Up, up and away – the rise of the meta cloud

The future direction of cloud computing can be wrought with twists and turns, with the next big cloud destination introduced being the 'meta' or 'super' cloud concept. But what does the meta cloud actually mean for businesses; how and why should they embrace this new iteration of cloud technology?

“Local organisations aren't strangers to the value that cloud computing offers,” says Brian Smith, Business Unit Manager at Datacentrix, a leading hybrid ICT systems integrator and managed services provider. “It does come with its own pitfalls though. For one, rising costs associated with cloud computing are seeing many companies opt out of blanket solutions,” he adds.

> “The trend towards meta cloud adoption is taking root for these two reasons, overcoming complex and expensive cloud architecture using cross-cloud services, but we haven't yet begun to scratch the surface of how this might look down the line.

And while the exchange rate contributes to growing expenditure, management of an IT environment that is becoming increasingly complex is another key limitation. “For many businesses, one cloud is simply not enough. If fact, Deloitte Insights notes that as many as 85 percent of businesses are using two or more cloud platforms – and 25 percent are using at least five.”

What we know today

Private clouds emerged over a decade ago, while the hybrid cloud model evolved into a mix of on-premises infrastructure and cloud-based services and applications, Smith explains, while public clouds, including AWS, Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud for example, have made a compelling argument in favour of adaptability, scalability and reduced infrastructure investment.

“Opting into different cloud services, irrespective of where these services reside, has resulted in a multi-cloud scenario for many organisations. The point is though that cloud decisions didn't always start out with a solid business and data strategy in mind, he adds.

As a result, doubts can arise over how best to harness cost savings where they occur, ensure tighter security controls, manage a heterogeneous IT environment and adopt the skills needed to address all of this.

> The meta cloud service layer gives us an opportunity to derive greater value from cloud investments, ensuring closer application integration and enabling a single view of workloads wherever they are hosted to minimise complexity, cost and risk.

Brian Smith, Business Unit Manager at Datacentrix

Moving into a new cloud formation

The trend towards meta cloud adoption is taking root for these two reasons, overcoming complex and expensive cloud architecture using cross-cloud services, but Smith believes that we haven't yet begun to scratch the surface of how this might look down the line. In fact, it raises several questions:

- How can we take advantage of meta clouds today to design for the future and so maximise value from a multi-cloud environment?
- How can we best cater to our business and application requirements while optimising integration across multiple clouds?
- How can we take advantage of hyperscalers, which typically cater to their own needs, to leverage services on our own terms?
- Adding our own applications into the mix, how can we manage all of that from the perspective of a single-view architecture?

Smith maintains that we need to change our thinking to a best-use scenario. “The meta cloud service layer gives us an opportunity to derive greater value from cloud investments, ensuring closer application integration and enabling a single view of workloads wherever they are hosted to minimise complexity, cost and risk.

“While this may hail the future of cloud computing, any cloud initiative needs to be designed around your data and applications,” he says, noting however that what we know about technology today is not going to look the same tomorrow.

“This is ever true in the cloud computing paradigm. The meta cloud brings us a step closer to untangling the multi-cloud muddle. That the need exists for it at all should make us consider cloud solutions from the perspective of business value, and not lose sight of the challenges down the line,” he continues.

“Trends in cloud computing will continue to come and go, and the meta cloud is one viable approach to reduce the complexity of a multi-cloud reality. Moving beyond the buzzword and promises of benefits – and not jumping into cloud computing because everyone else is – is perhaps exactly where we need to arrive to use this model more appropriately.

“Thus, the key questions to ask before embarking on a cloud computing strategy should be: what value are you getting out of it? Where will this value come from? And, what makes the most business sense? It should never be a blind leap of faith,” Smith concludes.

For more information on Datacentrix's Hybrid ICT approach, please visit www.datacentrix.co.za/hybridit.html