Launching your business into the future with IaaS

Mark Chadwick, Head of Cloud Services, Datacentrix, looks at what organisations should be looking for in an IaaS provider.

The term 'Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)' has become practically synonymous with 'cloud'. The difference? Cloud can be looked at as a location and on-demand consumption model, while IaaS delivers the actual cloud computing infrastructure, facilitating the availability of new capabilities in an evergreen manner.

When a company decides to go the IaaS route and selects a service provider, it is important that they adhere to the type of principles that would be used for any type of technology decision – due diligence still applies and provides a good starting point.

For instance, factors such as security, service level agreements and other typical contractual checks would most definitely be relevant when it comes to this type of evaluation.

While this might provide a good baseline from an IaaS perspective, the next step entails looking at the reason behind the business' move to the cloud. Everyone wants to make the change, but it is important to understand why. It is critical that the organisation gets to the bottom of what the business case is – be it based on a specific business requirement, or perhaps the definition of a new strategy.

A potential IaaS partner should be able to conduct a rationalisation exercise, ascertaining cloud readiness, making recommendations as to which lower risk workloads to move first, as well as providing a roadmap that allows the company to build confidence in the new environment. By identifying a specific use case, businesses would also find that some IaaS providers may be more suitable than others.

Next, the organisation should look at how to optimise what has been moved from on-premises to IaaS, determining the real benefits that can be gained, such as cost reductions or operational efficiencies. This is often overlooked, and it makes sense to ensure that the service received is not prohibitively expensive for the same, or less value than a traditional setup.

Another question to ask is to what extent the potential provider can help with managing the environment. Some IaaS partners offer managed service capabilities, where they take on the responsibility of at least part of a company's environment over and above the provision and management of the underlying infrastructure, and it is here that greater scale and value can be gained.

In addition, it is important to find out whether the potential partner offers complementary services, such as

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serverless technologies, which allow for the dynamic consumption of computing resources via the cloud, without the need to manage underlying virtual machines and accompanying OS components.

Finally, compliance is of particular significance when it pertains to data, specifically with regards to regulatory frameworks like the South African Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), which defines how companies should process information about data subjects, or people's personal information, and what controls need to be in place to do so. The key here is to find an IaaS partner that has already done the legwork in this regard and is able to assist companies in navigating this landscape.