



Lindsay Barthram
Director – client intake
Wilson Allen
@WilsonAllenTeam

For more information, visit:
www.wilsonallen.com

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COMMENT

Heading to the cloud? Five key considerations

Just a few years ago, if you had walked into most CIOs' offices and uttered the words 'cloud migration', you would have been met with a furrowed brow and perhaps a disapproving glance.

Fast forward to today, and this naturally risk-averse sector is opening its thoughts to the capabilities and possibilities a cloud-first approach can deliver.

As you consider journeying into the cloud, here are five key considerations to think through to prepare for the ascent.

1. Budgeting and costing models As more solution providers introduce cloud offerings, one of the first things to adjust to is the change to budgeting and costing. Cloud computing enables a shift from large server and operating system Capex costs to a monthly subscription licensing model. Monthly fees may be higher, but they are more predictable than large, intermittent capital investments, levelling cashflow. In addition, you typically only get charged for what you use.

2. Adoption and change management Cloud comes with an ethos of continuous improvement and updates; new features and functions are rolled out continually and incrementally. Users can adjust to small changes frequently, rather than big changes all at once, as part of significant upgrades or new releases. Training doesn't disappear, but the 'small and frequent' approach puts a major tick in the box for easier adoption and change management.

3. IT and infrastructure Turning to IT, the new model of continuous improvement entails a bigger change for support teams than for end users. Maintaining cloud systems requires a different set of skills. Application interoperability and packaging is hugely more important now. The processes of architecting, designing, testing and deploying major systems, which IT teams usually take months to do, will have to be rescaled so that it can be done continually, at much quicker pace.

4. Testing As firms shift to continuous updates, many are considering their deployment strategies and moving towards some level of test automation. Long gone are those extended periods of user-acceptance testing that drew on key business teams for resources, for many weeks or months.

5. Customisation and configuration With the cloud, ability to customise heavily is somewhat removed. Innovation comes from the technology supplier through incremental improvements, rather than the firm having to turn software developer to re-engineer for bespoke needs.

Getting your firm ready for take-off Timing is often a critical component of making any change. The reality is that cloud adoption is gathering steam across the sector. Where does your firm want to be positioned on the curve of technological advantage? With careful planning and a steady approach, you too can introduce the cloud into aspects of your firm's technology stack and gain the many benefits the journey brings. ▴