Cutting through cloud choice

Tips for choosing the right cloud from the right partner.

The future is exciting.

Ready?

vodafone business
Introduction

The cloud is flexible and agile. It can free up valuable IT resource, let you reallocate spend, encourage innovation and untether you from geographic constraints. A good cloud solution solves problems – seamlessly connecting people, places, technologies and tools, while keeping each valuable asset unquestionably secure.

To reach this utopia, and fully unlock cloud potential, businesses need to look for a cloud partner not just a cloud supplier. The problem is, not every cloud can step up to the task. And with analysts Gartner predicting that by 2020 ‘cloud shift’ will affect more than $1 trillion in IT spending* it’s clear that choosing the right cloud solution from the right partner is a major decision.

This guide takes a detailed look at why partner choice matters so much with cloud – and how a smarter, safe and simple choice can elevate the use of cloud in your business.

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1. Making the most of the cloud

While most businesses are on a cloud journey, there are still opportunities to better capitalise on the potential cloud offers for digital transformation.

Your business might be on that journey, and while you may have adopted a ‘cloud first’ attitude to new applications and services, you might also be wondering “What next – what about my stubborn, non-cloud native enterprise apps?” and “How do I manage cloud operational issues?” or even “How can I effectively manage multi-cloud environments?”

The right mix of clouds

The right mix of clouds is the centrepiece of your IT strategy. But choosing them is a complex decision that’s entirely dependent on your business, and the type of data you generate and use. There are important choices to make before you truly shift from building to consuming IT.

When you find the right cloud partner, they will present you with the opportunities to:

– Create a flexible, future-proofed IT estate.
– Improve the performance and security of enterprise applications.
– Tighten control and mitigate the rise of shadow IT.
– Reduce costs, increase commercial flexibility and focus the IT department on value creation.
– Deliver new services and business efficiencies.
– Choose a mix of clouds that are right for your business needs.

It’s understandable. Given the rate of technological change today, it’s not easy to identify how you can better exploit the cloud, while simultaneously running day-to-day business operations. Add to that the confusing array of cloud options – Public, Private, Hybrid – and their overlapping definitions, and it becomes hard to know which cloud (or clouds) are best for you.

There are two things you need

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The right partner

To make the most of cloud in your business, so it gives you differentiation, and enables you to gain a competitive edge, you need a partner that can help you answer these questions:

– Which cloud solutions are right for the business goals?
– Is it right for the rest of the business?
– What skills do I need to deliver and run it?
– Will I be able to connect everything together?
– How much will it really cost?
– How will you help me transition?

No matter where you are on your cloud journey, it’s never too late to start asking these questions. They will help you to find the best partner and move forward with the right cloud solution.
2. What to look for in a cloud partner

Businesses want to use the cloud to solve problems and achieve great things. To get to that position, they need to find the right partner and cloud for them.

As the cloud is so crucial to every area of a business, there are a number of key questions to answer before you can be sure about the right solution and partner for your business. These cover everything from the best cloud for your business objectives and how can you take advantage of the cloud, the Internet of Things and connectivity, to the partner’s ability to offer strategic advice.

The following six questions go into each of these areas in detail. They look at what the right partner for your business should be able to offer, and the big questions asked of CIOs that cloud partners can help to answer.

What should the right cloud partner offer?

1. Do they offer a choice of cloud services and can they support multi-cloud environments?

Businesses are likely to need, or be using, a variety of cloud services, which are designed for the specific needs of their operations and applications. Both of these scenarios require a partner who can offer assessment services to help you understand what you need, and to answer questions such as:

- Is there a cloud path for my legacy IT apps?
- Which apps are relevant for the different types of cloud such as Private, Public and Hybrid?

A consultative partner can assess these needs and also offer information on cost, ROI and ease of migration. The ability to broker and manage effective Hybrid Cloud estates – with the flexibility of Public Cloud and the security and availability of Private Cloud – can be a differentiator.

Don’t get shoehorned into a solution that forces you to compromise. Make sure you choose a partner who can offer a wide range of enterprise-class cloud platforms and hosting services to suit your IT demands.

