Migrating IT Systems to the Cloud: How to Get Started

What keeps organizations from migrating?

Over the last two decades, vendors such as Microsoft and AWS have made adopting cloud computing increasingly more accessible to organizations of all sizes. Migrating from on-premises systems to cloud solutions offers IT leaders multiple opportunities to further their teams' strategic value to the organization.

Though unique to your own operations, your vision likely has some of the same objectives as those of IT leaders at other organizations. Among the outcomes they've pursued:

- Saving several man-days each month researching and remediating vulnerabilities.
- Employing service management as a tool that can be used across functions throughout the organization.
- Providing support to IT/security teams that are currently struggling to keep up with reactive tasks.
- Converting IT from a cost center to a strategic partner to the business.

Still, many IT and other enterprise systems remain on-premises. What's keeping organizations from migrating? There isn't a single answer, but firms continue to wrestle with several challenges, considerations and objections.

Uncertainty holds organizations back

Uncertainty about cloud migration is not rooted in one cause. It's the result of years of evolving technologies and threats, shifting priorities and endless external and internal pressures, a few of which are examined below:

Risk tolerance

It should come as no surprise, but not every organization is comfortable with being an early adopter. Past global economy uncertainty (for example, the Great Recession of 2008 - 2010) is an unsettling, top-of-mind reminder for organizations facing economic headwinds today. Combine this uncertainty with current tightened budgets and it creates an atmosphere of low risk tolerance. C-suite

leaders are hesitant to make big risk bets on emerging or evolving cloud technologies, particularly when having to answer to shareholders.

Shifting pricing models

Historically, technology had an amortization schedule and was budgeted under capital expenditures (CapEx). SaaS-based pricing and subscription licensing shifts the investment to the operational expense (OpEx) budget. This lowers the barrier to entry and adds flexibility to change vendors at the time of subscription renewal. However, it commits organizations to a continuous payment schedule, a significant shift from the known norm.

Leveraging existing investments

It's not uncommon for enterprise systems to have been in place at an organization for decades. Over the years, users' comfort level with the system has grown. Organizations have invested significant budget (into the millions) and resources, fine-tuning systems to be configured perfectly for immediate needs. The thought of walking away from these systems, even if still running on a mainframe, is terrifying. Even if the same system vendor has a cloud-hosted option, the fear of "fixing what isn't broken" has been enough to keep legacy systems deeply rooted in many organizations.

