



Cloud Management

Utilising managed services to become a cloud champion

Updates, new features, applications maintenance, threat detection, incident support - the upkeep when it comes to IT infrastructure is seemingly a never-ending list. Add to that the need to keep team skills up to date in an ever-changing technology landscape and the drive for IT to carve out time to proactively contribute to value-add activities. The senior IT professional has never had more to juggle. However, what if the day-to-day management of the IT environment was taken off your hands, relieving your team of the mundane but important tasks and enabling you to drive innovation, growth and business outcomes elsewhere? As adoption of the cloud continues at pace, many organisations are moving towards an 'outsourced' model, leveraging the skills of cloud specialists to not only keep the engine running but also deliver enhanced optimisation, efficiency and agility with assured continuity and reduced risk.

Problems in-house

Maintaining your IT infrastructure grabs the lion's share of IT spend yet offers little back in terms of real business development. The monitoring and managing of your servers, software and network is an expense which could be better utilised elsewhere, with IT expenditure better spent on innovative projects designed to take the company forward.

Not only is there a cost aspect, but in-house management also uses up valuable time and resources. Ultimately, when you are talking about managing and maintaining your IT infrastructure, you are asking your IT department to fulfil an extensive list of your business's IT demands – backup, availability, security patching, business continuity and so on.

Furthermore, the rapid pace of change in the cloud can create a significant strain on internal skills. This never-ending innovation requires people to maintain an expert level of knowledge whilst constantly dealing with technologies that are evolving on a near daily basis. In 2017, there were over 500 feature releases on Microsoft Azure. Your IT department is focused on keeping a growing number of lights on in your business, managing the supporting technology. What they should be doing, however, is focusing on what the business does and how the IT function can

add business value.

"The nirvana for most organisations is being able to create a set of highly automated IT systems which almost look after themselves. In a heritage, on-premise environment that is often achieved by stitching together a range of 'best of breed' products and management technologies. Now in a public cloud world, you get that capability out of the box. You have a highly sophisticated, integrated management platform that's designed from the ground up. The challenge for the business is that it still requires management by the team, but you are potentially talking about a whole new skill set," says Sean Morris, Head of Consultancy at New Signature UK.

Cost saving and agility - compelling gains

Cloud Managed Services allow businesses to grab back that huge amount of money spent on 'keeping the lights on' through not only cost reduction, but also lower capital expenditure.

In the cloud, the amount spent on hardware and infrastructure shifts to far cheaper operating expenses, which are also far more flexible, while companies can also make major savings in IT spend thanks to a Managed Service Provider's (MSP's) extensive portfolio of offerings.

Infrastructure, operating costs and resources are all shared across a service provider's clients and by working with economies of scale MSP's can increase operational efficiency far more than in-house solutions. Therefore, MSP's can offer services cheaper than in-house IT teams. Businesses are also assured that they get what they pay for, with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) guaranteeing predictable costs and accurate financial forecasting and budgeting.

Then consider the implications on your expenditure from the cloud's elasticity. Being able to scale in and out to meet business demands is perhaps one of the clouds most enabling features. That means you only pay for what you use, and you can dial that up and down on demand. New Signature also offers managed services customers free access to their Cloud Management Portal intelligence hub. This enables the business and the MSP team to constantly monitor usage trends, cloud services consumption



and be able to 'right size' it and forward plan capacity to optimise expenditure.

However, perhaps the most compelling gain of leveraging a Managed Service model is the IT transformation that flows into the business. Moving your IT systems into the cloud and using a Managed Services Provider transforms IT service capability into a modern environment and that creates a tangible step-change in just how agile IT can become to business demands. What results is a powerful combination of transformation and efficiency at the same time by introducing improvements to your existing service model and leveraging the inherent automation of public cloud.

Refocusing the business on core competencies

The jump to cloud also has a significant impact on the workforce and the expertise available to a business. As the management of IT infrastructure is augmented by the MSP in conjunction with the internal IT department, they are then able to focus on the software and operations that matter most to your business, and with those added heightened levels of agility. However, this does not mean an exodus of

technical talent, indeed, it means quite the opposite.

Efficiency and agility, when it comes to the workforce, can provide the backbone of transformation. Reshaping the business so that assets are in a position where they can truly benefit the business - rather than simply keeping the lights on.

Moving to a Managed Services model means that the business can access expertise on demand. The benefit to this is two-fold. Not only do businesses avoid having to invest significant sums in training and skilling in house teams, but MSP's are able to provide expert, technical support 24x7 and knowledge sharing with the team so the upskill advantage flows into the business naturally. Cloud management provides effective BAU support with extended hours availability and continual service improvement, all combined with a lower overall TCO. As a result, businesses can redeploy their own staff while having infrastructure managed by experienced experts. This lets you concentrate on what you do best, letting the experts manage your environment so you can focus on innovating in the business. Taking away the

mundane tasks that seem to take up the majority of your day is an added perk, your staff freed from low-value highly time-consuming tasks, benefiting the business when it comes to moral and removing the drain on resources that these mundane tasks can often be.

