

3 TIPS FOR HYBRID INFRASTRUCTURE SUCCESS

As CIO for the city of Minneapolis from 2011 to 2018, **Otto Doll** had a front-row view of the evolution toward hybrid and multi-cloud IT.

“It takes hundreds of applications to run a city or a state today,” says Doll, who is now a senior fellow for the Center for Digital Government. “But the things you’re responsible for aren’t just in your data center anymore. That creates new challenges around governance, how you deliver applications, data privacy, etc.”

Doll recently shared his thoughts on how to thrive in today’s rapidly evolving infrastructure environment:

1 Fully evaluate how and when you’ll need to pull data from the cloud. Moving data in and out of the cloud can be difficult and expensive.

Negotiate with your cloud providers to ensure you can transfer data out of your cloud environments for analytics or other needs without incurring large costs.

“If you don’t pull your data out of the cloud at some point, you’re just putting your legacy data silos into cloud silos,” says Doll. “At certain points you’re going to want to aggregate data from various places to evaluate operations and look for ways to improve city management.”

For example, when Minneapolis implemented a cloud-based 311 system, city leaders realized data from workorders they received could be used to spot emerging infrastructure problems and other issues. But until they could pull that data out of the cloud for further evaluation and comparison with data from other systems, they couldn’t see the larger problems they needed to address.

2 Understand the true cost of on-prem, cloud or hybrid.

There’s no silver bullet when it comes to infrastructure. Determining the best option depends on multiple factors.

“It’s a game of determining if you’ll be transitioning enough work into cloud to make it competitive and give you the type of ROI you need, or whether some things are better left on-prem,” says Doll.

At the same time, government IT leaders are under constant pressure to react to “better deals.” But those deals can come at a price. For instance, private sector rules and processes don’t always fit how government works. If a solution requires departments to drastically change the way they do business, it may not be as cost-effective as expected.

“A lot of government apps and business rules are unique, so a cloud-based solution that fits our needs might not exist,” says Doll. “One of the factors you have to weigh as a CIO is whether or not you can or should make business changes to move to a new platform.”

3 Think from the inside out. At the end of the day, infrastructure exists to empower your workforce.

Designing infrastructure from the end user’s perspective can arm city workers with tools that enable them to work as a team. For example, giving technology to police officers or other mobile employees that makes it easier for them to report problems like a leaking fire hydrant or broken street light can ultimately improve citizen services and quality of life. This has the added benefit of creating a more engaged workforce.

“Technology can have that kind of impact,” says Doll. “We just need to convince people that shifting the approach is worth the effort and the money.”