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Move your data to the cloud with confidence

Intelligent data management helps with a successful transition

The cloud has become an essential technology for companies to effectively collect, integrate, and process data. By enabling real-time data analysis, the cloud helps organizations make better decisions by turning data into value. In short, the cloud is where value creation takes place.

But getting data to the cloud so organizations can take full advantage of its benefits can pose a number of challenges. It would be a mistake to think a one-size-fits-all solution is the right choice.

Intelligent data management can help organizations plan for a successful cloud transition to deliver value to the organization by leveraging automation and cloud-based architectures. The cloud allows companies to maintain agility and flexibility, govern data according to new regulations and evolving technologies, and manage and maintain trusted data throughout the organization.
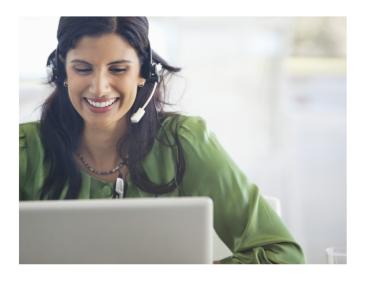
Cloud advantages and challenges

The days of "cloud hesitancy" are over, and a number of drivers have contributed to the growing use of the cloud. Companies say they want to be more agile or need more capabilities to improve their business. Whether it's infrastructure as a service, platform as a service, or software as a service, the cloud model allows organizations to simplify how they consume, own, and take advantage of technology infrastructure.

One of the cloud's greatest benefits is that it allows organizations to access, process, mine, and analyze significantly larger volumes of data with much greater efficiency and speed. For example, real-time financial reporting processing isn't really feasible with

on-premises technology and wasn't even considered just a few years ago. The cloud changed all that.

In addition, a number of technology vendors have made their solutions cloud based, allowing them to offer more platforms and enhanced capabilities. What's more, ERP software providers are shifting to the cloud and the larger providers are becoming cloud based or are transitioning to cloud-native technologies.

But in spite of the advantages of cloud and its increasing ubiquity among technology providers, companies can face a number of challenges as they prepare to extend their business capabilities with cloud technologies.

Many enterprises still store data in legacy on-premises warehouses or platforms and may think that the most efficient and least time-consuming method of transition is moving all data to the cloud at once. While this "lift and shift" process may be appropriate for some organizations, most companies should consider a more strategic approach.

Though clearly tech-focused, data-related cloud modernization is more than an IT project. Since a small percentage of a company's data is accessed most frequently, cloud utilization should be tied to overall data strategy or, even better, a specific business objective or use case.

It's important that the business sponsors and IT work closely in planning out their cloud transformation strategy from the beginning. For example, are we trying to facilitate management reporting? Data visualization? AI learning or modeling? How often will that data be needed? Once those business drivers are identified, the organization can work backward to determine what data sources and domains would be required to meet those objectives. IT leaders can then identify what assets to migrate and efficiently onboard the appropriate data, files, and databases to cloud-based platforms.

Another important consideration is data accessibility, or how the business will be able to access that data once it's in the cloud. The objective is to get the data into not only the cloud but also the hands of the right users so they can generate value for the business.

Organizations must also consider data governance. That includes creating an enterprise data catalog that can be linked to a business glossary for data discovery, naming data owners and stewards so the business can make expedient data decisions, and having master data quality management so users know that the data is reliable and can be trusted.

Data privacy and security will also be essential, so companies will need to develop and deploy robust protocols to ensure data is protected and used properly.

Finally, organizations should avoid being too ambitious with their initial data/cloud projects and rather apply the principle of "think big but start small." In other words, a successful cloud transition will require business leaders to have the big picture in mind but begin with smaller use cases and build and scale out as the transformation moves forward.

Value in the cloud

Once you've moved your data to the cloud, the next question is: How can your business derive value from its cloud investments? What's the recipe for success?

A transition to the cloud carries the expectation that the business function will be able to perform its role more efficiently, with greater agility, and with lower costs. To achieve those goals, however, an organization must determine their purpose for moving a function to the cloud and match the right technology to that purpose.

Therefore, every cloud investment requires a conversation around data integration, data management, and data governance before those investments are actually made. If not, companies can invest in the latest and greatest cloud solution for, say, their sales and marketing, only to find that the application isn't fit for business use—for example, data fields, like customer IDs, are incomplete or inaccurate, or there are questions about security and privacy.

Another important consideration for success is to ensure that users know how to access the data and how they can apply it to their functions. That includes ensuring they know who to go to for help when they have questions around data in the new cloud environment.
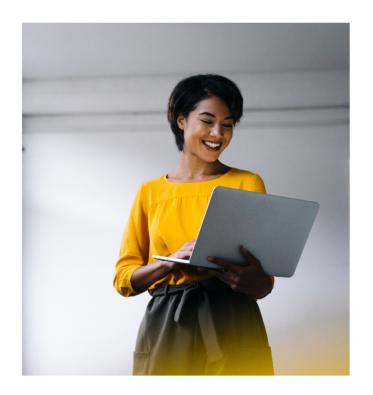
Finally, organizations should ensure that the business leaders—the CEOs, CFOs, and CMOs—and IT are on the same page and are communicating regularly to ensure that issues can be addressed when they occur, rather than down the road.

Final thoughts

Cloud technologies provide companies with the capabilities and agility to turn data into value by driving better decisions and innovation. But choosing the right cloud and data management technologies is critical and should be aligned with an organization's business needs and strategy.

As more and more companies move their data to the cloud, business leaders and IT must work together to identify what assets to migrate, transfer them efficiently, and then ensure user access as well as provide security and privacy.

Intelligent data management can provide the strategies, methodologies, and technologies that can change the way organizations interact with data, enabling data-driven, rapid decision-making. This should lead to greater efficiencies and better outcomes.

Contact us

All of the authors are primarily focused on the chemicals and materials industries and would be pleased to continue the discussion about the new reality for tax and the remote workforce.

Joe Updegrove
KPMG LLP
Managing Director
T: 212-954-3013
E: jupdegrove@kpmg.com

David Fourie
KPMG LLP
Partner
T: 212-954-3366
E: davidfourie@kpmg.com

Susan Wilson
Informatica
VP Data Governance and Privacy
T: 858-699-7221
E: swilson@informatica.com

Peter Ku
Informatica
VP Financial Services Strategy
T: 650-385-5131
E: pku@informatica.com

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