Transitioning to Cloud?
Engage a Hybrid MSP!

MIGRATING TO THE CLOUD? TAKE YOUR TIME!

"To The Cloud!!!"

Advertisements on television, in magazines, and online all exhorted everyone to immediately move everything to "The Cloud!" Don't wait. Don't hesitate. Everything gets better when you move it all to "The Cloud."

This may have done more to scare people than encourage them. What exactly was "The Cloud?" WHY should everything go there? For businesses, the suggestion was that they take their entire information technology (IT) environment and just move it. The systems that they use to take orders, process them, ship them, invoice them, and collect revenue, as well as everything else. The systems they depend upon for their continued existence.

WHO WOULD TAKE A RISK LIKE THAT??

Perhaps the most ill-advised way to transition from your current on-premise platform to a cloud-computing environment, or any other platform, is all-at-once. Best practice is always to assess each workload individually, determine the most efficient platform, prepare thoroughly, and then migrate just that workload. Then the next. There's NO reason you can't migrate that way, gradually and under full control. In fact, it's the sound way to proceed with minimal risk.

YOU'RE GOING TO REMAIN HYBRID FOR LONGER THAN YOU THINK.

When all of your workloads have been processed on your premises on your own network and you move one of them to a cloud computing platform you have just created a hybrid environment. Most of your IT deployment is still on your own premises, and part of it is now in a public or private cloud. That's the simple definition of a hybrid network.

While creating a hybrid network is just that simple, moving to a completely cloud-based environment is probably not going to happen as quickly. Properly transitioning each workload will require that you take time to thoroughly perform each of the steps mentioned earlier; assess, target the right destination platform, prepare the data and applications, then perform the migration and testing before going live on the new platform. Depending upon how many workloads you'll be moving, this could take a very long time.

You may also determine that certain workloads may not be so easily migrated. Some may require modification, or even new coding. You may wish to take the opportunity to convert some applications to containerized microservices or otherwise take advantage of new technologies as you migrate. Some workloads may have

to remain on-premise due to corporate, federal, or other regulatory requirements.

Many consider it a relief that they will not have to pack everything up and move lock, stock, and barrel to another platform all at once. While talk of "hybrid networks" used to sound exotic, today they are the norm. There are benefits and great reasons to obtain some public cloud services, some private cloud services, and keep some services on your own premises for the foreseeable future.

GETTING THE RIGHT KIND OF HELP WITH YOUR NEW ENVIRONMENT – THE HYBRID MSP

Managed Service Providers (MSP) first emerged just before the turn of the century to help companies manage their still relatively new local and wide area networks. They would connect to their customer's network either via a leased circuit from a carrier or, in some cases, via the newly emerging Internet. Once connected they would monitor every device on the customer's network usually using Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) to inspect compliant devices. Each compliant device maintained its own Management Instruction Base (MIB) which would report back any anomalies quickly. The MSP could then alert any combination of customer, service provider, and their own personnel to take restorative action.

As the MSP community matured, companies found themselves with a growing array of choices all of whom could manage their on-premise networks for them.

As the adoption of cloud computing grew companies found slimmer pickings when seeking service providers who could help manage their new cloud environment. Those who were prudently transitioning gradually, workload-by-workload from on-premise to cloud found an even sparser selection of service providers who could manage hybrids of both on-premise as well as cloud computing components.

Just as sparse are management platforms that provide users the convenience of a singular solution for the management of both on-premise and cloud computing elements.

A recent development has been the arrival of the Hybrid MSP, with skills both in on-premise network management as well as management of cloud environments. This has served to eliminate a lot of the "finger-pointing" that naturally emerges when more than one service provider is involved in the management of any environment. It has also enabled companies to use cloud-computing as much more than just an extension of their own resources, taking fuller advantage of the capabilities that are only available on a cloud platform.

HOW MUCH MSP DO YOU NEED?

The answer to the question of how much MSP you need is not as simple as it might appear. Even those companies with large IT departments need to ask themselves how many of their own people they want monitoring and managing their network. In many cases, these companies have not only found the right MSP to be more cost-effective, they have also found that using an MSP frees their own IT specialists to focus on far more productive, higher-level work.

Just as the migration to cloud computing is not an "all-or-nothing-at-all" proposition, neither is the involvement of an MSP in the management of your hybrid network environment. Companies may elect to have an MSP handle some aspects of network management while involving their own personnel or even third-party servicing companies where appropriate.

