This IDC Technology Spotlight highlights the importance of working with a partner that can provide technology expertise and operational best practices to help enterprises securely accelerate digital transformation initiatives while efficiently adopting a multicloud strategy.

**Leveraging Professional Services to Accelerate a Secure Journey to Cloud**

**July 2021**

**Written by:** Leslie Rosenberg, Research Vice President, Network Life-Cycle and Infrastructure Services

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**Introduction**

In the digital transformation era, IT’s role has shifted from supporting business operations to driving business opportunities, architecting and implementing new operating models, and enhancing an exceptional user experience. These initiatives must be closely coupled with agility, visibility, and security, all within the parameters of an ever-constricting budget and diminishing IT resources as well as an expanding cloud skills gap. IDC believes that IT workloads and infrastructure, whether shared in the public cloud, dedicated off premises, dedicated on premises as a service, or traditional IT, must be considered strategically and early in the decision cycle.

According to recent IDC studies, 56% of enterprises use at least two public cloud IaaS providers, with 78% stating they use more than one provider but primarily default to one main public cloud provider. Furthermore, public cloud selection is based on the enterprise's perception that one provider's landing zone is more suitable for a particular workload than what is offered by another provider. Additionally, 55% of respondents utilize a hybrid cloud strategy. Interestingly, usage of private cloud, and more specifically private cloud as a service, is preferred by 48% of respondents for specific workloads that will not move to the public cloud, according to IDC's July 2020 *IaaSView Survey.*

Organizations have a strategic imperative to assess IT workloads, security, and governance requirements to determine the optimal deployment model for their needs — whether public cloud, private cloud/colocation, or on-premises datacenter. The right solution is likely to combine all these models. For many enterprises, the initial strategic assessment and the following migration and deployment efforts can be overwhelming due to limited IT skills and resources.

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**AT A GLANCE**

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Professional services can accelerate an enterprise’s journey to cloud by offering:

- Strategic guidance for workload prioritization and rationalization
- Development of business case and cost metrics for adopting a cloud strategy
- Technology expertise for infrastructure design regardless of landing zone
- Secure and efficient data migration
- Operational best practices
- Insight, automation, and analytics for continuous optimization
- Ongoing business, technology, and operational resources for digital transformation success
Therefore, IDC recommends finding either a consulting and integration vendor or a systems integration partner with the right technology expertise, tools, platforms, ecosystem partnerships, and best practices to facilitate this transition. When evaluating external resources, organizations should look for a partner able to:

» **Align IT initiatives with business outcomes.** As companies digitally transform, IT and business become intrinsically linked. IT infrastructure investments should be regarded as an enabler of the organization’s business priorities, including enhancing customer experience, meeting regulatory compliance, and reducing operational costs. Service providers should be able to demonstrate their proficiency in aligning infrastructure projects with business outcomes and leveraging new technologies to innovate their service offering.

» **Understand the business imperative.** Not all workloads need to move to the cloud, but they do need cloudlike capabilities. Helping customers understand that their applications and workloads are informed by their business priorities, governance and compliance needs, risk profile, and internal staff skill sets will make for more successful hybrid IT strategies.

» **Enable consistent service delivery.** Consistency is the key to success for any initiative, particularly when it comes to delivering mission-critical services that enable transformation for the organization. Service providers should showcase a standardized approach across delivery methodologies, processes, tools/platforms, and onshore/offshore team coordination to provide consistency in the way the services for engagements are delivered.

» **Articulate expertise across the infrastructure.** A partner should demonstrate technical expertise across network, compute, storage, and security to ensure workloads are aligned with the appropriate infrastructure in the correct landing zones and can be managed with the right levels of security, visibility, and actionable insights.

**Definitions**

» **Dedicated cloud**: This type of cloud is shared within a single enterprise or an extended enterprise, with restrictions on access and level of resource dedication, and defined/controlled by the enterprise beyond the control available in public cloud offerings.
  - Dedicated clouds may be on premises and off premises or dedicated cloud as a service.

» **Public cloud**: These clouds are shared among unrelated enterprises and/or consumers, open to a largely unrestricted universe of potential users, and designed for a market, not a single enterprise.

» **Traditional**: This term describes any IT deployment outside the category of private or public cloud. Traditional IT environments can include highly virtualized infrastructure that does not utilize self-service or elastic pricing.