Geopolitical concerns

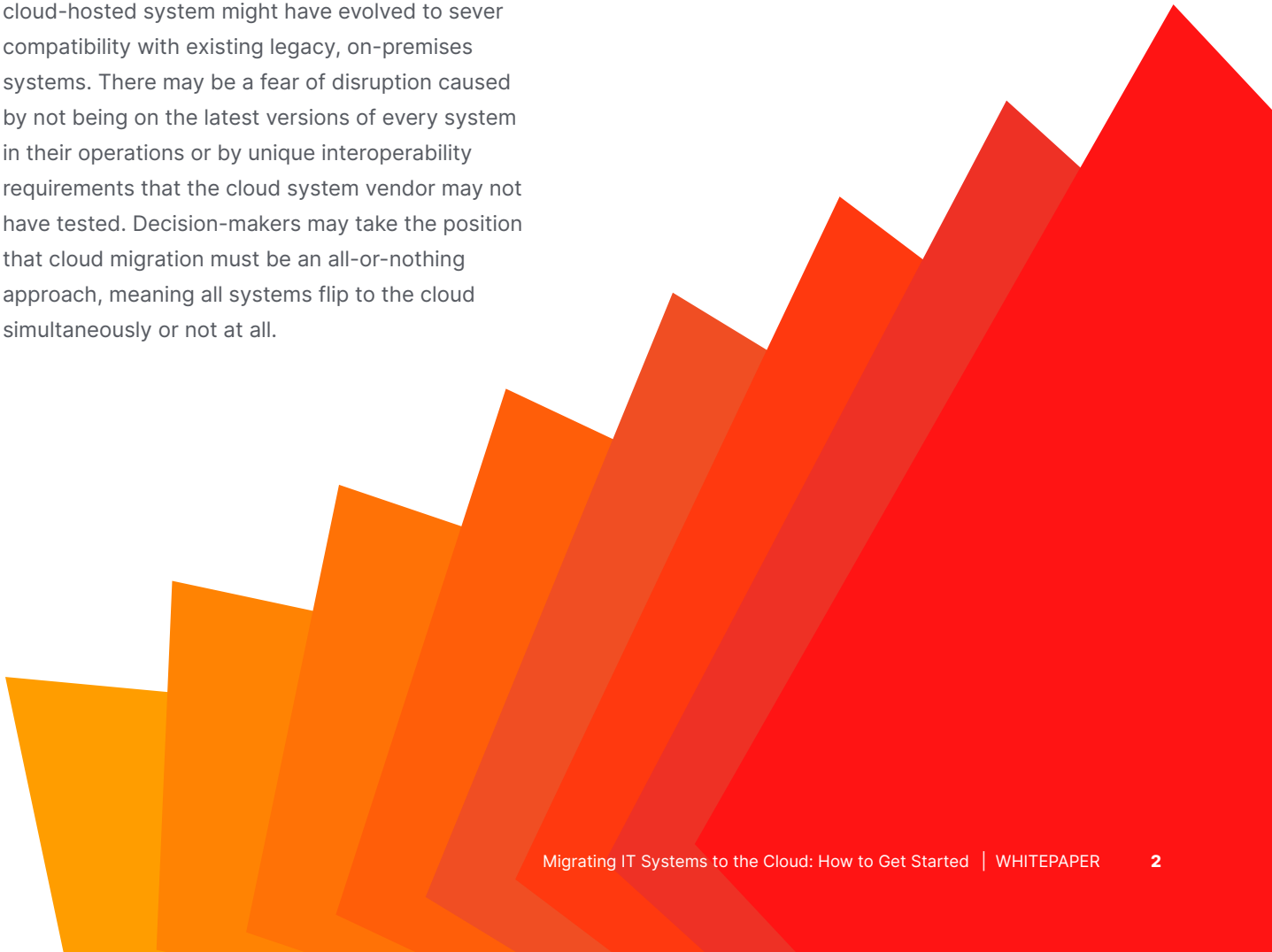
Shifting geopolitics has dramatically influenced the rationale and requirements of keeping on-premises systems intact. Disruptions caused by known geopolitical issues are obvious, but there is the perpetual uncertainty of where the next political upheaval might occur. Many organizations feel that if they were to consider migrating to the cloud, the data center must be within the national borders of their operations. This causes a challenge for multinational firms, who must plan for scenarios in each country where they operate.

Impacts to interoperability

This concern focuses on the risk that a newer, cloud-hosted system might have evolved to sever compatibility with existing legacy, on-premises systems. There may be a fear of disruption caused by not being on the latest versions of every system in their operations or by unique interoperability requirements that the cloud system vendor may not have tested. Decision-makers may take the position that cloud migration must be an all-or-nothing approach, meaning all systems flip to the cloud simultaneously or not at all.

Why now is (finally) the time to start migrating to the cloud

With all of these (and many other) considerations, there are compelling reasons for migrating to a cloud-based IT tech stack. Beyond the early hype, the maturing market for cloud hosted applications offers value that goes beyond the balance sheet. So, why might it be time to embrace cloud platforms?



Your people

Chances are, your IT and security teams aren't staffed to the level you require to achieve your desired IT outcomes, and your limited resources (in people and budget) aren't likely to grow anytime soon. You're not alone: IT leaders regularly tell us about their teams' struggles to simply keep up with their current needs. Adding to this friction is the growing list of tactical responsibilities placed on these teams. It is getting increasingly difficult for IT analysts to "tread water" rather than be overwhelmed with current service levels. As a result, taking on strategic projects like a cloud migration initiative is becoming more challenging.

Security teams suffer from similar challenges. The reactive nature of remediation distracts from prevention initiatives. We only need to look at the headlines to appreciate the increasing activity among threat actors or the severity of breaches. No industry is immune, making it difficult to attract and retain enough talent with the skills to sustain an optimal security stance.

Across IT and security teams, visibility continues to be a challenge. Cloud migration offers the opportunity to improve visibility — from discovering more assets in your ecosystem to reconciling the counts reported across various systems, providing more accurate inventories. This kind of clarity may generate savings on software licenses through reclamation or by reducing the risk of audit penalties. It may also reduce hardware costs as endpoints are reallocated if not fully amortized. Beyond these cost savings, improved visibility created through cloud migration "saves" your teams – empowering them to act more swiftly to address threats, make better decisions faster and generally accomplish more for your internal customers.

