



A DECISION-MAKER'S GUIDE TO HYBRID AND CLOUD COMPUTING

The Process Every Enterprise Should Think Through

Featuring research from

Gartner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
INTRODUCTION	3
Gartner: The Influence of Cloud in Outsourcing, 2010-2011	4
Context – How Did We Get To The Cloud?	8
Overview of Today’s Cloud and Hybrid Services	9
How Do Cloud And Hybrid Solutions Work?	11
How Are Cloud and Hybrid Solutions Really Being Used?	14
Types of Business using Cloud and Hybrid Solutions	17
What Are Your Choices?	18
What Should You Do Next?	18
Conclusion	19
ABOUT RACKSPACE	20

Summary

In recent years Cloud Computing has made the difficult transition from marketing buzzword to credible technology. More and more IT organisations are achieving real cost efficiencies from cloud and hybrid solutions while improving their business agility. At the same time, the wave of high-tech firms rebranding their products as “cloud-enabled” shows no signs of abating, resulting in a complex and sometimes confusing vendor landscape.

The purpose of this guide is to cut through the jargon, give a straightforward explanation of cloud services, and help buyers find a solution that fits their organisations’ needs.

For more help making your choice, please contact Rackspace – the home of Fanatical Support®

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing wave of speculation that Cloud Computing is bringing the most fundamental shake-up of corporate IT in decades. Starting with a lot of undoubted marketing puffery, there is now a growing realisation that cloud computing is real, and is driving real change. What’s more, everyone involved – vendors, consumers, commentators alike – are convinced that this is only the very start of a truly significant evolution towards a computing-as-a-service model.

Given the significance of this trend, there’s surprisingly little agreement of what Cloud Computing actually is. Attempts to agree a single definition have been largely thwarted by vendor efforts to rebrand their existing hardware and software as cloud solutions, or “cloud ready”.

Nonetheless, among industry commentators and analysts there is broad consensus that whatever else it may be, cloud is quick to implement, easy to scale, and offers “pay for what you use” computing.

This ability to grow capacity on-demand, only paying for resources consumed, means that Cloud Computing can enable a step-function increase in your organisation’s business agility. This is the truly compelling driver for cloud adoption – which means that cloud or cloud-hybrid is no longer a question of “if?”, but rather a question of “when?”, “where?” and “how?”

From the Gartner Files:

The Influence of Cloud in Outsourcing, 2010-2011

Cloud computing continued to gain momentum in 2010, and its influence on outsourcing became more material. Providers and buyers of outsourced services must continue to analyze the implications of cloud computing and the actions they need to take in a world in which cloud models increasingly permeate all aspects of IT services development, delivery and management.

Key Findings

- Gartner clients' No. 1 topic of interest in 2010 has been cloud computing, which illustrates just how important this fundamental trend is for IT buyers and sellers.
- Many aspects of cloud computing are at the peak of "inflated expectations."
- Cloud computing is creating major challenges and opportunities for "traditional" outsourcers; many however, appear paralyzed by indecision as to how to proceed.
- Interest in private cloud models also mushroomed in 2010, as CIOs sought to leverage the potential benefits of cloud computing and mitigate concerns about risk and security; many organizations will accelerate their development of private clouds in 2011.

Recommendations

Buyers should:

- Recognize that cloud computing represents a fundamental and irreversible shift in architectures, development and delivery methodologies, and management strategies.
- Understand that while private cloud may be an expedient tactic to deal with the cloud-computing wave, many of the benefits of cloud computing will not be fully realized through an exclusively private cloud-orientated approach.

Providers should:

- Quickly embrace cloud computing in their service strategy. This should include the implementation and provision of public cloud services, and services related to establishing private cloud models for customers.
- Frame the emergence of cloud computing as an opportunity to seize market leadership, not as an irritating disruption to "business as usual."

ANALYSIS

The industrialization of IT services, now encapsulated in the term "cloud computing," and buyers' expectations for outsourcers to deliver on cost take-out goals, while improving the value they deliver, have created a new opportunity to shape the relationship between those who use IT services and those who sell them.

With cloud, providers can deliver specialized services in IT in an industrialized and pervasive way. Users of IT-related services can focus on what the services provide,

rather than on how the services are implemented or hosted. Just as utility companies sell power to subscribers, and telephone companies sell voice and data services, buyers can now use the service contract as the main control mechanism. This model differs from the labor-based, licensed-based, on-premises models that have dominated the IT industry for so long. This trend has such a significant impact¹ that all market participants must be fully engaged to understand its effect on and potential to disrupt their operations and business.

What Happened in 2010

Software-as-a-service (SaaS) deployments have continued to grow. Although many suppliers' median deployment size is still relatively small (for example, salesforce.com's median deployment size is still less than 50 users per client), we increasingly see contract sizes in the thousands or even tens of thousands (for example, a 420,000-seat contract with Siemens by the HR SaaS vendor SuccessFactors).

