MOVE TO THE CLOUD FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

Consider the plan, process and people when moving to the cloud.

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AS THEY STRIVE to improve how they deliver technology and services to their customers, government agencies have made cloud computing an essential part of their digital transformation initiatives. One of the biggest benefits of moving to the cloud is agility, which is the combination of speed and smarts. Using the cloud can help an agency accelerate the pace of innovation, incrementally transform business processes, and expand the art of the possible.

Doing all this requires a certain level of dedication and focus. That begins and ends with leadership. To fully leverage the agility the cloud provides, organizations have to be open to new ideas, accepting of change, and willing to confront the unknown.

As agencies delve deeper into cloud computing, however, it's essential they have a plan for how it will support their IT modernization efforts. Agencies need to know how the cloud directly affects their business processes, mission, and the citizens it serves. Will it offer improved service or enhance the mission? Will it save money or improve agility?

Determining this requires some forethought. A good place to start is to develop a paradigm; a discipline or governance model to help an agency examine the opportunities available in the cloud.

One such framework is Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle, which agencies can apply to their digital transformation initiatives to help prioritize certain tasks or projects. For example, a process improvement to positively affect the mission outcome could be prioritized over an efficiency gain that is mission-relevant, but not mission-critical.

Having a framework will ensure agencies are moving to the cloud for the right reasons. It can be overwhelming because organizations are no longer constrained by the particulars of their technology or hardware. It's an

unbounded world, which offers amazing potential. It can also be burdensome because the art of the possible is infinite.

There are other challenges as well, and below are some specific areas upon which agencies should focus their attention. A great place to start is investing in people. There is no better way to ensure digital transformation success than by recruiting, training, and retaining the right talent.

And don't overlook the importance of change management. This is the most delicate and often the most under-invested portion of a transformational effort. There is often a correlation—the harder the challenge, the more impactful the outcome. To really move the needle, it's going to require a lot of change.

It's also critical that agencies understand their technology landscape before they move to the cloud. They should have a strong grasp of the system architectures supporting legacy applications—including insight into institutional knowledge employees may have—so when agencies are ready to make the move, the unknowns don't hold them back.

Finally, don't underestimate the importance of a strong public/private partnership to the success of cloud implementations. An arms-length relationship with a cloud provider is never beneficial. Communication and dialog early in the process is essential. People, relationships and trust must work together to make the whole project succeed.

Ultimately, it's about being diligent and understanding the role cloud service providers play in delivering an agency's capability. Build the appropriate guardrails around agreements with cloud service providers and be vocal about the innovation you want. Self-actualization is really important for a successful outcome.
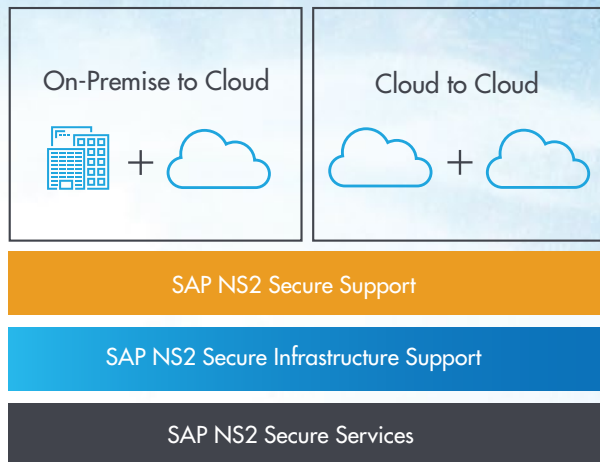
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