Technology strategy

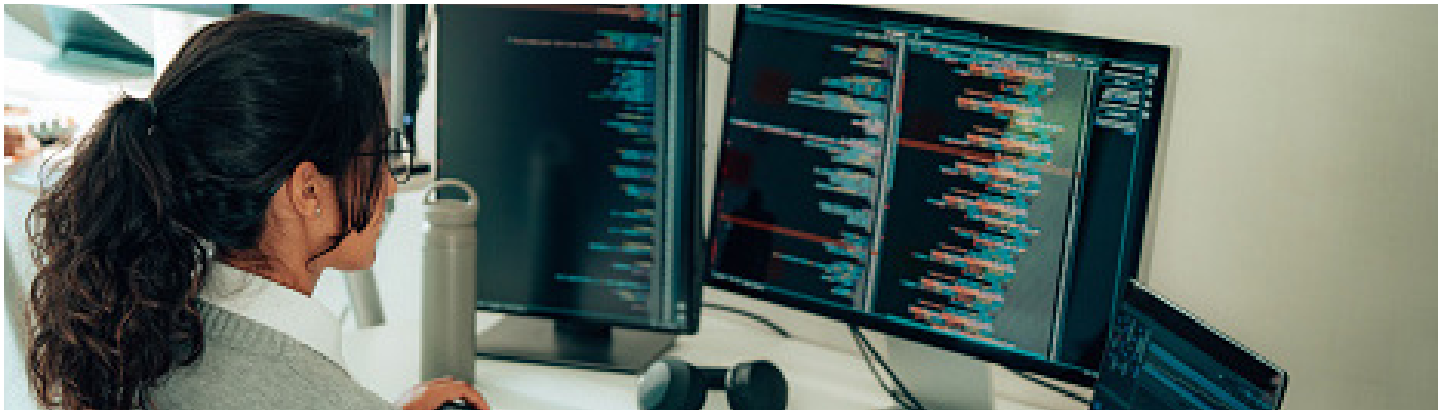
IT is more than just a cost center. Maybe you have had to make that stand in cross-functional meetings, or maybe it's the mantra you're working to embed in your team DNA. Among the most visible "proof of value" is the IT organization's ability to innovate. Migrating to the cloud creates opportunities for innovation through a wide range of mainstream and emerging tech.

Consider your existing on-premises systems, and how much access — even the latest versions — of these systems are equipped to integrate with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML). How do these on-premises systems take advantage of data lakes or the industrial internet of things (IoT)?

IT leaders view cloud migration as essential to their go-forward strategy, with several goals in mind. Three common reasons:

- Current macroeconomic environment (41.4%)
- Migrating old enterprise software apps to cloud-based solutions (33.4%)
- Shifting workloads from on-premises to the cloud (32.8%)

All of these are valid, strategic reasons the cloud is a foundation for IT modernization. Cloud migration enables your vision for IT innovation to become attainable, powering the future of your organization. Artificial Intelligence, as an example, makes up 59% of the use cases across business operations. This stat is comprised of a 33% share of respondents seeing AI as an opportunity to automate IT processes, and 26% seeing security and threat detection as another compelling use case.



Risk management

Think about the level of effort needed to reach 100% patch coverage across your current on-premises systems. Considering the logistics involved, is 100% even achievable? By comparison, consider the opportunity with significantly faster and more efficient patch deployment to cloud-based apps. This greatly reduces the risk of a missed patch. Plus, it increases the chances of containing a breach, as security teams can isolate or shut down the affected service for investigation and remediation without shutting down the adjacent infrastructure. Other areas of operation may be able to continue with minimal disruption, protecting your bottom line.

Security — be it for patch efficiency, data security or other benefits — is a major reason to migrate to the cloud. In fact, 94% of businesses report significant online security improvements by embracing the cloud.

SouthStar Bank realized significant time savings while improving security after cloud migration. Among the successes they realized, according to a case study:

> The visibility and automation delivered by Ivanti Neurons for Patch Management, for instance, has saved them "several days a month" researching and resolving vulnerabilities by providing accurate data so they can isolate device issues with patches, zero-day threats and out-of-band updates.

This kind of visibility goes a long way for firms aiming to improve their security posture as part of their strategy in migrating systems into the cloud.

There are probably multiple reasons that make it time to migrate. For example, there may be a goal or mandate to incorporate innovative technologies that are also security enhancements. For instance, perhaps your existing on-premises IT systems lack support for multi-factor authentication (MFA). While MFA is a widely used security tool, it's an innovation that your organization cannot deploy because the on-premises legacy system vendor is unable (or unwilling) to support it.

Tips for getting started

Whatever has given you pause about migrating to the cloud, you're not alone. One important truth of cloud migration is that the project will not be small. If it were an easy move, you would have already done it for many of your enterprise systems.