Organizations have found they were using more SaaS than they'd realized. An increasing number of large and midsize enterprises tell Gartner that they have a sizeable number of different SaaS applications in use within their organizations. It is not uncommon for organizations to deploy more than 20 different SaaS applications across the enterprise.

Platform as a Service (PaaS) has gained substantial momentum. Some leading SaaS vendors are selling the idea that their application is simply one component of a broader strategy to offer customers a hosted application development platform. PaaS, while still in its infancy, is generating great interest among Gartner clients and is set to become a new competitive battleground among pure-play SaaS providers and incumbent Tier 1 independent software vendors.

Infrastructure as a service (IaaS) offerings have been red hot. Client interest in offerings from vendors such as Amazon, Google and Terremark exploded in 2010, as organizations rushed to experiment with this model and began threading it into their systems infrastructure environments.

IT outsourcers have become more cloud-orientated. Incumbent Tier 1 and 2 IT outsourcing vendors have stepped up their efforts to embed cloud infrastructure elements into their traditional dedicated one-to-one outsourcing contracts.

What We Expect in 2011

Adoption of public and private cloud computing will continue to increase. We are moving beyond philosophical discussions of why interest in cloud computing is occurring and whether the cloud wave is real. In 2011, we will see organizations focus on strategic and tactical considerations of how to successfully deploy and use cloud concepts.

The anti-cloud backlash will gain market attention. Expect high-profile press articles to start “bashing” cloud computing, quoting those whose use of cloud computing has generated unimpressive results. IT services providers and out-sourcers that have fallen behind the cloud wave will happily join this chorus. Organizations will relabel shared services models as private cloud. Many organizations that have developed shared-service models will claim that these are private clouds in an effort to be seen to be “in tune with the times.”

IT outsourcers will accelerate development of cloud portfolios. IT out-sourcers will broaden and deepen their cloud-related portfolios offering services for customers developing private clouds, management of public cloud services, and most important, the provision of their own public cloud services.

Use of IaaS in outsourced ERP will become more visible. Most IT executives haven’t even considered using IaaS in outsourced ERP, but a small percentage of the outsourced ERP market will implement IaaS. This will mark an important psychological shift in how organizations think about their core application management strategy.

What You Need to Know

Cloud computing represents a radical new set of principles and practices that are upsetting “business as usual” computing strategies for the better. The ideas of paying for what you use, flexibility in contracts and commitments and innovation in ease-of-use are all clearly advancements in sourcing. These innovations, however, are largely coming from new vendors, which is where the revolutionary nature of cloud computing originates. Incumbent outsourcing vendors, which have been slow to introduce innovation while dominating the market, are on the defensive as they react to these trends, and this defensive stance hampers their ability to take advantage of these new ideas.

Advice to Buyers

Experiment with the cloud: Discover where it is already taking place in your organization. This is the only way you will be able to gain insight into whether cloud models make sense for your organization.

Leverage the innovating potential of the cloud: Identify new commercial opportunities that are emerging due to cloud computing.

Balance strategy with tactics: Develop an overall cloud-computing strategy; create a multidisciplinary task force to create consensus on the use of cloud services.

Ensure that IT leads: Business units will not wait for IT to deploy cloud if the CIO/IT leadership does not appear to be taking on its leadership role. IT must take the leadership role to advance the new cloud-computing model and address integration challenges.

Advice to Providers

Align your portfolio strategy with the irreversible changes in the cloud:

Adapt your offerings to evolving market conditions, but be aware that they present opportunities (increased profitability) and threats (new competition and reduced revenue).

Back innovation offerings with tangible and measurable objectives: Link innovation to real business outcomes and communicate this clearly. Be ready and willing to educate clients about the level of innovation that you have or will deliver during the outsourcing engagement.

Align operations with 21st century IT principles: Outsourcing vendors must accelerate their efforts to develop capabilities around principles of reuse, automation, standardization, specialization, templates, and globalization. Without these changes, their offerings will become less relevant over time.

Showcase your ability to address key buyer concerns: Understand that security, compliance, integration and architecture are top priorities for established and prospective clients. Ensure that your cloud offerings and services address these concerns.

Evidence

¹“Forecast: Public Cloud Services, Worldwide and Regions, Industry Sectors, 2009-2014” provides Gartner’s sizing and forecast of cloud services at a worldwide, regional, and country level for 2009 through 2014. The forecast shows that the worldwide cloud services market will be worth \$68.3 billion by the end of 2010, and that by 2014 the market will grow to be worth \$148.8 billion. This represents a compound annual growth rate of 20.5%.

This research is part of a set of related research pieces. See “Gartner on Outsourcing, 2010-2011” for an overview.

