

CLOUD

Move from 'The Cloud' to 'The Optimal Cloud'

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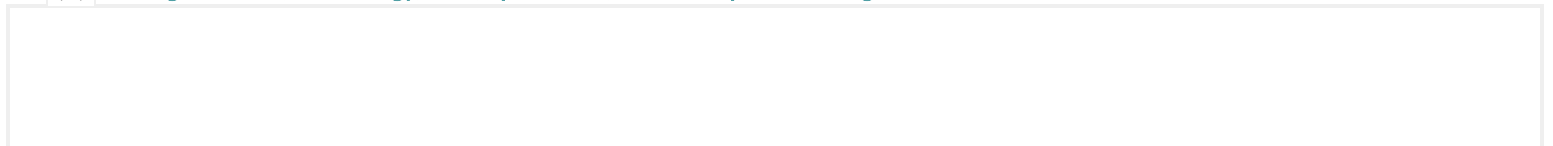
Five Steps to Becoming a Cloud-Ready Company

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By now, cloud computing is a familiar resource at most enterprises. But like any data infrastructure or architecture, good enough won't do, which is why many organizations are looking beyond mere deployment strategies and into full-blown optimization.

However, optimizing the cloud will not proceed along the same track as optimization of traditional data technology. For one thing, nearly all of the functionality in the cloud, at least as far as the enterprise is concerned, happens on the virtual layer or above. So rather than creating optimal environments through advanced technology, the play here is in tighter integration of services and applications. At the same time, optimized platforms are no longer focused solely around enhancing PC or desktop productivity, but on mobile devices and both wired and wireless infrastructure.

According to EY (formerly known as Ernst & Young), [an optimized cloud needs to encompass six key elements: organization, technology, data, operations, audit/compliance and governance](#). These facets will



The takeaway here, though, is that optimization is not merely a product of how the cloud is built and deployed but how, and why, it is being put to use.



This could make planning for the cloud rather tricky considering that **many preconceived notions as to what the cloud is and what it can do are wrong**. A recent survey from Internap Network Services, for example, found that many organizations overemphasize risks before they deploy processes on the cloud, and then find that not only were those assumptions unfounded but that cloud computing actually improves data functionality in unforeseen ways. Security is a key example, with 40 percent of pre-cloud respondents citing it as a top concern, but only 15 percent actually experiencing security-related issues post-deployment. The top issue for most cloud users, in fact, is performance, which is usually a function of poorly optimized environments.

Also, the cloud industry is becoming more fragmented, with more and more services set up to handle particular workloads. Optimization, then, often starts with selecting the right cloud, which is why **cloud brokerage has become an increasingly vibrant industry**. A good broker, in fact, can do a lot more than just steer clients to a cloud provider, but can provide crucial guidance when it comes to migrating data and applications, integrating internal and external resources and recommending the right services and service levels in order to achieve operational goals. It goes without saying, of course, that the more clearly those goals are stated by the client enterprise, the smoother the process and the better the results.

For an odd twist on the subject of cloud optimization, consider a recent infographic from Sungard that **equates preparing for the cloud with preparing for the zombie apocalypse**. In both cases, preparation, strategic development, a thorough plan of operation and a clear understanding of end results (a high-performance data environment in the case of the cloud, basic survival in the case of zombies) are key considerations. When things get real, after all, losing one's ability to function on the digital universe is almost as serious as losing one's brain stem to flesh-eaters.

The optimal cloud, then, is not the product of advanced management software or vendor A vs. vendor B's XaaS platform. It may sound corny, but optimization must come from within, because only you know what you're trying to accomplish. The rest is just a matter of putting the right pieces into place.