New Signature's Sean Morris comments, "Embracing cloud management services certainly delivers a range of benefits but I think the real key benefit is agility; to be able to respond quickly to the business' demands, unlocking potential within the business because IT is no longer holding it back due to high-priority operational demands. It enables a variety of management tasks to be automated including remediation of issues, so the business can focus on what it does best and be far more agile and nimble, supported by efficient, modern IT service delivery models."

Peace of mind – DR and disaster protection wrapped up

There is also reduced risk when it comes to a Managed Services model. In an ever-evolving threat landscape, Managed Services offers increased security, compliance and business continuity. Utilising technology like automation to detect and prevent intrusions, coupled with Microsoft Azure's data replication across multiple data centres, Managed Services takes the burden away from patches and backup, monitoring and incident support, administration and more - the key areas of technology management that are vital to ensuring the most optimised environment.

Even before an incident occurs, your business can be prepared with a robust Recovery Plan, rigorously tested and maintained to ensure ongoing relevance. Should the worst happen and a recovery scenario results, the business benefits again from a greater ability to respond – after all MSP's are much better equipped to deal quickly with an outage or natural disaster than an in-house IT team by the very nature of their specialism. They also have extensive teams that can work round the clock in multiple geographic locations – and anyone that has dealt with a DR event previously will remember all too well that the internal teams are completely burned out after 24 hours or more, of continuous

recovery work. Disaster Recovery helps restore data and get mission critical applications back up and running as quickly as possible, sometimes within a matter of minutes or a few hours. Essentially acting as an insurance policy for the business, a DR plan can replicate the application estate between two data centres, meaning that a back-up site could take over should anything happen to the primary site. Should your applications already be running in a virtualised environment, then cloud-based DR is a very cost-effective viable alternative.

As the cyber-threat landscape continues to evolve, security will become harder to manage in-house. In a recent research study by tech business Barkly, 7 out of 10 organisations reported that their security risk increased significantly in 2017 and a staggering 54% of businesses experienced one or more successful attacks that comprised their data and/or IT infrastructure. So the potential to exploit the latest security measures and ensure timely patching and 24x7 monitoring has never been more attractive to businesses.

Real-life transformation

Like many businesses operating in today's frenetic business climate, Mining companies have a challenge on their hands – how to monitor critical, complex systems in a 24x7 capacity. Not only are these remote systems responsible for sharing important data with head offices, as publicly traded companies it is critical that monitoring is consistent around financial reporting. Overwhelmed with this challenge, a mining conglomerate turned to New Signature for its expertise in delivering comprehensive cloud management services.

Besides managing virtual machines, storage, disaster recovery, and network configurations, New Signature provides increased efficiency and greater agility to each company's processes. Because of New Signature's size and bench strength, it can provide dedicated experts around the clock for each organisation. It is also able to take care of patch compliance, saving internal IT teams from administering patches on off hours or weekends, thereby reducing expenses.

“We know the challenges that companies face when it comes to on-premises and cloud environments, so we’re able to help solve their issues quickly and seamlessly. Our team is trained to maintain the health and integrity of these companies’ critical business applications and serve as experts for ongoing optimisation and assistance around the clock, every day of the year,” says Mike Brown, EMEA Managed Services Director, New Signature.

For these Mining companies, the switch to Managed Services resulted in reduced downtime through predictive failure, which allows visibility of impending problems before they become critical. The services also enabled them to plan proactively, and the integration of the Microsoft System Center suite of products extracts maximum business value for these organisations by being able to integrate infrastructure management across cloud and on-premise environments, heterogeneous and open systems.

Staff have been freed up to focus on more valuable and strategic work that benefits the organisations in other areas, versus spending time monitoring their systems, cutting costs while gaining access to a team of skilled subject matter experts.

No-nonsense IT Management for the Modern Business

Not every business has the in-house capabilities to be able to optimise and run its cloud infrastructure, constantly staying on top of a technology that is evolving on a near daily basis. So, outsourcing a sometimes seemingly bottomless list of management tasks that cloud adoption can bring will deliver numerous freedoms and benefits. Partnering with the right Managed Services Provider can free up staff from simply keeping the lights on to innovating and providing greater business value, provide safeguards from unforeseen downtime, provide a channel for knowledge transfer and skills building, and refocus the business on its core competencies. It can also provide a powerful means to transform existing service models into agile, modern practices leveraging the inherent automation of public cloud.

Managed Services Providers not only give businesses capabilities that they may not hold in-house but also make them more agile. Changing business demands require services to be flexible, adapting to meet the requirements of a fluctuating marketplace, and users. A Managed Service Provider helps to create a modern IT environment that can instantly respond to changing demand and not be left behind.

Outsourcing to a company with a reputation for success high customer satisfaction and the ability to manage Infrastructure as a Service, Platform as a Service and Managed Desktop environments, gives peace of mind that everything is running as it should be, now and should an unforeseen disaster occur. It also gives the business scope to evaluate and embrace new and emerging technology opportunities under the guidance of experts, and create heightened agility to fuel advantage and competitive edge in the future.



About New Signature

New Signature is a cloud-first, full-service Microsoft solution provider focused on delivering great customer experiences through transformative business solutions. The New Signature team delivers full lifecycle solutions—from project inception and planning, through deployment to ongoing support, management and maintenance.

To find out more, email hello@newsignature.com, visit www.newsignature.com or check out [@newsignatureuk](https://twitter.com/newsignatureuk).