Gartner RAS Core Research Note G00208940, Ben Pring, 1 December 2010

Context – How Did We Get To The Cloud?

The Tyranny Of The Forecast – Traditional IT Planning

For decades, IT organisations have been driven by forecasts and budgets. The forecast describes the expected demand for IT in the next planning period – whether based on extrapolations of historical trends, or forecast levels of sales demanded by the business, or numbers of users that the business hopes to serve. Based on that forecast, the IT organisation would agree a budget with its sources of funding, and determine its requirement for Data Centre, Hardware and Software, i.e. the IT function's capital expenditure needs. The same forecast would also determine the IT function's budget for staff salaries, hiring, and training, i.e. the opex budget.

Fallible Forecasts

Although the theory is unarguable, the forecast has proved difficult to deliver in practice. Even highly experienced CIOs find it difficult to get the forecast right – and from our research¹ more than half of IT decision-makers admit to getting it wrong.

The consequences of getting the forecast wrong can be serious. Forecast too low, and higher-than-expected demand is likely to overwhelm your infrastructure or service. Forecast too high, and part of your infrastructure (and probably your team), is likely to be running under-utilised or even idle. Either way, the consequences of getting the forecast wrong are likely to be serious – for your IT function, for your business or for your career.

The Inefficiency Of Perfect Planning

One of the more frustrating aspects of traditional IT planning has always been the inherent inefficiency of the process. Even when an IT function is able to correctly estimate the peak demand for their services, and build a solution to fit, the result is rarely efficient. Most organisations experience some degree of seasonality, often with quite significant demand spikes. In traditional IT environments, building infrastructures capable of handling spikes in demand has usually meant that IT infrastructure is under-utilised most of the time.

The Quest For On-Demand Computing

Since the 1960s, it has been suggested that one day IT could be delivered as a utility service². The first credible initiatives towards IT as a utility service were the Application Service Providers (ASPs) of the late 1990s. These services ultimately failed to take-off, largely due to the narrow-band data capacities prevalent at that time. Nonetheless these services forged the way for the cloud-based software (or Software-as-a-Service) as a new but legitimate service delivery model. Now in 2010, cloud-based applications have achieved success with cloud-based CRM

¹Survey of over 400 IT Decision Makers in US and EMEA, at organisations with between 100 and 500 staff, commissioned by Rackspace from independent agency LoudHouse

²John McCarthy MIT centennial speech, 1961.

(e.g. Salesforce.com), cloud-based email (e.g. Rackspace Email), and cloud-based office suites (e.g. Microsoft Office 365, Google Docs).

The next significant evolution towards utility computing was the frenzy of interest in Grid Computing, which moved into the public eye with the Seti@home project between 1999 and 2001. This technology promised the ability to share computational tasks across a geographically dispersed pool of compute resource. This technology was successful, but limited to specific niche markets that had requirements for large and complex calculations – “Monte Carlo” simulations for the Financial Sector, analysis of geophysical data for mineral exploration, analysis of radio signals for signs of alien intelligence, etc.

However, the real breakthrough – compute power available on-demand, over the Internet - came in 2006, when Amazon and Rackspace both launched their first cloud services. These services set the pattern for today’s thriving cloud computing sector.

Overview of Today’s Cloud and Hybrid Services

Public Cloud

Public Cloud is in many ways the purest expression of the original cloud computing concept. Public clouds provide compute resource that is available within minutes over the Internet, and that can be scaled up and down to meet the user’s demand. The leading public clouds enable users to provision (and de-provision) cloud resources automatically, by use of Application Programming Interfaces (“APIs”). This effectively means that cloud provisioning is integrated into the user’s applications. These public clouds are therefore a very good match for organisations that have highly seasonal or unpredictable demand for IT resources. The very nature of public clouds means that they are by definition only offered by service providers.

Private Cloud

Private cloud is really nothing more than a new name for a relatively mature technology – virtualisation.

In one of the more blatant instances of rebranding, vendors of traditional IT systems have renamed traditional on-premise IT infrastructures as “private clouds”. On-premises private cloud infrastructures are certainly private (they are, in most cases, owned, operated and housed by the organisation that has exclusive use of them). The extent to which they truly fulfil the criteria of “cloudiness” is much more open to debate.

