The right cloud for the right reason

With Graeme Dendy, services manager, converged solutions at Datacentrix

With the arrival of public cloud service providers in Africa, more companies are starting to investigate how best to migrate to the right cloud model and manage multiple cloud environments. It's a balancing act for end-users, but also has a far reaching impact on the partners, like Datacentrix, who are working to help customers deploy a model that works for them.

Our partner, Nutanix, recently released the results of its second Enterprise Cloud Index (2019). The results are staggering, and highlight that while cloud is growing, caution is the order of the day when customers are navigating the cloud. According to the findings:

- Enterprises rank hybrid cloud (85%) as the ideal IT operating model over the next five years and 49% of respondents believe it will meet all their IT requirements.
- Nearly 73% of respondents also stated that they are moving applications off the public cloud back to on-premise, some moving more than five applications at a time.
- Security (60%) is still the largest feature impacting the decision to migrate to the cloud, although hybrid cloud is seen by some as the most secure cloud model.

As an industry, the onus is now on us to stop trying to demystify the cloud, and to start helping our customers define how best to approach different cloud models so that they are able to align with this dynamic environment.

Workload priorities

It's no surprise that the EMEA results differed from those locally. Our African customers have different challenges. To this end, in EMEA respondents said they are 58% less likely to consider performance, but are 46% more likely to seek agility than other regions in terms of where to put their workloads. Closer to home, 27% of local companies said they spend approximately 20 to 30% of their annual IT budgets on the public cloud, stating that they expect a hybrid approach to be the ideal deployment model in years to come.

Africa is well-known for adopting mobile-first business solutions, and the cloud is no different. Why? Our customers want to easily move applications between cloud environments as required, in addition to being able to access relevant information irrespective of the devices used or the location from which it is being accessed. That said, enterprises must also carefully consider their current mobile environment and how easy (or difficult) it will be to migrate to a cloud-centric approach.

Fortunately, the flexibility to choose the right cloud environment for each use case rates as one of the biggest drawcards to a hybrid approach. Additionally, as this is a cost-sensitive market, choosing the best pricing model is also important for local organisations.

Decisive factors

The Nutanix research confirms that there is no lack of willingness by local customers to move to the cloud, but, rather, a caution-first approach, particularly around compliance and security, affordability and mobility. Irrespective of the cloud approach considered, having the option to select which workloads to migrate means companies can adopt a more segmented implementation strategy. More than three quarters of South African companies already using the cloud say they have increased the productivity and efficiency of their IT teams.

This is no surprise to the Datacentrix team, as we are constantly working with our customers to define which model, private or public, hybrid or multi-cloud, best suits their specific needs. Even so, the hybrid cloud is a significant drawcard for local businesses with 33% of South African respondents stating they will be using a hybrid cloud environment in the next 12 to 24 months. But as around 24% of local companies still use a traditional datacentre, this is not an insignificant shift.

Looking ahead, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the blockchain are all made possible by migrating data analysis to the cloud, it is our role to provide the skills needed to support these emerging technologies and skill up our customers' internal teams to do the same.

But with challenges come opportunities, many of which are overcome through partnerships. The cloud is here to stay, and Datacentrix is working with partners, like Nutanix, to unravel the complexities, define working models and help customers make the transition – but only where it makes sense for a customer to do so.

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