



Questions to Ask When You're Considering Cloud





Such a statement sounds current, trendy and tech-savvy, the sign of a healthy, forward-looking company.

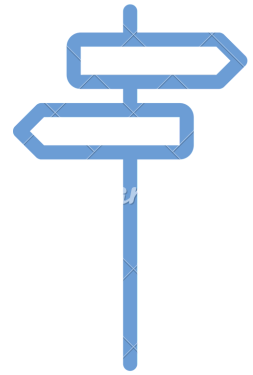
It might also sound rather daunting, confusing and vague. After all, moving to the cloud is no simple task. Simply saying you want to move to the cloud, choosing an all-in-one cloud product and then expecting a quick, easy transition is unrealistic.

This transition requires months of preparation and research, perhaps more so than any other system overhaul to date because it also entails getting rid of hardware. If your company is considering a move to the cloud, take the time to plan your migration carefully.

Here are 5 key questions to consider when planning such a major move:

- Where are you moving?
- What all are you moving?
- When is the best time to move?
- How will you afford the move?
- Why are you moving?

Which cloud: Where are you moving?



Where exactly do you want to move? Simply saying “the cloud” is not enough as there are several cloud-based options from which to choose. That’s like saying you want to move to Europe without designating a country, much less a city.

First, you will need to determine the best cloud environment for your company. There are three main cloud environments:

- **Public cloud:** In a public cloud environment, a vendor typically has multiple tenants sharing the same services that are accessed via the Internet. Email is the most prolific example. This type of solution works well for small businesses but might not be a viable option for a company that has strict regulatory compliance requirements.
- **Private cloud:** Large enterprises and government entities often gravitate toward a private cloud solution. This requires significant IT resources because they are responsible for the solution themselves, but it also gives them the freedom to customize the solution and maintain security. We work with organizations in Minneapolis that offer private cloud services; most want to do all or almost all of their clients’ servers and software.
- **Hybrid cloud:** A hybrid cloud allows, as you might guess, a combination of the two. Hybrid cloud can also refer to a company’s ability to connect either of the cloud environments with an on-premise system.



Next, you will need to choose how best to deploy your chosen cloud option. Here are the three most common cloud deployment models:

- Software as a Service (SaaS)
- Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)
- Platform as a Service (PaaS)

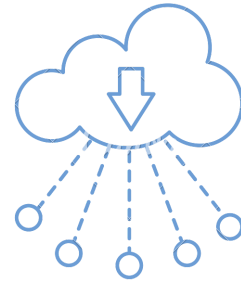
Perhaps the best description we've heard to differentiate between the three is likening cloud computing to the pizza restaurant industry.

In that analogy, **SaaS** is a sit-down pizza restaurant where someone else does all the heavy lifting of managing the software. No hardware is used, and users access the software through an online subscription, making this a public cloud solution.

IaaS is a take-and-bake pizza where your IT team manages the applications, data and operating system but your partner is responsible for the servers and network.

PaaS is pizza delivery, where you develop and manage your applications in a cloud environment someone else created.

All-in-one cloud: What are you moving?



You don't necessarily have to rip out every piece of your company's operations to move to the cloud. The transition doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing endeavor.

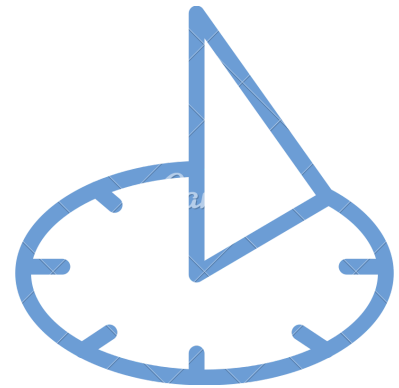
As mentioned earlier, you can opt for a hybrid option that allows your company to maintain key systems on-premises while moving others to a cloud solution.

Consider whether there are any of your current operating systems that you want to keep as is. For example, a highly customized solution unique to your industry might be difficult to replace. Similarly, you might be hesitant to put even more money into modifying a solution you invested in heavily just a few short years ago.

When determining what to move (or leave alone), make sure you are factoring in any integrations necessary between systems. Will moving one or more to the cloud adversely affect that connection, or can data still be shared between the systems as needed?

Good cloud software offers both strong import-export capabilities and strong automated web services to easily share data back and forth.

Timeline: When is the best time to move?



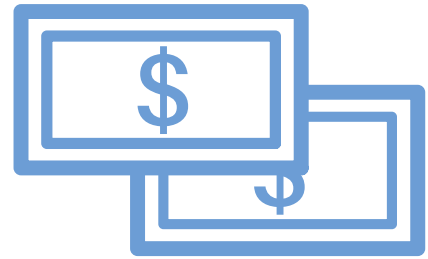
Once you know what you want to bring to the cloud, determine when you want to make the transition. This does not have to be done all at once.

Are there systems you want to move immediately but others that can wait a couple years? Depending on the complexity of your company's operations, you might choose to transition to the cloud in stages.

Prioritize what piece of the company's operations you want to move to the cloud first. If possible, start with areas that are less dependent on other technology or where you are likely to get the biggest return on your investment in the cloud.

To make the process as smooth as possible, plan the entire transition before you begin the first migration. Enlisting the help of a software provider who has assisted other companies with a migration to the cloud can be extremely beneficial here.

Budgeting for Cloud: How much will it cost?



Moving costs money, whether you're moving buildings or transitioning your company's infrastructure to the cloud. Setting up your system(s) in the cloud will require significant time and resources.

In addition to the cost of the actual implementation, you will also need to consider the change in ongoing costs. Your monthly bills will look very different once you implement a cloud-based system because you will likely have monthly fees that you did not have before.

However, you will also be reducing the risk of disaster, eliminating the work of maintaining servers and software and getting rid of the expense of buying new hardware every 3-5 years.

Moving to the cloud signals a transition from capital expenses to operating expenses. In the cloud, IT expenses move from occasional major purchases to smaller but more frequent recurring expenses. This means you will need to rethink the way you budget for IT needs.

For example, capital expenses and operating expenses are often taxed differently. While a capital asset depreciates over time, an operating expense does not.

When you do move to the cloud, be sure to schedule regular audits of the system. Often, companies continue to pay for services or apps that they are no longer using or forget to reduce the number of users during slower business months.

Considering ROI: Why move to the cloud?



Any big move will require an investment of your time, money and resources. Companies will sometimes look at the increased monthly cost that comes with moving to the cloud and immediately stop looking.

That's a short-sighted approach. While your monthly costs might increase, your long-term major purchases will decrease.

With a cloud option you will no longer have to worry about costly hardware purchases in the next five years, and you can be assured that your system will always be current.

Moving your company's operations from on-premise systems to the cloud is not the same as turning on a switch. It will take time and effort. You will likely experience some headaches and bumps on the way.

Done properly, migrating your operating systems to the cloud can lead to a more efficient, healthier company in the future.

Ready to move?

Boyer can help

Boyer & Associates is in the top 5% of Microsoft partners taking customers to the cloud. We can help you every step of the way.

But don't just take our word for it. Check out Microsoft's customer stories for this highlight of just one of our many successful migrations:

<https://customers.microsoft.com/en-us/story/812025-farnamstreet-banking-and-capital-markets-dynamics365>

Request your own cloud migration evaluation:

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