Cloud Migration Risks and Benefits

By Dr. Christopher Richard

"Cloud" has arrived, will stay, will grow and may become the only choice for hosting in the future and this is irrelevant of the truths and perceptions one may have of the good, the bad, and the uglies of the cloud.

Technology automation and Digital transformation continues to see massive adaption and growth across verticals. Organization opting for automation need application and are either building, buying or renting them and if you are not one of those born in the cloud companies and have these applications. They most probably have been hosted in the traditional choices that existed before the cloud explosion. For these applications the choice of migrating to the cloud, is not an "if" it is only a "when".

Migration to the cloud is more or less similar to you moving from an independent house where you were responsible for everything, to a either a community villa/Apartment (IAAS) or Partial service apartment (PAAS) or full-service hotel (SAAS). Your transition can be smooth if you make the right choices and plan the transition well.

While, making the choice to migrate to the cloud is the right thing to do, the first step in migrating is to have the right people involved and listen to them. Many failures in migrating or problems post migration are not unheard of.

Migration is like moving your home, it needs to be planned and you need to have knowledge of at least what are the things you have and what are their dependencies. Your old fridge may not fit into the fridge space of your new home or the power sockets of legacy electrical appliance may need an adapter to work in your new home. Most importantly you need to spend time accessing all you have and what they depend own to function, there is no point

taking your gas stove to the new home and forgetting to transfer you gas connection. There are always dependencies.

Never do this in a hurry, take the time to understand what you are hosting, how they communicate, what are the dependencies, do a pilot, and take the pilot seriously.

A leading staffing company in India, learnt the lessons above the hard way. While the Application they were trying to migrate was a legacy Application and had grown over period of time with many teams working on different parts, there was no one in the organization who understood the full components and communication dependencies of the Application. The application itself was crudely developed, had no documentation and I still say this would have been a successful project, had the time been taken out to figure all of unknowns before moving to the cloud.

The team become inaccessible during the planning phase, always had other priorities and wanted it to happen overnight when they decided to give it the priority and went ahead with the migration. When the migration experts pointed to them that the migration is not going right, they took the ownership and shooed the partner away. They did not take the testing seriously and gave a green signal that all is well after testing, in order to meet the go live date. Result after migration, huge performance issues in the Application functioning, the application became unusable and for a month they had to process salaries manually, invoices to customers could be raised as the timesheets from the Application, was not available. After a month of stress, lost money, they cancelled the migration and moved back and still struggled for 3 months to get things back to normal. In simple the risks of migration are only the decisions you make and not the cloud. ∎

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