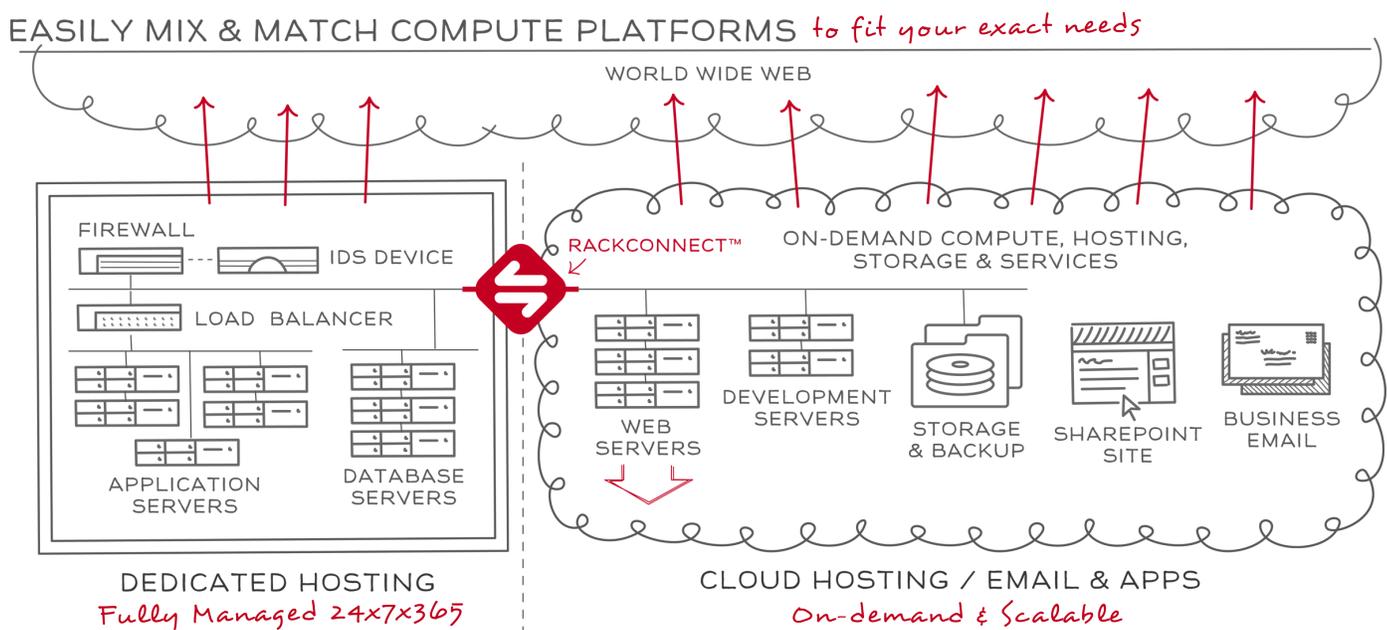
On-premise solutions are rarely quick or easy to deploy (anecdotally, one major bank admitted a two month lead-time to provision a single incremental server – simply due to the level of administration involved). Scaling up and down is also

not an option, since the dedicated infrastructures in which private clouds are delivered have finite, predefined capacity. In their defence, Private Clouds do provide considerably more flexibility than un-virtualised infrastructures, since they can be reconfigured relatively easily to reassign available resources where they are most needed.

Hosted private clouds are similar in most ways to on-premise private clouds, but with extra levels of flexibility. The shorter provisioning times that Hosting Providers offer mean that hosted private clouds can usually achieve a shorter time to market than on-premises private clouds. Hosting providers can also add incremental capacity to private clouds within a few days, in contrast to the weeks or months typically required for expanding on-premise solutions. And of course hosted private clouds have the same service and commercial flexibility as traditional managed hosting, including zero capital costs, and well defined service level agreements.

Hybrid

Hybrid clouds are straightforward combinations of cloud solutions and traditional infrastructures. There are several combinations possible, depending on the design goals of the overall solution. What they all have in common is the desire to marry together the specific advantages of the traditional infrastructure chosen (virtualised or not) and the cloud solution (on- or off-premises). Many organisations are attracted by the ability to combine the cost effectiveness and scalability of Public Cloud with the security and customisation of dedicated servers or Private Cloud. Hybrid is also an attractive option for organisations that need a fast scaling and flexible website but don't want to compromise on security for their data, have specific regulatory requirements (e.g. PCI compliance) or have highly transactional applications or databases.



Source: Rackspace

How Do Cloud And Hybrid Solutions Work?

Virtualisation – A Key Cloud Concept

Virtualisation is the technology that uses software to divide physical servers into multiple virtual servers or Virtual Machines (“VMs”). This virtualising software is called a hypervisor, and it provides a very light-weight operating system specifically designed only to enable virtualisation. Various vendors offer hypervisors today, including VMware’s ESX, Microsoft’s Hyper-V, the opensource KVM and Xen, as well as commercially supported variants of their Open Source siblings, such as Citrix XenServer. All these hypervisors share the common goal of ensuring that each virtual server exists completely independently from the others, and is designed to fully replicate the operations of an equivalent sized physical server.

Private Clouds

Private Clouds are delivered on servers belonging (or rented) to a single organisation, and those servers are then virtualised to provide VMs that are available for use exclusively to that organisation.