Figure 1 illustrates the various cloud models that enterprise customers may choose from as landing zones for their applications and workloads.
FIGURE 1: **Cloud IT Infrastructure Deployment Models**


**Benefits**

While developing and executing a multicloud strategy may be complex, with many choices and outcomes to consider, IDC believes leveraging the professional services and resources of an infrastructure vendor, a hyperscaler, a global systems integrator, or a certified delivery partner can ensure the following benefits:

» Alignment with a cloud solution that meets business, technology, and operational requirements and takes into consideration the availability and skill level of IT resources

» Expertise in creating an architecture for the future by leading the design and deployment of next-generation cloud and infrastructure architectures across cloud, networks, and edge

» Achievement of actionable outcomes

» Secure cloud workload migrations at scale

» Acceleration of time to market

» Adoption of industry best practices for operating in a hybrid, multicloud world

» Fast access to expert resources to troubleshoot and accelerate cloud initiatives
Trends
Digital transformation is an enterprise imperative for 2021 and beyond. Infrastructure resiliency and the ability to maintain business continuity are cornerstones of this strategy. More than 70% of enterprises undergoing transformation will include infrastructure modernization as part of this effort over the next two years, according to IDC's May 2021 Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey. Most enterprises consider a successful infrastructure modernization project to be a critical component of the overall success of their digital transformation.

Hybrid cloud infrastructure consisting of a mix of dedicated, shared, and traditional resources will be deployed across datacenter, edge, and service provider locations. Defining a strategy, prioritizing workloads and their appropriate landing zones, migrating workloads, and ensuring ongoing visibility and management can be overwhelming for many enterprises and expose the business to potential risks. The ability to design, deploy, and maintain secure connectivity of cloud networks is critical to protecting assets and ensuring the agility and responsiveness that the business requires. While there is an increase in automation and orchestration to help accelerate deployment and insight, leading tools and platforms must be thoughtfully coupled with an evolution of people and processes to maximize a multicloud initiative.

IDC is seeing an increase in investments from services firms (delivered by services arms of infrastructure manufacturers and hyperscalers, global systems integrators, or VARs) that are actively developing consulting and integration capabilities — either on their own or with partners — to provide increased management, visibility, intelligence, and insights across applications, workloads, and infrastructure that reside in a complex landscape of landing zones.

Considering Cisco Customer Experience Business Critical Services for Cloud
Cisco Customer Experience (CX) develops solutions that encompass all business units across the company, including products, services, sales, and marketing, in support of a customer's business, technology, and operational outcomes. The Cisco CX organization offers a portfolio of services, tools, expert resources, and solutions to help customers extract maximum value from their technology investments.

The Cisco CX portfolio allows customers to choose the right services that fit their budget and system requirements. Customers can leverage Cisco’s investments in telemetry data collection coupled with artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) to gain insight and intelligence from the devices, systems, and networks they have deployed. This intelligence, coupled with other Cisco resources including engineering talent, tools, platforms, knowledge bases, and account management, allows customers to effectively meet networking and business objectives.

The Cisco CX portfolio delivers life-cycle services across three main pillars: Support, Guide, and Operate.

» **Support** delivers technical support with offerings that include Solution Support, Smart Net Total Care (hardware support), and Software Support.

» **Guide** provides analytics-driven guidance, Business Critical Services, and advisory services.

» **Operate** offers operations management with managed services such as managed detection and response and Cisco UCM Cloud Enterprise Service.
**Business Critical Services for Cloud**

Cisco CX offers advisory and professional services through its Business Critical Services, including cross-architecture subscription services that help customers ensure optimal performance of the IT infrastructure. The Business Critical Services team has developed an operational model for business resiliency to address the needs of specific buyers/users more accurately so that they receive the appropriate insight and analytics, training, expertise, and support necessary to meet their business, technology, and operations objectives throughout their technology life cycle.

