

Cloud's top hurdles (and how to overcome them)

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Executive summary

Moving to cloud computing models can be fraught with questions and uncertainty; there doesn't seem to be one clear path to follow. Yet, most companies know that waiting until "the dust settles" with cloud may leave them well behind their competitors.

What should you do to move forward? What should you avoid? If you are struggling with the changing landscape of cloud, this paper offers information and guidance based on what Datalink has seen from early cloud successes and missteps.

Avoiding common hurdles to cloud success

Datalink has advised a number of organizations about their path to cloud. Many have since moved on to successfully embrace technologies and processes that support their emergent private and hybrid cloud architectures.

We've learned a great deal about what to do from these encounters. We've also learned from hearing about others' early cloud missteps. In the next few pages, we list common challenges that IT organizations have experienced with early cloud deployments. These tend to fall into two categories:

1. Hurdles that stall organizations from moving forward with cloud
2. Common missteps with active cloud deployments that lead to failure

Between these two areas, you'll notice some common, repeating themes.

Area #1: Common hurdles that stall cloud projects before they begin

We are often asked to summarize the common hurdles that can stall cloud deployments before they get off the ground. Here's a general list with some high-level advice to help combat them.

1. Being overly reactive by waiting for business users to guide or direct cloud efforts

There's a fine line between catering to the needs of your business users and not being able to meet internal requests geared toward private cloud deployment because you waited too long. Your business users are already moving ahead with their own external cloud plans – likely without your input. Therefore, you need to make proactive, measured moves toward a service-oriented mindset to achieve results for your IT organization.

2. Lack of defined objectives or outcomes

Many cloud projects never get off the ground because they failed to define what they wanted to achieve. Organizations also lack ways to measure project success. Instead of being enamored by the latest new technology or vendor visions about how to move forward with cloud, consider the merits of getting expert advice from third-party analysts or integrators who have vetted technologies, choices, and measurable ways to define and act on a cloud initiative.

3. No cloud roadmap or methodology

Moving to cloud architectures is a journey. How fast you get there depends on your organization's priorities, budget, and IT maturity levels surrounding technologies, architectures, and business processes. We've had significant success with customers who follow our five-phase cloud maturity model.¹ This model and accompanying methodologies provide a roadmap to take you from your present state to a successful, hybrid cloud reality.

Depending on your IT organization's level of urgency and priorities for cloud, we offer many services to assist with your organization's cloud roadmap and methodology. One of them, Datalink Cloud Complete,² offers a fast track to cloud that can cut months off a typical cloud deployment.

4. Not ready for change

Embracing a future cloud paradigm is as much about technology choices as it is about transforming IT processes and the IT organization. To move forward with an early cloud vision, you will need to ultimately embrace emerging, new IT roles for cloud – from cloud architects to cloud operators and managers. You may also need to reorganize IT teams to support the deployment of enabling technologies, such as advanced virtualization and converged infrastructures.³ We offer

Avoiding common hurdles to cloud success (cont.)

various cloud services⁴ to aid in assessment, research, planning, deployment, and ongoing cloud support for these areas.

5. Lack of supporting processes

There is a new set of habits and processes that coincide with a successful hybrid cloud environment. We can advise IT organizations on the best ways to proceed in this area.

6. Analysis paralysis

Choices and decisions can get overwhelming when it comes to cloud. Our advice? You may not have all the answers to ensure a successful conclusion with cloud, but there's no reason to wait indefinitely until all answers become clear. Instead, consider cloud pilots with already-proven use cases. For example, application development and testing are common areas of low-hanging fruit with fast ROI. Success here can also lead to greater confidence and internal support for expansion. Ask a Datalink advisor to share other common success scenarios where early cloud deployments and cloud proofs of concept tend to produce rapid returns.

Area #2: Common missteps that can derail active cloud deployments

Based on a survey recently referenced by GigaOM Research Analyst David S. Linthicum,⁵ many troubled early cloud deployments tend to falter in a few key areas. Here, we offer our take on this list.

1. Lack of metrics to define success

This recurring theme is the same hurdle that can prevent cloud projects from getting off the ground. Here as well, you can't be successful with cloud until you know what metrics constitute ultimate success. In an earlier *VentureBeat* article,⁶ we offer examples to help define metrics and measurable objectives for cloud.

2. Little to no cloud expertise

If you don't have in-house expertise around cloud, now's the time to seek it out. Datalink experts can help get you up to speed at many different levels.

3. Failure to properly consider governance and security

Part of the vetting process for cloud computing paradigms is to assess how your company's own unique regulatory and security needs can still be met. We are accustomed to incorporating these issues in any assessment, design, or implementation plan.

4. Insufficient cloud performance testing

It may seem obvious for any significant IT deployment project, but testing cloud pilots or cloud proofs of concept is critical for success at many stages of deployment.

5. Unmet expectations by cloud service (or provider)

Refer again to items #1 and #4 in this section, as this often relates to insufficient metrics or insufficient testing.

6. Inability to fit cloud into the organization's larger IT architecture

This gets back to the roadmap idea mentioned in the previous list. Your organization's cloud foray must be more than a one-off, experimental effort. A roadmap will help fit cloud efforts into your overall architecture so you can see positive change in every area – from IT business processes and organizational changes to the underpinning technologies that fuel your data center.

7. Too technology focused

Cloud is as much about people and processes as it is about technology. Focusing too heavily on technology without also considering business side changes can doom many cloud projects from the start.

