

# Outsourcing innovation to the cloud

Choosing a cloud partner based on its commitment to innovation and security will pay untold dividends

**A** S AGENCIES DEEPEN their involvement with cloud technology, they need to look beyond current challenges and focus on business outcomes. Cloud can be part of a much larger transformation, which is why agencies should ask how the technology will play into broader issues and even how it might make activities possible in the future that they don't yet know they will need. In that context, a cloud partner's ability to scale, innovate and provide top-notch security is essential.

Agencies are so busy keeping hardware running and software up-to-date that they often don't have time to think about innovation. But by shifting that responsibility to a cloud service provider, agencies don't need to be concerned about

networks and infrastructure as long as they are making sure that the cloud vendors are meeting their service-level agreements.

The cloud frees agencies to focus on mission-critical activities and other projects they couldn't do before because they didn't have the time or capability from a technology perspective. In other words, the cloud offers agencies the ability to outsource innovation.

## A chance to rethink business processes

Agencies should choose a cloud partner that has the agility to constantly provide innovation in a very secure way. Among other things, such companies should constantly be thinking about user-centered design and how to bring the



**Tom Padgett**  
Senior Vice President, SAP



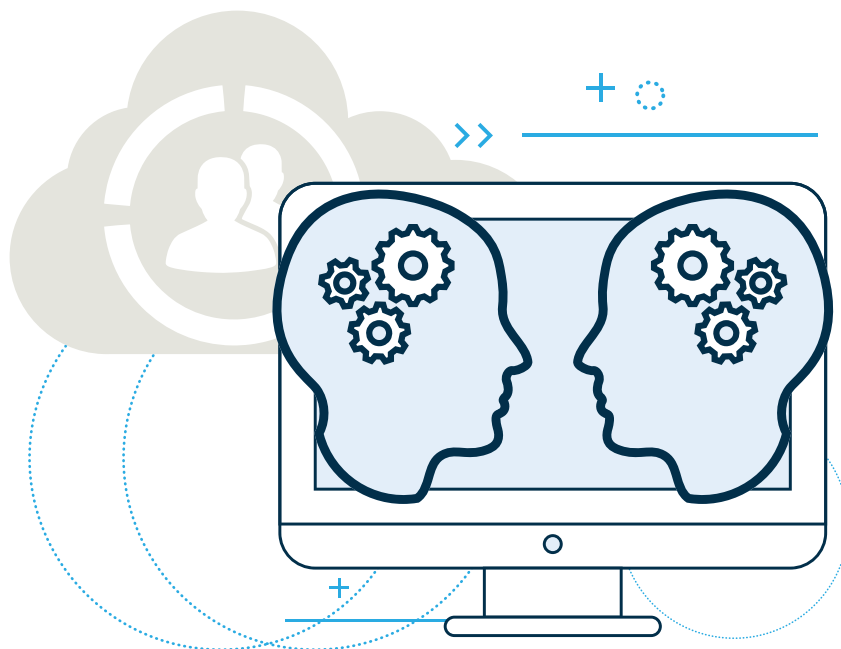
**Laura Grant**  
Head of Digital Innovation, SAP

latest advances, such as natural language processing and chat bots, into enterprise systems without disrupting the mission and agencies' day-to-day operations. And they must be able to do that while keeping everything secure.

In addition, as agencies think about moving applications to the cloud, they should take advantage of the opportunity to evaluate their business processes and workflows. Many of them are cumbersome because they are based on outdated policies or technologies. Those limitations might have been real 20 years ago when the systems were created, but streamlining processes now will save time and money while increasing efficiency. And it will ultimately enhance agencies' ability to keep pace with the public's demand for highly responsive services.

## A matter of trust

Agencies need to be able to trust that their cloud partners take security as seriously as they do. Indeed, it should be integral to a cloud partner's business. Therefore,



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agencies should get to know their cloud service providers' innovation strategy and security posture, and they should take the time to meet with companies' security officers and work together through the FedRAMP approval process if necessary. When they're considering partners or services through FedRAMP, agencies should carefully consider what impact level they need for a particular activity.

The highest level of security inherently limits functionality, so agencies should work with the cloud service provider and the FedRAMP office to figure out which activities truly need to be secured at the highest impact level and which ones can be done at a lower level so that agencies still have security but also flexibility.

Cloud adoption requires collaboration because security and innovation are

constantly changing. Indeed, the pace of innovation has never moved this quickly – and it will never move this slowly again. Therefore, agencies and their cloud partners need to work together to tackle challenges now and into the future. ■

**Tom Padgett** is a senior vice president and **Laura Grant** is head of digital innovation at SAP.



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