Cisco Business Critical Services for Cloud provide cloud-agnostic guidance powered by analytics, insights, and automation to assist in a successful cloud journey, regardless of whether an organization is evaluating public cloud, private cloud, traditional IT or a hybrid and multicloud environment that requires continuous innovation and optimization across the infrastructure from datacenter to edge to cloud. Business Critical Services for Cloud deliver the following service activities in support of core cloud outcomes:

» **Continuity**
- Evaluate private, public, and hybrid cloud options across infrastructure, applications, security, and operations to identify the optimal multicloud strategy that is aligned with business needs.
- Conduct strategy alignment workshops to maximize the impact of cloud services.
- Implement a target business operating model with recommendations for best cloud operations.

» **Insights**
- Provide visibility and observability across the applications, network, and infrastructure in all landing zones.
- Enable informed decisions and continually optimize a multicloud strategy leveraging Cisco Intersight, ThousandEyes, and AppDynamics capabilities.
- Deliver application and workload management (including application monitoring, deployment, and cost optimization).

» **Security**
- Protect data, applications, and users with zero-trust, end-to-end security expertise and threat management.
- Address vulnerabilities and compliance using best practices.
- Deploy IT policies to reduce risk.

» **Connectivity**
- Design and deploy a network architecture in support of applications and workloads in a multicloud environment.
- Secure multicloud connectivity leveraging design and testing expertise.
- Provide implementation strategy, testing, and validation.

» **Operate**
- Deploy and migrate applications and workloads.
- Run containerized applications on premises or in the public cloud.
- Manage software application development and testing using CI/CD tools.
Enterprise buyers of IT infrastructure (located in public cloud, private cloud, or traditional IT environments) have stated that they plan to leverage the expertise of professional services almost equally for modernization/optimization and transformation. These efforts are primarily focused on driving efficiency into existing environments, with typical outcomes involving speed, agility, and/or lower expenses (52.6%) and transformational projects with the potential to fundamentally change current business and/or IT operations (47.4%), according to IDC's 2019 Infrastructure Services Survey.

Cisco CX Business Critical Services bring together a portfolio of offerings that address both the essential modernization/optimization efforts and the transformational aspects of a customer’s digital journey. Leveraging the portfolio’s Business Critical Services tools, expert resources, and processes can effectively enable a customer’s ability to accelerate and de-risk the move to cloud. Cisco CX Business Critical Services for Cloud provide what IDC believes are the requisite services capabilities that address application prioritization and rationalization, infrastructure design and architecture, migration, operational best practices, and optimization.

**Challenges**

Defining a cloud strategy in alignment with business priorities is complex. Cisco Business Critical Services bring a suite of tools for insights and operational best practices to bear on the challenge, coupled with infrastructure expertise and resources to help enterprise customers successfully navigate their journey to cloud. It will be essential that Cisco articulate its ability to provide a business case and rationale for each model — public cloud, private cloud, or traditional IT — so that customers can make the most informed business, technology, and operational decisions that align with their business goals.

**Conclusion**

As a result of COVID-19, most enterprises have reprioritized and accelerated their digital transformation initiatives. These initiatives are underpinned by a journey to cloud — including hybrid IT and multicloud — as a strategic business imperative in 2021 and beyond. Defining that strategy has become significantly more complex than simply procuring elastic IT resources and porting over applications and workloads. There must be careful consideration of business, technology, and operational outcomes as well as a realistic assessment of IT skills and resources. Given the business criticality of the cloud journey and its inherent challenges, IDC recommends leveraging the consulting and integration services of a trusted partner with defined and repeatable methodologies; investments in tools and platforms including automation and AI/ML to drive actionable insights; and the right people and processes for strategic alignment and project management to enable a secure, accelerated journey to the cloud.

**About the Analyst**

Leslie Rosenberg, Research Vice President, Network Life-Cycle and Infrastructure Services

Ms. Rosenberg examines professional services trends and market dynamics for the enterprise. Her research coverage spans life-cycle services portfolio development across network, server, and storage infrastructure technologies encompassing the dynamics of software-defined infrastructure, automation, service delivery platforms, new consumption models, and the evolution of services impacting people, process, tools, and methodologies globally.
MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Continuous expertise across the multicloud life cycle

Getting the most out of your cloud environment requires a continuous cycle of innovation and optimization. Cisco Business Critical Services provide expert guidance powered by analytics, insights, and automation to assist you along a successful cloud transformation journey. Cisco expertise is there to advise you throughout the cloud journey to get you from where you are to where you want to be as your business needs and technology options change.

To learn more, visit Business Critical Services.