Moving Your IT Into The Cloud?

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This post is by our guest blogger John Dunnet, FBCS, Director – Transformation Practice  of evoco.co.uk a provider of fixed price business transformation and former CTO of Gartner. Evoco.co.uk are a provider of advisory and project services with resources details of whom may be seen [here](http://managedserviceexpert.com/managed-services-software/evoco-co-uk-fixed-price-project-mgt-business-transformation-detail).

Even in the ‘old days’ as CIO decision making was never as easy as your customers believed. If you are doing well, despite complexity you were the same as the water company. Turn on the tap, and water comes out. Of course! There was never any thought as to the myriad of processes, maintenance schedules and people that made it happen. And for a while, those who had IT sorted, had it easy. OS – check; Personal productivity – check; Routing – check; hardware vendor – check.  
At the time the biggest challenge was the system bought by a business leader, installed under on a server under a desk, which became mission critical, broke and then became my problem.  A couple of days without the app, and people soon learned self-service IT was not the way forward. Sorted.  
Now the challenge is the Cloud. The business head can commission the purchase of an enterprise business solution, seat by seat with little more than a corporate credit card.  The consequences of which will always end up at the door of the CIO.

When we referred to 'the cloud' in the late 80s, it was the place where your network went to communicate; now it is a cover to sell anything and everything to everyone.  
Cloud could be simple. The concept at its purest is ‘on demand’ and ‘internet based’. This could be storage, or it could be an application or anything else for that matter.  
A micro business of 3-4 people could decide nearly all of IT business would be ‘public’ cloud based. An internet based file sharing service would be appropriate for data storage; a hosted mail service (with hosted email filtering included) can deliver the same experience as on network in the eyes of the user; a software as a service provider can provide an accounts package with nothing to install; another can provide a powerful yet on demand CRM solution;  a host for their website; and a internet based voice mail service for their telephony.

To do this they own no hardware other than the laptops. Their business runs on a number of very functional and affordable applications; they own no servers; their business applications are in the public cloud. All they need is a desktop or portable device and an internet connection (which these days is available cheaply in most locations on the move). Even in the office an increasing number of small businesses are going cable-free with wireless technology being cheap, easy and giving greater range and reliability that previously available.

With benefits including : no installation charges; software updates done for you centrally; always on/always accessible solutions; data backups done for you in multiple location secure environments; no capital outlay and the easy ability to add users during the term as growth determines.  
Of course there are some considerations as with any solution such as: reliance on a cloud companies financial strength; need for an internet connection to access applications; lack of possible integration between systems (although signs are of clouds starting to talk to clouds); no multi-cloud single sign on (again though signs are of this abating) ; the small business also needs some guidance on questions to ask of a cloud provider around areas such as data sovereignty, SLA’s and exit strategies.  
As you can see in this small and simple example, there are risks which need to be weighed against the benefits. As you scale to an organisation of thousands, this can quickly become a quagmire.  
To overcome this you need a method to develop a cloud strategy. It should assess the needs of your business and demonstrate the decision making behind which services should be cloud based and which mode of cloud (public, private, hybrid). It should be flexible enough to adapt to changing business circumstances.

Cloud strategies need to consider, your organisations culture and its risk appetite. The current and future shape IT estate and the journey to it. The current and future IT change portfolio.  Once this is understood, determine what to do first and why. The strategy should be developed with a method which describes the business benefits and risks of each service; define logical groupings, and studies of similar successful implementations.

Now is the time for organisations to define cloud plans and strategies that will be their foundation for change for the coming few years.  Cloud is going to effect and impact businesses, people, decisions, budgets and strategies more in the next 36 months than in the last 10 years and business and IT leaders need to have answers in advance of the questions that will come their way. If they don't a Kodak moment awaits.

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