

WHAT ROLE SHOULD THE CLOUD PLAY TODAY?

Security concerns have risen, but Kevin Beasley, CIO of VAI, argues that, when done right, migrating to the cloud offers multiple benefits.

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Kevin Beasley, CIO of ERP solutions provider VAI, based in Ronkonkoma, New York, is aware of the security concerns around cloud migration. But he argues that the benefits far outweigh the challenges—and that having a cloud strategy can actually enhance your security profile.

Beasley spoke with StrategicCIO360 about the challenges and pluses of cloud migration, how to handle both and why you need to make sure your provider is fully transparent about costs.

How can CIOs transition from on-premise to the cloud seamlessly?

Businesses should create a cloud migration strategy that helps align the migration process with their specific business needs and goals. Consider conducting an impact assessment of your applications

and workloads beforehand to assess any risks and then build and implement a clear strategy. Commit to developing this strategy to ensure all data that can be moved to the cloud is migrated in a timely and accurate fashion to be successful.

For example, some businesses cannot do a lift and shift model due to the complex nature of their workloads or simply want to keep some applications on-premise—making every cloud migration project unique. With the right partner, businesses can ensure it's a successful transition.

What are the benefits of moving to the cloud?

Organizations can experience several benefits when moving to the cloud such as additional security capabilities, cost savings, the elimination of physical infrastructure, easier scalability,

disaster recovery and improved analytics. Cloud databases can significantly reduce the cost of operating in-office databases and physical on-prem servers in that on-premise licenses may no longer be needed.

Scalability is another benefit of the cloud because it can be set to be automatic. Disaster recovery capabilities should be a requirement of the cloud and allows for data to be safely stored in case of an emergency and improved analytics allows the business to integrate AI services to offer deeper insights to data.

Where do enterprises stand on cloud security?

Cloud security is something that needs to be at the top of their radar for enterprises. Transitioning from on-premise to the cloud comes with several benefits, including the latest and most

advanced cloud capabilities with the best offering with built-in AI in their security offerings.

While some businesses might have initial concerns about security, they quickly find that the cloud is extremely secure as many providers offer full visibility into your cloud environment and protection from malware and other threats. Enterprises are continuing to see the security benefits of a successful cloud migration project.

What do IT leaders need to be thinking about when it comes to protecting sensitive data in the cloud?

When it comes to protecting sensitive data in the cloud there are multiple options from encrypting at the column level, database level or all data completely encrypted at rest. In addition, encryption in transit should be mandatory. IT leaders need to keep essential tools and best practices top of mind.

For instance, leaders should be thinking about implementing preventative measures and strong security controls in place, such as establishing multi-factor authentication. Additionally, IT leaders should find the right tools, software and services that

best allow them to keep track of and audit all aspects of their infrastructure and their data access to fit their goals. The same is true for cloud providers and partners—it's crucial to provide protection for customers hosting data in the cloud and have the right measures in place.

What are the common pain points of IT leaders when managing a cloud environment?

Whether at inception or during a deployment, or after a cloud migration project, IT leaders can often face other challenges when it comes to managing their cloud infrastructure, including cost optimization, application sprawl and scale.

For example, depending on the model in which the cloud is deployed, it's crucial that IT leaders watch for things like resource allocation and storage changes to avoid unwanted costs piling up or fees from the cloud provider, if the cloud charges by metered billing instead of a flat or contract rate.

It's also important for the cloud provider to be transparent about cloud costs prior to implementation. Other challenges include application sprawl and

scale. IT leaders might already have on-premise applications that they've migrated to the cloud or utilize other management or monitoring applications that are making it difficult for IT professionals to have one pane of glass into their cloud environment. This lack of visibility and application sprawl can also make scaling the environment with new applications or workloads an issue, considering their technology stack might have now grown too complicated.

To solve this, IT professionals should look for vendors who can consolidate their technology stack to make optimization, management and visibility easier and more efficient within one platform or console.

Anything else to consider?

Every business is different, which means vendors need to help customize cloud environments to fit the needs of each business. By working closely with IT and C-Suite leaders to align on goals for a cloud migration project, address potential roadblocks, and ensure high security and visibility, any organization can be successful in the cloud.