



Don't get lost in the clouds

Tips for managing multi-cloud environments

SPONSORED BY



The conversation about cloud has changed over the past two years. As cloud adoption has accelerated, attitudes about implementation have shifted.

“In the past, the IT team felt it was a safer bet to go with one provider,” said Jamie Spiller, Sales Leader with IBM Public Cloud. at a recent CanadianCIO Virtual Roundtable. “But now, hybrid and multiple providers are accepted. It’s tilted the conversation from adoption, to how to manage multiple players, secure IT and put business processes in place.”

During the roundtable, IT leaders talked about the challenges they’re now facing with managing multi-cloud environments and how best to address them.

Choosing the workloads to move to the cloud

At the beginning of the session, Spiller shared his observations about why some organizations have been successful, or not, in gaining a return on their cloud investments.

“Early on, a number of organizations made bold declarations about becoming a cloud-first business,” he said. Indeed, in these cases, the performance of IT leaders was measured on how many workloads had been moved to the cloud. “Everyone was eager for quick wins,” Spiller said.

The organizations that found success were those that moved the type of workloads where it was impossible to forecast peak demand. For example, it was difficult to predict the uptake for new digital banking services. In cases like this, the bursting capability of the cloud put the organization in a good position to react to market needs.

However, organizations that moved stable and predictable workloads to the cloud found that their results fell short. In fact, in many cases, the new environment turned out to be more expensive if they were simply doing a “lift and shift” and running like-for-like services in the cloud.

“The lesson is that you have to have a sound understanding of the financials,” said Spiller. “Cloud is always portrayed as a way to save costs, and sometimes it is. But others realized that the ROI is not there for moving stable workloads.” For many CIOs, who acknowledge that direct cost savings may not always be possible, there are still benefits to moving to the cloud, not the least of which is the increased security that the cloud provides.

“Cloud is always portrayed as a way to save costs, and sometimes it is.

— Jamie Spiller,
Sales Leader,
IBM Public Cloud

Security is now a driver to the cloud

Security used to be the biggest inhibitor to moving to the cloud. “Now, it’s the largest driver to the cloud,” said Spiller. In the past, organizations were hesitant because of concerns about regulatory compliance.

More education is needed on how cloud providers have matured in their security stance, said Spiller. “They’re spending more on security than individual organizations could ever afford,” he said. He noted that IBM is developing industry-specific clouds so that all the required regulatory controls in a specific industry are codified in the cloud. This includes measurement and the production of reports required by compliance officers. “It passes compliance on to the provider,” said Spiller. “The providers can provide a much better security standing than a lot of organizations can do on their own.”

Communications is everything

Several of the roundtable participants said the relationship between the IT and business teams is still a major challenge related to cloud implementation. “How do we engage the business?” asked one CIO. “We struggle when they have their minds set on a path.”

There’s a need for more education and communications, Spiller said. According to an IDC study, 86 per cent of organizations that moved workloads to the cloud have repatriated at least one. Many of them were shadow IT projects. “This shows that the line of business is doing its own thing,” he said. “They need to understand the complexities of what they acquire on their own, so it’s not happening to us and we’re playing catch-up.” It’s also important for the business to understand that the only way to maintain a consistent security posture is to have centralized management and control.

Communications with the business must start at the very beginning of a project, Spiller said. "For every change agent, there are 20 or 30 people who can say no," he said. He pointed to an example of a financial institution that said its culture was resisting the implementation of its cloud strategy.

“The best technologists are those people that are in love with the technology.

— Jamie Spiller,
Sales Leader,
IBM Public Cloud

Businesses rely on infrastructure and applications to be able to respond quickly to market changes. The adoption of containerized workloads and Kubernetes makes it easier for IT to demonstrate its ability to partner with business to become more agile in achieving its goals.

The skills challenge

Spiller believes the biggest obstacle to successfully managing multi-cloud is the skills shortage. "There is a dearth of skills, especially in cloud native development," he said.

There is going to be a competition that lights up for these skills." For example, Spiller mentioned a situation where an employer offered an employee a 50 per cent raise in salary to counter a job offer. Despite that, Spiller mentioned that he was able to attract the candidate, not by a bidding war, but by offering an opportunity to do some very interesting and challenging work.

"The best technologists are those people that are in love with the technology," said Spiller. "You need to think through how you're going to make the future journey look interesting and exciting to potential candidates. Without them, you'll have significant challenges."

A good approach that Spiller has seen some organizations take is to establish a joint innovation council. "This helps the business spot how to use technology to accelerate in the marketplace," he said.

One roundtable participant noted that the role of IT is changing in his organization as it offloads the technical functions to third parties. The company is now looking for more expertise in project management, business relationships and governance, he said. "Decentralization of IT probably makes sense in some cases," added Spiller. He's seen organizations realign IT teams according to business functions, but, he said, the jury is still out on it. "It may be that you lose something in the collaboration and centre of competency in an IT team," he said.

How much control can you give up?

In the “old days,” when something went wrong, managers knew they could walk down the hall and talk to the right person, said Spiller. “With cloud, you can’t always see where the problem is. Traceability is an issue in the multi-cloud environment.”

When they’re making IT decisions, organizations don’t spend enough time on their level of comfort with the amount of control they’re prepared to give up, Spiller said. “Every time you look at putting a workload in the cloud, you want to do a review and make sure you’re comfortable with where the control lands,” advises Spiller.

This is part of a broader discussion IT should have with the business team when they move to the cloud. “It may sound trite to say, but I really do believe that communications is paramount to a successful cloud implementation,” said Spiller.

ABOUT IBM CLOUD

With over \$20B in annual cloud revenue, IBM has built a leading enterprise hybrid cloud business. This includes a comprehensive range of as-a-service offerings, software, hardware and professional services that enable IBM to advise, move, build and manage cloud solutions across public, private and on-premises environments. Through its global network of more than 60 cloud data centers across 19 countries and 18 availability zones across six regions, IBM public cloud helps enterprises in all industries to meet security, resiliency, performance, and global deployment requirements.

www.ibm.com/cloud/public

ABOUT ITWC

ITWC is the Canadian AI-enabled digital media and marketing platform reaching Canada's most influential, engaged and targeted technology decision-makers. Using first-party data, the science of demand generation and industry knowledge, we create value for both our community of participants of over 280,000 CASL-compliant subscribers and our leading vendor customers.

www.itwc.ca

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE IBM PUBLIC CLOUD