The Hybrid MSP provides or enables three fundamental activities that facilitate effective management of the public cloud, private cloud, and on-premise network segments in a hybrid environment:

Monitoring – To assure that all devices and services on a hybrid network are performing at peak efficiency, someone must keep a close eye on everything at all times. Especially in a hybrid network, it is critical to monitor to assure that all on-premise and cloud segments are working well together!

The Hybrid MSP will leverage the capabilities of one of the few monitoring platforms available today that are designed to effectively interrogate both on-premise and cloud-based computing resources. With hybrid discovery and classification capability, best practice monitoring policies and processes, relationship and dependency mapping, full automation and easy-to-read dashboard analytics, ScienceLogic is an excellent example of such a hybrid monitoring platform.

Management – Whether on-premise, cloud-based, or hybrid today's network requires constant management. Proper backup and protection of stored data must constantly be assured. Patches and updates to operating systems, applications and utilities are constantly being distributed, each requiring examination and assessment to assure they will not interfere with operations. Especially when the cloud services in use are sourced from multiple providers, there are regular adjustments and other routines which must be performed. With limited exposure to cloud services, many companies prefer to turn to an expert Hybrid MSP to provide unified management.

Performance – Once any hybrid network is fully in production, the goal is to extract better and better performance, reliability, and security from it. This requires an enhanced feature set including resource lockdown capability, Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS), Intrusion Prevention Systems (IPS), Security Incident and Event Management (SIEM), log analysis, anti-virus, anti-malware, firewall tuning and much more. In the government space this also includes regulatory requirements, authorization to operate, and other official issues which require constant and consistent compliance.

THE RIGHT TOOLS, THE RIGHT PEOPLE, THE RIGHT PROCESSES

Most companies are not in the business of providing IT services, yet many staff, train, tool, and otherwise prepare as if they are. The expense of such preparation never really ends, as changes in technologies require constant updating and upgrading of platforms, people, and processes.

For the Hybrid MSP, the customer company's hybrid network is Job #1. Earning and keeping the all-important trust of their customers means they must bring all the right resources to assure optimum performance, reliability, and security at all times.

The Right Tools – At DLT we've chosen to take advantage of the tools and partnership offered by ScienceLogic whose discovery policy and platform creates a foundation for highly effective management of hybrid environments. Their EM7 data engine provides tremendous flexibility and power in the creation of custom dashboards which enable us to examine and interrogate hybrid networks far more easily and thoroughly. It brings all the data you need to fully understand and monitor hybrid networks in one application, eliminating lost time and confusion throughout the environment.

The Right People – Anyone who has engaged a quality MSP will describe it as a relationship well beyond just being a service engagement. The people who

are assigned to care for a company's IT resources and operations must have a deep understanding and appreciation for the business functions and desired outcomes involved as well as the technology. In a hybrid environment, the right specialists will enthusiastically and aggressively seek ways to obtain more of the unique value that is only available from cloud services to augment the functionality of the overall system.

The Right Processes – One of the powerful business advantages of cloud computing is derived from consumption-based billing for services consumed. This adds an additional layer to the responsibilities of those managing hybrid environments. Not only must the entire network run reliably and securely, it must also run cost-effectively by requesting and rapidly releasing resources to minimize billing. Cloud users, especially new ones, will have deep concerns about Billing & Spend control, appreciating alarms critical to consumption control.

NOTHING IS "ALL OR NOTHING AT ALL"

Incorporating cloud computing into a company's network is all about creating new choices. Choose which workloads are migrated from on-premise to cloud-based system. Choose when. Choose which services to trust to a qualified Hybrid MSP, and which to keep assigned to your own personnel. Choose which cloud services to obtain from various cloud providers. Choose resources that are complementary to your own, and don't force you to discard and replace previous investments.

The one choice a quality Hybrid MSP will never offer you is an "all-or-nothing-at-all" proposition. Control, compliance, and consistent performance are what they are all about.

THE IMPORTANCE OF END-TO-END SUPPORT

Management of a hybrid environment is not the starting point. Before a hybrid network is managed it must be properly configured and engineered. Just as your onprem-to-cloud transition will be challenging, having to change support providers when moving from deployment to production operation becomes difficult. Seek a Hybrid MSP that also offers all of the assistance you'll need preparing workloads and applications to conform to the requirements of new platforms. A quality Hybrid MSP that also engages for comprehensive migration services is your best solution.

For more information please contact:
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