Prior to virtualising, most servers are typically under-utilised – industry estimates indicate that un-virtualised enterprise servers typically operate at 10-15% utilisation. The process of virtualising overcomes that inefficiency, because virtualisation permits multiple underutilised physical servers to be replaced by VMs that perform exactly the same tasks. Since multiple VMs can co-exist on a much smaller number of virtualised physical servers, the utilisation and efficiency of the virtualised infrastructures are often significantly better than un-virtualised systems. This process is commonly known as server consolidation or physical to virtual migration (often abbreviated to “P2V”).

The physical servers on which Private Clouds are delivered are very similar to traditional high-end enterprise servers. This means that in addition to the efficiency gains inherent to virtualisation, hosted private cloud is able to offer the level of security and reliability of a Managed Hosting solution. As hosted private cloud runs on dedicated hardware, it is typically backed by comprehensive SLAs, dedicated account and support teams and supported 24/7/365.

The Public Cloud

Virtualisation is also the power behind most Public Cloud solutions – whether using hypervisors to provide massively scalable banks of virtual servers on demand, or virtualising a disk array for storage purposes.

Public Clouds get their name because they are built on shared, public, hardware as opposed to the dedicated infrastructures that make up Private Clouds. The economies of scale that shared hardware gives the hosting providers enables them to deliver them at a much lower cost point than Private Clouds.

Most Public Cloud providers offer their services with utility-based pricing, so that customers only pay for the Cloud resources used, usually calculated hourly. Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) are also another attractive feature of many Public Clouds. These APIs can be used to automate some functionality that Cloud Hosting providers' control panels offer. These can be used to automatically create new servers to react to demand, and to scale back down again when the demand reduces.

The combination of the utility pricing and scalability makes Public Cloud solutions an ideal fit for young businesses or applications with irregular traffic levels.

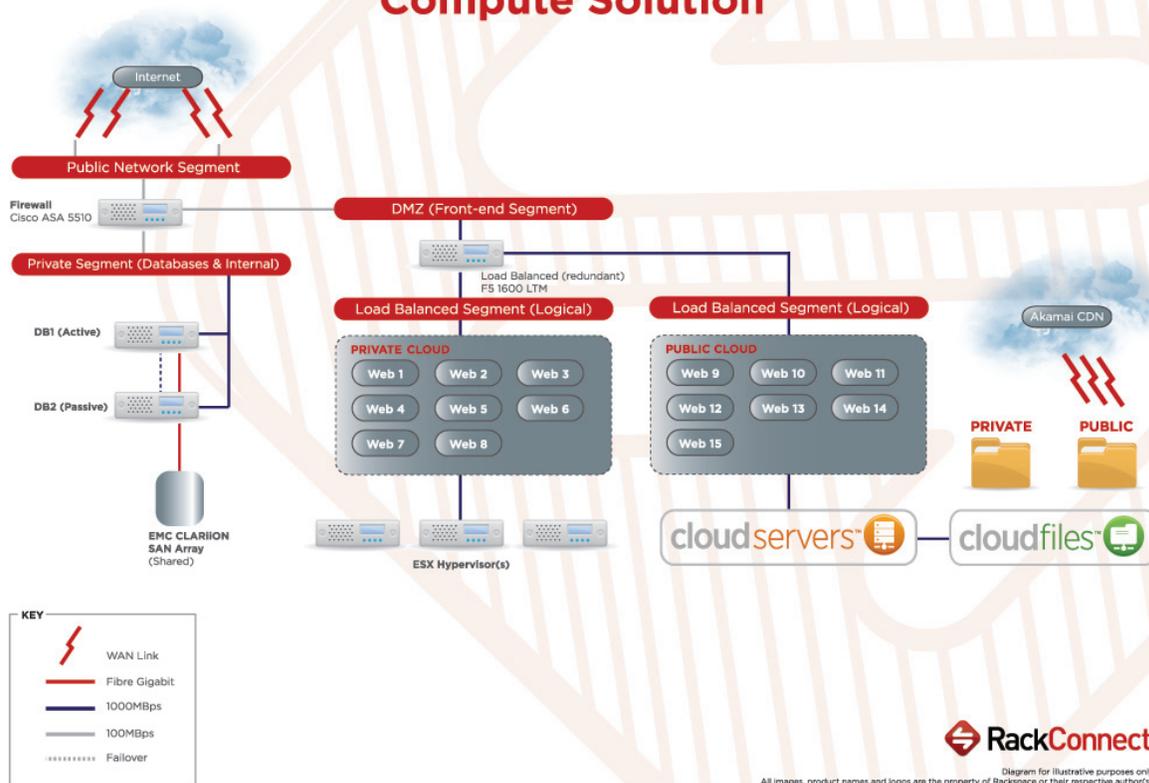
Hybrid

There are strong indications from the market that hybrid solutions are going to be more popular than either standalone public or private cloud.