2. Can the partner offer you more than just cloud, do they bring expertise from areas such as the Internet of Things, connectivity and mobility?

It is advantageous to partner with cloud partners who have additional expertise in areas such as Internet of Things, mobility, security and connectivity. This way, all IT solutions can potentially benefit from the cloud.

The ability to link mobility, Internet of Things and the cloud at scale can give you an unrivalled competitive advantage.
What to look for in a cloud partner

3 Can they provide strategic advice and ally cloud technology to your business outcomes?

Meeting user demands, reducing risk and controlling costs, while taking advantage of cloud technology, requires extensive skills and knowledge. Look to work with cloud experts who can help you audit your current IT estate and business applications. Those who can give analytics backed cloud recommendations should be seriously considered.

A cloud partner should be your trusted partner to help you move towards your ideal scenario, through assisted DIY or fully-managed migration – delivering the right cloud for your business.

4 Can they guarantee global end-to-end data security?

A cloud partner with networking pedigree is a clear advantage. A global cloud supported by a global network means points of presence can be located strategically alongside cloud, carrier and data centre facilities – which means your data need never leave the partner’s network.

A partner who can offer this end-to-end security across multi-cloud environments, alongside threat protection and data sovereignty in your countries of operation is key. Dual-site, tier-3 data centres will also help to ensure peace of mind.

5 Does the partner have the global reach you need and does it address local data sovereignty requirements?

Global businesses want to deliver services consistently, reliably and securely to customers wherever they are in the world. If your business is global, your partner needs to be global too.

Businesses should be mindful of where a partner hosts data. Security and compliance regulations can vary drastically country-to-country, particularly in Europe. Look for a cloud partner who has worldwide operations and the ability to ensure regional data sovereignty compliance.

Remember: it’s not only about reach. While the biggest Public Cloud partners might offer services worldwide, you also need to consider performance and security for your mission critical data and applications. A secure, globally consistent cloud for all your apps and data is the utopia.

6 Can the partner free up in-house staff to focus on differentiation, not operation?

Maintaining skills in-house is a challenge. CIOs need to find time to innovate and bring in expertise to fill gaps. Your choice of cloud partner is critical – one who understands enterprise IT and the cloud’s role within it is vital.

Look for a partner who has experience of working alongside clients with mixed IT environments, and who is helping them to embrace cloud first solutions. Make sure they can support you through the migration and ongoing evolution of your cloud services, keeping them aligned to your changing needs.
3. What should your partner deliver?

You need a partner who delivers a cloud solution that enables your business to innovate, grow and unlock efficiencies. All in a secure, cloud first way. You should be considering whether they address any of the following:

**Be safer in the cloud with:**
- Protection for your data – from device to data centre
- Resilient data centres for global sovereignty
- SLAs to ensure availability of mission-critical applications

**Work smarter with the cloud by:**
- Improving agility and performance while reducing time to market
- Offering a broad choice of cloud and hosting services to create intelligent, tailored solutions
- Unlocking new capabilities, new ways of working, new ways of thinking

**Make managing your IT simpler through:**
- Improved control and real-time visibility
- Contract simplicity, transparent costs and flexible commercials
- Simplified processes and faster business operations
There's a cloud that can

Before you can decide which solution is right for you, you need to know what problems you are looking to solve. You need to know which of your datasets and services are suited to the cloud and, crucially, which aren’t – and you need to know where the cloud can transform your services and processes.

Vodafone has a long-established pedigree in global connectivity, Internet of Things and cloud and hosting. It has the expertise to make the most of these in your business.

With strategically-aligned cloud solutions offering speed, security and simplicity, we give the power of IT back to the CIO, helping them to control the rise of shadow IT, manage budgets, and integrate new and emerging technologies, as well as legacy. Whether you want co-location and hosting services or a secure, high-performing, global Private Cloud, speak to us to find the right cloud for you.

Is it time for your business to find a cloud that can? Talk to Vodafone Cloud and Hosting.