A SPOTLIGHT ON FLEXIBLE IT

The Key To Enterprise Hybrid Cloud: An Annual Forrester Consulting Study Commissioned By IBM

Executive Summary

Amid uncertainty and changing business needs, organizations that can best leverage a future-ready hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy will be better positioned to capitalize on their agility and resiliency. Traditional on-premises infrastructure is critical to most firms' overall infrastructure strategies. It continues to house sensitive, custom applications and data that are integral to organizations' security and health, even as IT teams increasingly embrace cloud environments. Now uncertainty, emphasized by the COVID-19 pandemic, brings a special focus on sustaining a healthy hybrid infrastructure strategy as firms face two monumental tasks: 1) quickly adapting to changes in the market and 2) continuing the pace of their product and service delivery to offset any potential market or revenue losses.

In October 2020, IBM commissioned Forrester Consulting to refresh 2019 research evaluating how organizations develop and implement their IT infrastructure strategies — for both cloud and traditional on-premises deployments. For the 2020 research, Forrester conducted an online survey with 384 enterprise IT decision-makers (ITDMs) across industries to explore this topic. We found that organizations are investing in a hybrid cloud strategy, with traditional on-premises infrastructure playing a foundational role as firms enter the 2020s.

Organizations seek flexibility through open source to future-ready their infrastructure strategy and drive business outcomes.
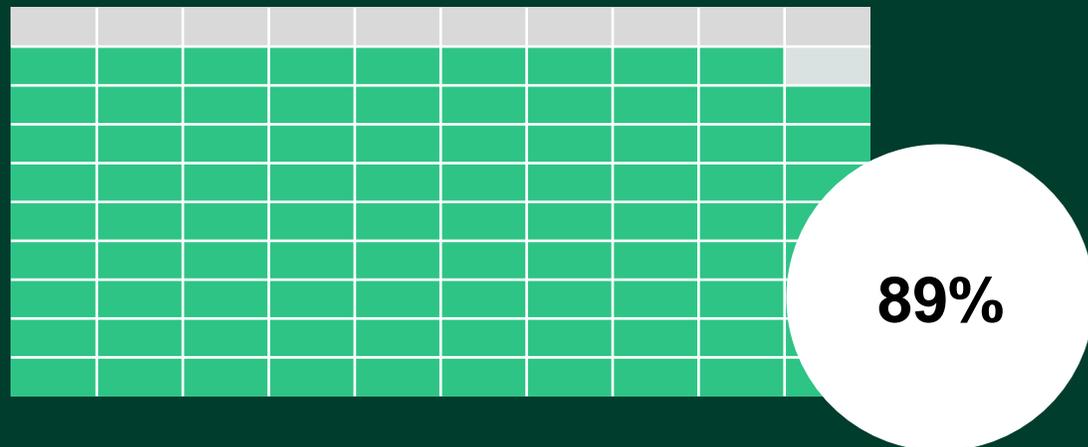
Adapt to changes today and tomorrow by future-readying your firm's IT infrastructure strategy:

- Leverage open source to enable flexibility in your ongoing infrastructure investments.

- Strengthen your hybrid cloud strategy with on-premises infrastructure as a foundation.

- Drive business outcomes through a flexible and open hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy.
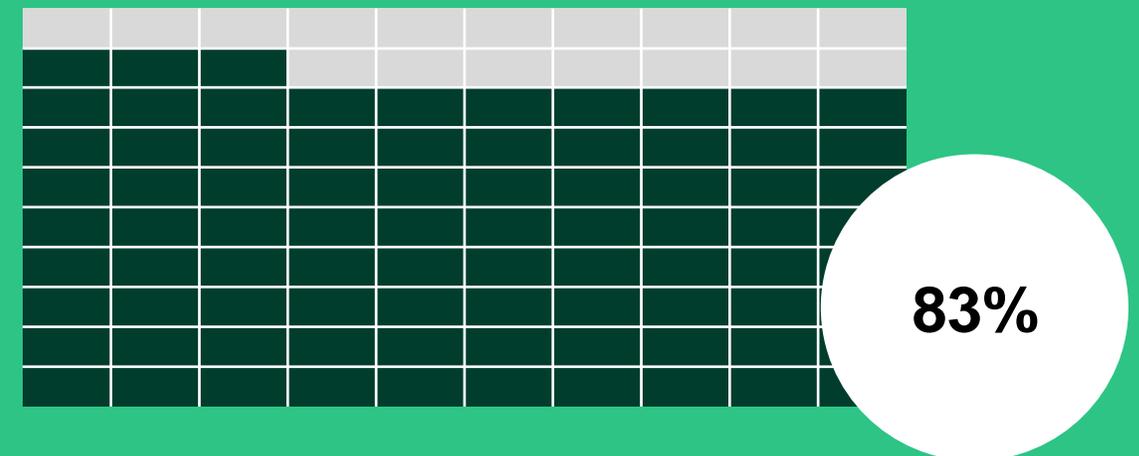
Firms report overwhelmingly that open source unlocks the benefits of a hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy

According to Forrester, businesses rely on open source now more than ever, and that reliance will continue to grow. Open source provides benefits such as cost savings, accelerated innovation, and flexibility.*
Similarly, survey respondents in this study also see value. They strongly agree/agree that:

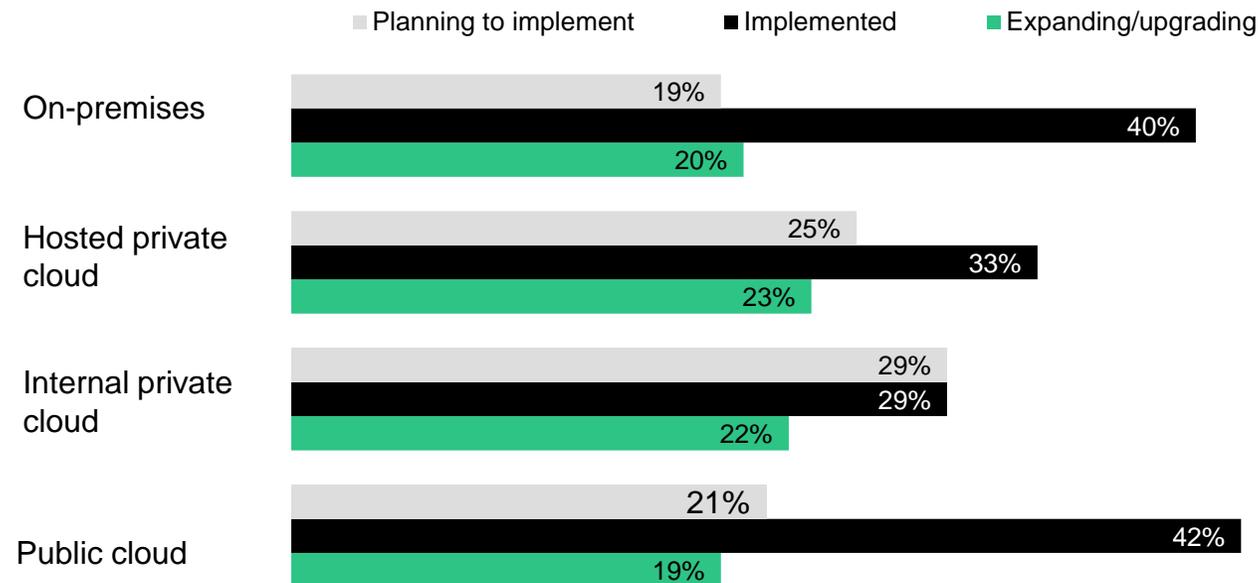Open source allows for a more open and flexible hybrid cloud strategy.

89%

A hybrid cloud IT infrastructure leverages open source for greater efficiency and scalability in the future.

83%

Base: 384 global decision-makers for IT infrastructure environments
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, November 2020

*Source: "To Maximize OSS Value, Create An OSS Strategy," Forrester Research, Inc., March 27, 2020.
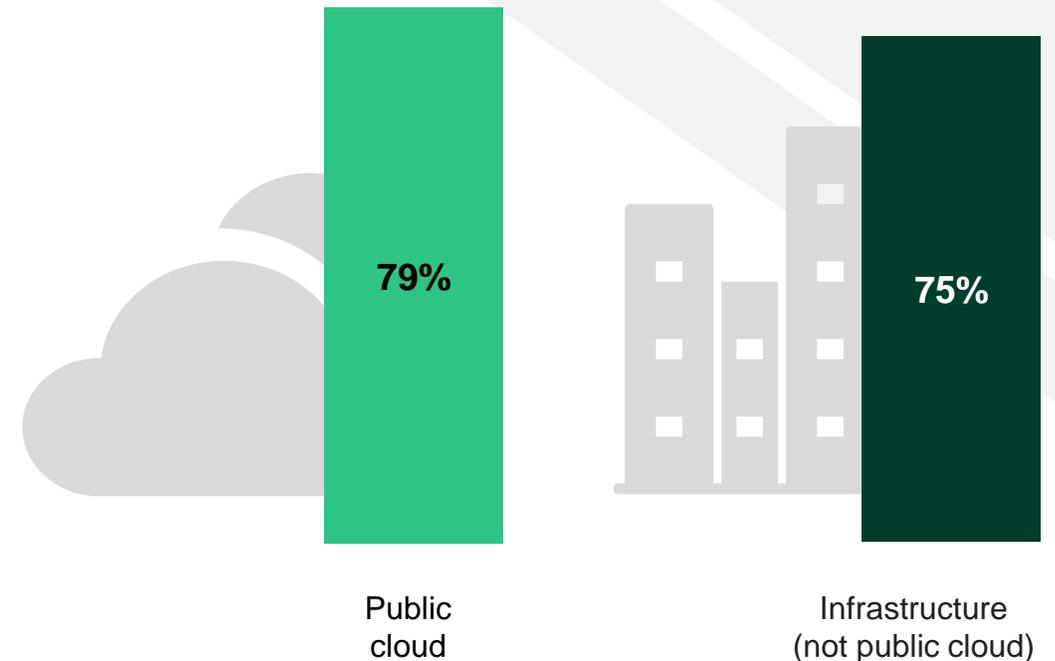
Seek openness in your continued infrastructure investments