Recently, Memorial Health System migrated their IT service management from an on-premises Cherwell system to Ivanti Neurons for ITSM on a six-month timetable. With a phased approach, they plan to add more biomedical components, expanding visibility across their estate. Planning a migration in stages is a common approach for organizations, making the migration more manageable.

Once you've decided to migrate, where should you start? No single system is right for every organization to choose as the first to migrate. A look at enterprise software maintenance renewal schedules may be a good guide for some. For others, internal service level agreements (SLAs) or alignment to other organizational strategic initiatives may set the priority.

Common considerations

The following are common considerations in picking a starting point for migrating systems to the cloud:

Prioritize low-risk systems

One common approach among organizational leaders is to first migrate systems with a lower risk of impacting revenue. This approach allows project teams to get comfortable with the scope and level of effort in system migration, building up their comfort level with each migration stage so they are more skilled and familiar with the work before migrating systems more closely tied to revenue operations.

Ensure a fallback plan

Another consideration is to start with systems with easy-to-implement fallback plans. This allows the IT migration team to know they have a system "safety net" should any unforeseen complications occur during the migration process. Organizations aren't going to implement a fully duplicated system as a fallback plan, of course. But for those who follow the

"be prepared" model, starting early cloud migration with a fallback plan reassures the team and leadership that there are risk mitigation contingencies if the migration suffers delays. This is a practice to follow for every migration.

Minimize SLA disruption

A third consideration relates to any SLAs that must be maintained, whether internal or external. An essential part of cloud migration project scoping is defining what commitments are in place and how to best support those during the various phases of the project. If there are expected periods of service disruption, communicating the length, timing and process around them is essential. While it would be great to have a migration happen as quickly as turning on a light switch, conservative estimates relating to these risks defined during project scoping will go a long way toward getting departments across the organization to agree the migration has been successful during the retrospective stage.

Debevoise & Plimpton is a great example. In their cloud migration, they aimed to elevate the value of their service desk to more than a ticketing system, using the migration as a means to make Ivanti for Service Management an "enterprise-level tool for the whole company." Through the cloud-based solution they raised productivity, simplified compliance and customized during implementation for a tailored experience. And their greater visibility into user history helped IT understand the big picture of a request, making it easier and faster to satisfy requestors.

A further note...

There are many direct benefits of migrating to cloud-based systems, with only some of the most-referenced discussed above. But there are also indirect benefits to your business.

Environmental

Cloud-hosted solutions help reduce your organizations direct carbon footprint. It may seem obvious, but shifting servers out of your on-site enterprise server rooms to a cloud data center takes that energy use expense out of your facilities' utility bills. As more of the organization migrates to the cloud, your firm could get leaner on leased office space or open existing space to accommodate increased staffing.

Regulatory

With systems moved to a hosted environment, cloud migration aids your organization with ISO 14001 certification. Moving these Scope 1 and Scope 2 fully controlled emissions to Scope 3 energy use has significant benefits for the environment — not the least of which is a minimum 22% greater energy efficiency according to research from Microsoft based on its own on-premises-versus-cloud implementations of its SharePoint products.

Governance

If your organization's Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives aren't the reason to consider cloud migration, your customers' sustainability initiatives may be. In July 2024, Danish toy manufacturer Lego Group announced new mandated sustainability targets for their supply chain partners. These mandates include specific emissions targets by 2026 and a second set of goals for 2028. If you meet these kinds of goals for your customers, then your organization's sustainability results in the annual 10-K are sure to please shareholders.

Let's get started

You don't have to "dive into the deep end" when it comes to cloud migration. It's a journey, strategically moving system by system. Your organization isn't alone: Ivanti already works with customers at every stage along their migration path, helping guide them along to success.

Our partner network extends that ability so that you get local support, with opportunities for expert services and professional consultations, helping you follow your most efficient path — not just through the migration process but also toward your greater goals.

Contact us to start building a cloud migration plan that elevates your Everywhere Workplace.

About Ivanti

Ivanti elevates and secures Everywhere Work so that people and organizations can thrive. We make technology work for people, not the other way around. Today's employees use a wide range of corporate and personal devices to access IT applications and data over multiple networks to stay productive, wherever and however they work. Ivanti is the only technology company that finds, manages and protects every IT asset and endpoint in an organization. Over 40,000 customers, including 85 of the Fortune 100, have chosen Ivanti to help them deliver an excellent digital employee experience and improve IT and security team productivity and efficiency. At Ivanti, we strive to create an environment where all perspectives are heard, respected and valued and are committed to a more sustainable future for our customers, partners, employees and the planet. For more information, visit ivanti.com

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