to ensure that the expected benefits are realized.

Two key roles are needed in this office. One is a project manager who coordinates all projects that require services and allocates resources accordingly. The other is a lead architect, who is charged with understanding business needs, ensuring technical consistency, evaluating and determining the need for additional services and mapping service availability and delivery to business requirements.

These functions need not necessarily sit within the IT organization. The most critical factor is that the people in these roles understand business needs and how services map to them.

LEVERAGE EXPERIENCED PARTNERS

An integrated multi-cloud operating model can deliver many benefits, including more frequent application releases, an improved end-user experience, reduced costs, and reduced Shadow IT. However, changing your operating model is not easy. Working with a partner that has predefined roles, job descriptions, process flows, responsibility matrices and communication plans can accelerate the process and reduce the learning curve.

Dell Technologies Consulting Services has extensive experience helping organizations adopt a [multi-cloud operating model](#). They can define and automate new processes and workflows, develop standard operating procedures, define the roles and skills needed, and provide training and communications plans. They can help get you where you need to be to provision services faster, support agile development lifecycles, and enable consistent, repeatable IT environments, so that you can start driving business outcomes sooner.

From strategy through tactical execution, Dell Technologies Consulting Services can help you adopt an integrated multi-cloud operating model enabling faster provisioning, support for agile development lifecycles, and consistent, repeatable IT environments.

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