Developing a long-term **vision for multi-cloud**

Rapidly changing cloud environments require visibility and strategic, deep-rooted partnerships

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WITH THE SHIFT to remote work during the pandemic, agencies lost the controlled office setting with its well-defined IT perimeter. Instead, employees were accessing resources from home networks, and although agencies had no control over those networks, they did have to deal with the impact on security, availability and performance.

As we enter the next phase of our "new normal," agencies are realizing they need to support a hybrid IT environment for the long term so employees can be productive and engaged from any location. Cloud technology plays an essential role. For example, applications that employees could seamlessly use in the office but require additional steps to access from the other side of the firewall are prime candidates for cloud-based services.

Advances in cloud technology are accelerating at a time when agencies' digital transformation journeys are also gaining speed. Today it's common for agencies to have a mix of multiple public cloud solutions along with private clouds they maintain on-site. And with vendors continually adding new services and capabilities, the resulting IT environments become even more complex.

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The need for visibility and best practices

A multi-cloud approach can be a double-edged sword, with benefits and risks. When agencies have access to a cloud environment, it's easy for them to spin up new compute resources or storage solutions. But this flexibility opens up risks in terms of performance and security. Even when an agency is working with public cloud service providers, it's the agency's responsibility to make sure its resources are configured properly. Many data leakage incidents in the cloud are the result of a configuration issue.

Furthermore, in a multi-cloud environment, technologies are created independently of one another and won't always work well together. Agencies must make sure they have the appropriate visibility across multi-cloud environments and on-premises systems so they can understand and manage all aspects of their IT systems. This includes controlling costs and decommissioning purpose-built cloud resources when they are no longer needed.

Developing a comprehensive multi-cloud management strategy starts with having the right tools for visibility. Additionally, agencies should define standards, best practices and baselines for spinning up compute resources and storage buckets so they're configured properly by default. They can develop templates with pre-codified requirements so that when a new compute

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resource is created, it automatically has endpoint detection, for example.

Industry alliances that continue to evolve

According to Gartner's hype cycle, technology development is moving much, much faster than it did in the past. Therefore, agencies need to refresh technology more often and also review policies, procedures, baselines and best practices much more frequently than they have in the past.

Once they understand their constraints and requirements, agencies can find the right technical solution. However, they must look beyond their current challenges and ensure the solution also gives them the flexibility to address future needs. Agencies need to make sure they understand not just where a particular solution is now but where it's going.

Ultimately, agencies should look for strategic partners who will be with them for many years to come and who can become true partners creating long-term solutions. They should ask companies about their roadmaps and how they intend to continue innovating. As agencies consider their own IT roadmaps and long-range transformation goals, they need to make sure their cloud providers will grow along with them. ■

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