Hybrid solutions connect clouds with dedicated solutions, in an attempt to offer the "best of both worlds". The precise solution used to make the connection varies. The lowest cost hybrid solutions are in effect dedicated IT infrastructures connected via virtual private networks ("VPNs") over the Internet to a cloud solution. These VPN-based hybrids are inherently limited by the relatively slow (megabit) speeds of business Internet connections, which are much slower than the high (gigabit) speed connections normally used within data centres.

High performance hybrid solutions are really only possible if the public cloud and the dedicated infrastructure are located within the same data centre. This enables the hybrid connection to be made at true data centre speeds, typically using load balancing and bridging devices to make and manage the connections.

RackConnect creates a Seamless Compute Solution



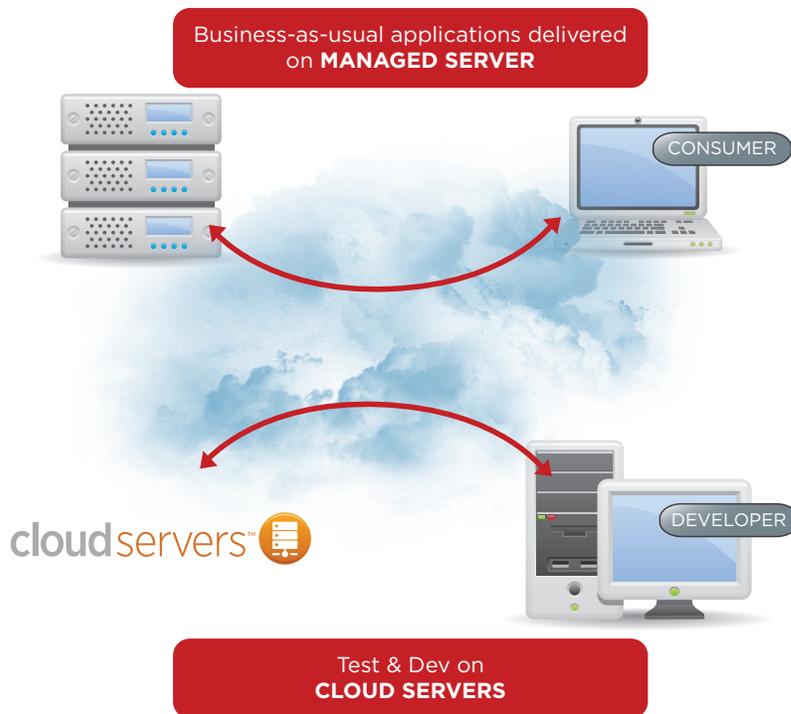
Source: Rackspace



Diagram for illustrative purposes only. All images, product names and logos are the property of Rackspace or their respective author(s).

Sample Rackspace Hybrid configuration, combining Managed Hosting with Cloud Servers and Cloud Files

How Are Cloud and Hybrid Solutions Really Being Used?

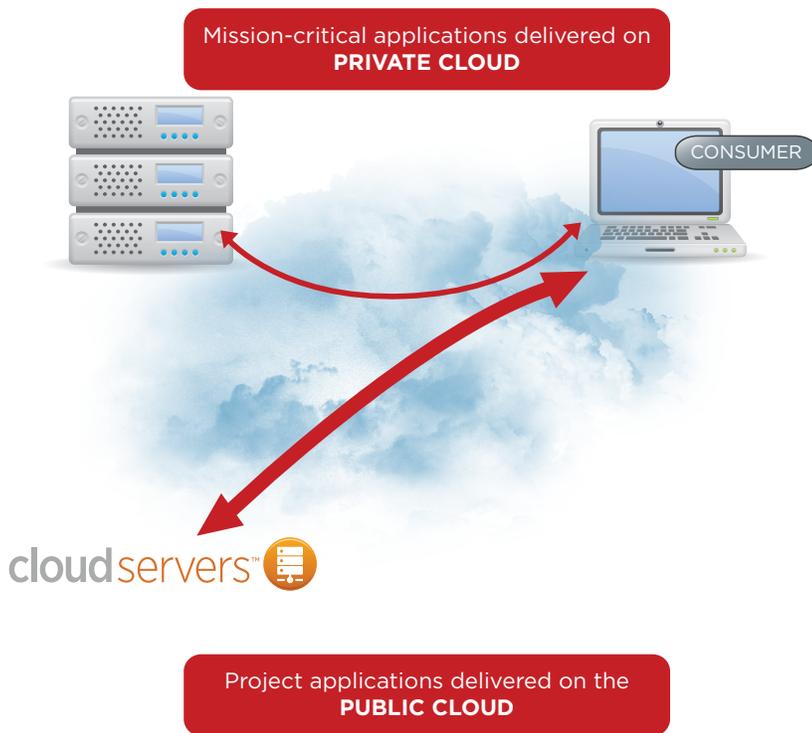


Source: Rackspace

Public Cloud and Hybrid for Test & Development

Organisations of every size and sector have taken to the Public Cloud for test and development of applications and User Acceptance Testing (UAT). Virtual servers on the Public Cloud can be provisioned on-demand to enable code tests. Once testing is complete, the Virtual Machine, or VM, can be deleted, and no further costs are incurred. VMs can also be backed up and stored indefinitely on the Cloud, allowing clones of servers to be simply provisioned at any time. This is a much more flexible and cost-effective approach than has been possible previously with dedicated test & development infrastructures.

