

Two priorities to enhance the value of your google cloud platform and your AI foundation

Introduction

Many businesses have moved to Google Workspace (formerly G Suite) for office productivity in recent years. Gmail has become the de facto standard email platform for many companies. More recently, Google has focused its research efforts on innovative technologies such as Kubernetes and TensorFlow that it contributed to the open-source community. Google's strategy is to transform its approach to Cloud by focusing on cloud services, artificial intelligence, and data. Google understands that customers are increasingly looking for enterprise cloud services that can help them move to a more innovative and flexible approach to hybrid computing. You may want to move workloads and data from your traditional data center to the cloud to protect your investments.

Businesses are starting to ask important questions: How can I quickly get started with a hybrid approach in order to work with various clouds, on premises services, and data? How do we gain insights from data no matter where it resides? What technologies should we adapt to make sure we are prepared for market changes? Below we briefly discuss these considerations and how businesses are augmenting their IT investments while continuing to use Google's Cloud Platform and its native AI technologies.

The need for a business-ready cloud

Your business is increasingly preparing to move to the cloud to support mission-critical workloads. You want to integrate a variety of data sources with cloud-based workloads in a secure and compliant manner. Your organization wants to be able to move beyond monolithic applications to cloud native flexible services. IT leaders like you want to quickly integrate with various services no matter if they reside on a public, private, or data center platform. This approach requires a cloud architecture that pre-integrates core services and consistent APIs that make integration of third-party cloud services seamless.

The reality is that you don't have time to assemble, secure, and create scalable clouds on their own or to pay for integrators to spend millions of dollars to do the complex work. You want to focus their energy and efforts on transforming your business by moving your enterprise workloads to the cloud. As organizations embark on a "cloud first" approach to development, it is important to consider whether the cloud platform is designed to easily integrate and manage critical workloads. For example, does the cloud have the compliance and regulatory requirements required for your industry? Is security built into the cloud environment or are you on your own to figure out how to create a security framework?

Analyze your data wherever it resides without moving it all to the cloud

Moving your data to a centralized repository should not be a prerequisite to building machine learning and AI powered applications. Who has the time and budget to move all corporate data to a single repository? If data is replicated in multiple locations for analytics, how do you ensure security and the veracity of the data? Is your security organization going to allow you to move the most sensitive corporate data to the cloud? Adopting offerings that allow you to find, manage and analyze data no matter where it is stored is an important capability for companies that want to make a leap in the way they use data.

The most pragmatic approach is not to try to move all of your mission-critical data to one on-premises location or to a single public cloud. Rather, the focus on managing data in a highly distributed hybrid computing environment requires that workload placement is strategic. Latency, security, and data structure has to be taken into consideration. Even more important for the business is implementing a consistent way to manage the meaning of data

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across business silos. Do you understand the meaning of common business terms across different data sources? Is there a common catalog that provides business consistency no matter how that data source is designed and managed? Are you able to leverage emerging AI-based techniques to help you manage what has become a huge volume of data? To be successful, IT needs to provide business management with a consistent and trustworthy data environment across all public, private, and data center services.

Adopt opensource technologies to find the best talent and technology partners for your company

Finally, companies are seeing the business value of adopting open technologies and working with vendors that fully support open source. One of the primary reasons why businesses are using open source technologies is that they gain access to large pools of excellent and creative developers who are ready to bring value on day one. Developers don't need to learn vendor specific platforms when a vendor adopts open technologies. In addition to gaining access to top talent, it's easier to find partners and incorporate existing technology with non-proprietary technology. For example, emerging partners with new approaches to business problems don't want to limit themselves to a specific ecosystem. Why would an emerging company want to only work with businesses that choose a specific cloud vendor?

A large insurance company must position itself for the future by modernizing applications and moving to the cloud

Take the situation of a global insurance company under pressure to transform its business to better compete with more nimble startups. The company determined moving to a cloud-first approach would give them the flexibility to respond more quickly to customer expectations. The first step in this journey was to modernize their current applications through containerization.

In addition to modernizing applications, the company also needed to choose technology partners to form a reliable cloud platform. The company had two main priorities when evaluating cloud technology vendors:

1. A cloud platform that was pre-integrated so that this shift to the cloud would show quick results. Leadership needing to prove that this move to the cloud was worth the investment and wanted development teams to focus on projects that would directly impact customers rather than creating a cloud technology stack.
2. A streamlined approach to data that could bring together data from across teams and data sources. The management team needed to have a clear understanding of all of the business data and how that data impacts success. In addition, leadership need to be able to trust the output from machine learning models, meaning data must be vetted, cleansed and up to date. At the same time, data needed to be secure and masked to follow regulatory guidelines. In addition to giving leadership business insights, development teams could use this cross team data to build customer-facing AI driven applications that customers expect.

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How IBM Cloud Pak for Data enhances the value of the insurance company's GCP investment

The insurance company made the decision to use GCP as its primary public cloud platform because its developers were familiar with the platform and Google offers a number of propriety data analysis capabilities. While this approach met the needs of the technical team, the platform fell short when it came to management expectations. Business leaders required the ability to have a unified approach to data management across teams to get an accurate real-time view of the business. The IBM Cloud Pak for Data provided a unified, open source approach that was architected to operate seamlessly sitting on top of the Google Cloud Platform. By using IBM Cloud Pak for Data on GCP, developers can use the native GCP tools while having the ability to leverage data across the company – data that is on the cloud and on-premises data. In addition, the same Cloud Pak can work across any cloud. This is important since many businesses are dependent on more than one public cloud.

While GCP offers a variety of advanced tools, it doesn't provide a consistent data management platform nor does it have the ability to analyze data no matter where it resides. The advantage of the Cloud Pak for Data is that it provides the business with a cloud native unified environment that sits on top of any cloud and provides consistent integration, automation, based on a data supply chain and managed AI lifecycle management. Therefore, the Cloud Pak platform provides consistent automation to handle data duplication, easy data search and data quality and manageability across data sources.

Depth of Understanding of the industry

As you begin to move to the industrial cloud it is imperative that your technology partners have a deep understanding of changes in the market along with industry specific regulatory and governance requirements. Without the depth of understanding of the market it is very difficult for a business to adapt emerging technologies such as cloud services and artificial intelligence to the needs of customers. One of the benefits that IBM brings across many important markets is a team of experienced professionals who are able to work directly with customers to transform their IT environment so that it can be ready to compete as markets change.

Conclusion

Smart businesses are enhancing their initial cloud investments with new technologies that prepare them for the future. While it is clear that Google Cloud Platform has many innovative capabilities, it is clear that well-established businesses with a strong customer base need to move quickly and efficiently.

The IBM cloud framework with offerings such as Cloud Paks and cloud solutions for industry offer an open-source based approach that is flexible enough to enable customers to leverage a variety of innovative tools without sacrificing the need to streamline implementation.