IT organizations are committed to meeting the demands of today and tomorrow by seeking openness through increased investments in a diverse mix of applications, including traditional on-premises and both private and public cloud.

"What best describes your organization's plans to adopt the following in the next 12 months?"

Expected Increase In Investment Over The Next Two Years

■ Planning to implement ■ Implemented ■ Expanding/upgrading

On-premises
- 19%
- 40%
- 20%

Hosted private cloud
- 25%
- 33%
- 23%

Internal private cloud
- 29%
- 29%
- 22%

Public cloud
- 21%
- 42%
- 19%

79% Public cloud

75% Infrastructure (not public cloud)

Base: 384 global decision-makers for IT infrastructure environments

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, November 2020

Strengthen your hybrid cloud strategy with traditional on-premises infrastructure as the foundation

Decision-makers view a commitment to traditional on-premises infrastructure as pivotal in ensuring an open and flexible future-ready hybrid cloud strategy.

8/10

agree that on-premises infrastructure is a critical part of their firms' hybrid cloud strategies.

30%

say they have experienced **loss of openness or flexibility** following a delay in on-premises/noncloud or private cloud infrastructure refresh.

Base: 384 global decision-makers for IT infrastructure environments

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of IBM, November 2020

Drive business outcomes through a flexible and open hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy

A future-ready hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy drives security and resiliency and meets enterprises' unique needs.

A hybrid cloud environment is able to store and move data and workloads easily and securely

89%

A hybrid cloud IT infrastructure that integrates on-premises solutions with public and private cloud is best suited for my organization

88%

My organization sees a hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy as a permanent solution, as opposed to a stepping stone toward a complete move to the cloud

87%

Key Recommendations

Make yours a hybrid cloud infrastructure strategy. Each aspect of a hybrid cloud strategy is already in use by about three-fifths of the decision-makers we surveyed. These respondents' firms have already implemented or are expanding/upgrading their implementations of the four aspects of public cloud, internal private cloud, hosted private cloud, and/or on-premises hardware. These firms pursue an open infrastructure and open-source strategies for flexibility.

Keep on-premises as part of the strategy for the foreseeable future. On-premises infrastructure should remain an active part of your hybrid cloud strategy. This continuation of commitment to traditional compute doesn't represent a failure to move forward. To the contrary, 85% of surveyed leaders list on-premises as a critical part of their hybrid cloud strategy, recognizing that the modern, cloud-based infrastructure has yet to accommodate all workloads and performance environments. Look to on-premises to address needs around data residency, regulatory requirements, security, and specific infrastructure performance requirements.

Manage the mix of public cloud, private cloud, and on-premises as a whole. There are many good reasons for each of the different infrastructure aspects of a hybrid cloud strategy — so manage your infrastructure needs as an open portfolio of options, not a single compute environment. It would be an unusual company that meets all of its workload and performance needs through a single infrastructure architecture — so don't try to force your firm into that rare state.

Keep up with on-premises infrastructure refreshes. Too many firms assume that moving everything to the cloud is the best strategy — making ongoing refreshes of on-premises infrastructure something to be avoided. To the contrary, 83% of our survey respondents report delaying on-premises/noncloud or private cloud infrastructure upgrades in the past five years with significant negative repercussions. These negative impacts include security vulnerabilities, higher costs, restrictions for compatible apps, and diminished performance.

Download
the full study

Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 384 global decision-makers for IT infrastructure environments to evaluate how organizations develop and implement their infrastructure strategies. Survey participants included IT decision-makers in infrastructure and operations, application management or maintenance, and/or software development. Questions provided to the participants asked about environments used for different workloads and infrastructure investments. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank you for time spent on the survey. The study began in October 2020 and was completed in November 2020.

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Contributing Research:
Forrester's Infrastructure & Operations research group