Hybrid solutions are well suited to test and development scenarios, where organisations run their production environments on dedicated hosting or Private Clouds, and have their test and development and/or UAT running in an interconnected Public Cloud environment. This allows a finished product to be simply uploaded directly from the Public Cloud development environment directly to the production environment.



Source: Rackspace

Public Cloud and Hybrid for Projects

The commercial flexibility of public cloud makes it ideal for projects that are either time-limited or discretionary in nature. Discretionary projects that would be impossible to justify on a dedicated infrastructure become viable because of the low costs of public cloud. Short term projects become affordable using public cloud, because there's no contracted term and no minimum commitment.

Hybrid also works well for organisations that regularly need to host applications or websites for short-term projects. They can retain their core offering on dedicated infrastructure in a Private Cloud, and utilise an interconnected Public Cloud solutions to bring project applications or website online swiftly.

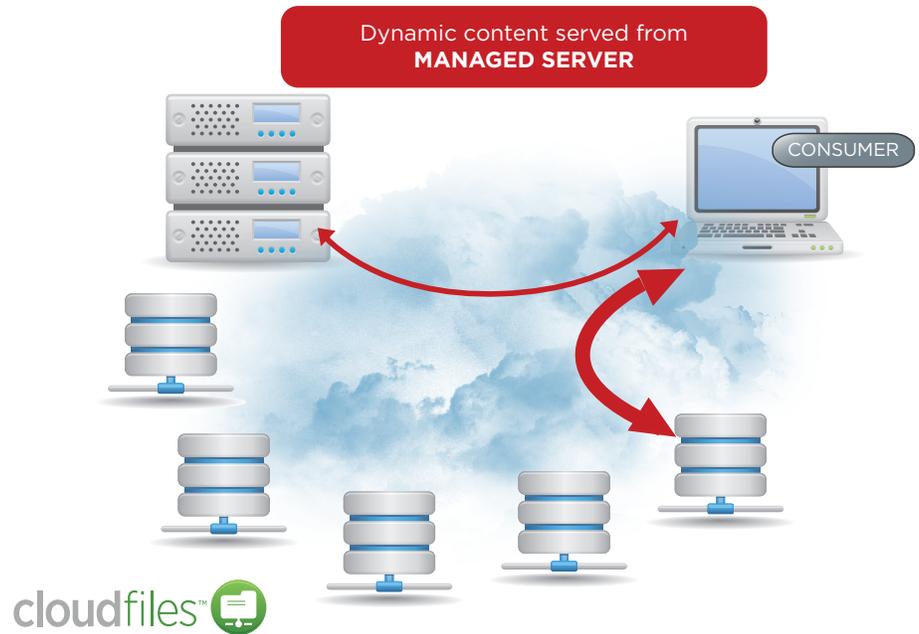
Minimal Entry Costs

For any organisation with limited funding, Public Cloud has the benefit of zero or low up-front charges.

Massive Scaling

Public clouds have the benefit of immense scalability. All leading public clouds (including Rackspace Cloud Servers and Cloud Files) come with Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), to enable cloud resources to be provisioned automatically by customer applications. Delivering applications and sites this way ensures that whatever the load, the service is never impacted by demand – this use has been tested extensively by highly spiky sites such as those promoting popular musical concerts, television shows and political blogs.

Static Content Archives and Rich Media



Source: Rackspace

Cloud Storage is an extremely cost-effective solution for organisations that need to keep large volumes of data, either as an internal archive (e.g. for document management), or as an internet resource (e.g. an image library). Static content with undemanding performance requirements is ideally suited to cloud storage because of the storage and bandwidth charges are so affordable. Many Cloud Storage solutions (such as Rackspace Cloud Files) come with built-in Content Distribution Network (CDN) functionality, often at no additional cost. This makes serving files to global users much more cost efficient. CDN providers have data centres in major cities across the world, which can be used to store, or cache local copies of files being accessed over the Internet. End users in cities close to CDN data centres are able to access these files at higher speeds than downloading them from a central, single server.

Types of Business using Cloud and Hybrid Solutions

Public Cloud and Hybrid for Start-ups

Public cloud has become the almost automatic choice for young businesses, because it is so well suited to the very special environment of start-ups.

