Hybrid Cloud: Built for your benefit

Haven't thought about the cloud yet? Still concerned about security limitations? Discover the hybrid cloud, a solution that combines the cloud benefits and your security needs

Still afraid of the cloud?

Cloud solutions polarize. Advocates say they're a must for businesses in the digital world:

- Data is accessible whenever and wherever it is needed. This is a key demand of the modern customer, who expects access to everything, everywhere.
- Cloud solutions are based on economies of scale and therefore lead to significant cost savings.
- The cloud allows companies to react flexibly to dynamic market demands.

Skeptics say the cloud is a no-go for security reasons. They think data in the cloud is somewhere out of their control. Losing control means losing trust, and losing trust, especially of customers, is a threat to a business. This is currently the major roadblock to companies using cloud services.

Formation of the cloud

Similar to nature, there is not only one cloud – different types of clouds have evolved over the last few years. Five options can be combined according to specific business needs:

1. **In-house data centers**. No cloud/Blue Sky.

2. **Housing**. Rack space, including power and Internet connectivity, is supplied, and servers are self-managed.

3. **Infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) in a dedicated data center**: Hardware is vendor provided, software is self-managed.

4. **Platform-as-a-service (PaaS) with known location**: No physical access to the hardware, location guaranteed.

5. **Platform-as-a-service (PaaS) with flexible location**: Computing power is located wherever it's cheap.

Mix and match

We do not recommend a "one-size-fits-all solution" for any company. Different systems have different demands in terms of accessibility, flexibility, security, privacy, and cost.

Today, it is possible to combine the different cloud approaches into one overall solution. Correctly implemented, the resulting system behaves like one cloud and makes life easy for users as well as administrators.
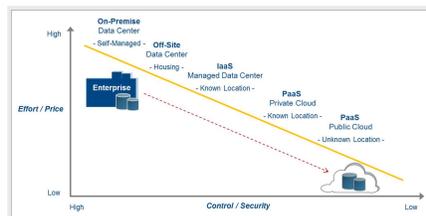
In practice

For an example, a telecommunications provider would manage the business-critical systems and handle their core network itself. The business-intelligence system would be placed into a data center using a housing approach, as these systems have very specific demands on hardware.

CRM can run based on PaaS; however, because of the legal implications on customer data, a known location is preferred. The web shop and online self-service tools can leverage the full cloud experience in an unknown location.

Every system has its own demand in regard to business criticality and data sensitivity. Companies should mix different approaches and use whatever suits their purposes best.

Now let's get started

The real challenge is to build an integrated solution that behaves like one system but is, in fact, constructed from multiple different technologies. The technical basis is offered by vendors such as e-shelter and Rackspace. They offer all kinds of cloud solutions in one data center. This makes building hybrid solutions extremely efficient, as the physical distance from a company's own servers housed, e.g., at e-shelter, to the cloud servers of internationally known vendors such as Amazon Web Services, is very short, which allows for fast data transfer and low latency.

> **The hidden champions: e-shelter**
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> *e-shelter*, one of the pioneers of the cloud business, manages nine data centers and has the largest single data center facility in Europe. Many of the new stars of the IT business industry are already customers of e-shelter, benefiting, for example, from its individual hybrid cloud solutions.

However, a system is only as good as the solution you build on it. Leveraging the hybrid cloud efficiently requires the development of a proper strategy. The solution needs to be embedded effectively into the company's environment and consider the given strategic alignment and constraints.

Drawing from our deep and continuously developed knowledge in cloud strategy, Arthur D. Little can help to build such a reliable and sustainable IT solution based on the promising model of a hybrid cloud.

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