Public cloud is consumed and paid for by the hour, with no upfront capital requirements – which works very well for start-ups which are typically surviving on very modest seed investments. Public clouds are capable of scaling rapidly, which aligns with the typical start-up plans for rapid growth. Public clouds have list prices and fixed terms and conditions, avoiding the need for legal review and commercial negotiation. And finally, public cloud is the most cost-effective way for start-ups to make use of industrial-strength data centre facilities.

Hybrid solutions are also ideal for start-up businesses with compliance requirements, ecommerce solutions or sensitive data. In these situations, start-ups can minimise the amount of dedicated hardware that they have by only hosting the bare minimum on dedicated hardware or Private Cloud, and then utilising the Public Cloud for all other business requirements.

Public Cloud and Hybrid for Enterprises

More enterprise organisations are turning to Public Cloud products to allow them to react to customer and internal requirements faster than internal IT departments usually allow. Whether creating test and development servers, standing up new departmental servers, building proof of concepts or setting up internal applications such as chat, ticketing or knowledgebase systems, Public Cloud gives enterprise organisations more flexibility. Software as a Service (SaaS) applications are also increasingly being used by enterprise organisations to give teams access to software packages that are not readily available internally.

Hybrid solutions can be used by Enterprise organisations wishing to host business critical applications (such as CRM, accounting, email, etc.) on dedicated hardware, but still retain the ability to react swiftly to IT demands in a flexible manner.

What Are Your Choices?

Cloud Solutions

The quickest and easiest way to get started with cloud is to simply sign up. The leading cloud providers allow subscribers to get online within minutes, allowing you to experience their services at first hand. Since there is no minimum commitment, you can keep your costs to a few hours of usage - a few pennies or cents. Using the cloud first hand allows you to test the convenience of cloud solutions, and check the level of service and support that you can expect from the various providers.

Hybrid Solutions

Organisations seeking their first production implementation using the cloud, often choose to segregate the new cloud elements from their existing infrastructure. This ensures the stability and security of existing services while the new cloud services are implemented. This provides reassurance to internal stakeholders that critical enterprise services will not be compromised, and allows you to explore how your business can best leverage the flexibility and scalability of the cloud.

Fully Integrated Hybrid Solutions

As organisations become more confident in their use of the cloud, they increasingly implement fully integrated solutions. These solutions typically use the cloud wherever this is possible (to benefit from the flexibility and cost advantages of cloud) and use dedicated only where cloud is not possible. Dedicated elements are most typically chosen for reasons of compliance, performance, security or to ensure that enterprise applications retain support. The most sophisticated hybrid solutions make use of cloud APIs to automate the connection, so that cloud resources can be scaled up and down in line with demand.

What Should You Do Next?

If you and your organisation are not already using the cloud, you need to get cloud experience within your team as soon as possible. In spite of the hype, cloud is truly a game-changing evolution in IT. Organisations that use the cloud will be nimbler and more efficient. If you don't take advantage of this, your competitors will.

Your first step should be a careful evaluation of what you really need from your IT infrastructure. This should include an analysis of the power and performance requirements of your applications, to help guide what initial size of infrastructure

you will need. Don't forget that most cloud services are much easier to scale up and down than physical infrastructures would be – so try to quantify the performance you need today, rather than the performance you expect you will need tomorrow.

You should also carry out a review of your security policy confirming what you're protecting and who you're protecting against. It's important to be honest with yourself over this – many organisations over-specify their security requirements for the cloud, overlooking areas of non-compliance on their existing infrastructures. It's also still the case that your most sensitive applications and data may be better suited to dedicated servers than to a public cloud solution, but remember that this does not preclude using cloud solutions for other elements of your IT. Increasingly organisations are deploying hybrid solutions – dedicated where required for compliance, and cloud for the rest.

Finally you should consider what level of technical support your organisation needs from your cloud provider. There is a broad range of cloud services in the market, ranging from unsupported self-service options, to fully supported high-service options. The right choice for you depends on the extent of your internal resources and expertise – your ideal partner will be able to cover any gaps you may have, lightening the load on your internal teams and allowing them to focus on more value-add activities for the business.

Conclusion

Cloud and cloud-hybrid solutions are fairly new and still quite complex. Finding the right solution and the right provider is important - the challenge is still to ensure the right performance, security and support.

Fortunately all leading cloud services have low hourly prices, so our overwhelming recommendation is to spend a few pounds on test accounts, and “shop around”. A few days using cloud services will quickly reveal how responsive the provider's phone support is, how quickly they can deliver a hybrid dedicated + cloud solution, and how helpful their design engineers can be.

In the end, your choice depends upon your needs. The one certainty is that for the great majority of organisations, cloud and hybrid solutions will play an increasingly significant role for years to come – so get testing!

Source: Rackspace

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