

The office that fits in your pocket: Cloud migration tips for SME owners

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Once upon a time, SMEs struggled to keep up with the technical and financial power of their bigger counterparts. Larger enterprises typically had powerful IT teams, expensive software licences, large sales and marketing budgets, and sky-high headquarters in bustling city centres - all with the newest computer technology.



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Today's small business is agile and fluid, unencumbered by physical boundaries, and newly empowered by technologies that anyone can afford.

What is driving this technological democratisation, and where might it take small businesses? To answer that, we need to look to the cloud.

A game changer

The use of the cloud has offered SMEs a variety of advantages, including the ability to reach new consumer groups in new locations, create new income streams, and transition to remote work in situations of distress.

When Covid-19 hit, being able to change direction and quickly create cloud-based business models was essential. Many of these innovative business models, which were first developed out of necessity, have now led SMEs to remarkable new locations.

SMEs are radically reshaped by the on-demand economy, and cloud computing is more important than ever. In this new normal, cloud implementation won't be a 'nice-to-have'; it will be imperative.

Top tips for implementation

Consider the following recommended practices if you want to move your small business's operations to the cloud. For example, you must determine whether you want software as a service (saas), platform as a service (paas), or infrastructure as a service (iaas).

With saas, third-party providers create applications and make them available to businesses through the internet, often on a subscription or pay-as-you-go basis. This is a wonderful alternative for SMEs who want access to a variety of digital tools but do not want to create, maintain, and upgrade their own applications.

Paas provides businesses and developers with an easy-to-use platform to develop, run, deploy and maintain their own apps - all in a simplified environment. This is a good option for organisations that want to create bespoke solutions that don't want to spend time, and money on building and maintaining onsite infrastructure. It's also a good option for SMEs looking for faster, easier development

IaaS enables SMEs to keep their onsite technological footprint incredibly small, as memory, storage, software and operating systems are all provided via the cloud. Basically, IaaS offers a 24/7 offsite data centre that can be accessed from anywhere. This could be a good choice for rapidly growing SMEs that don't want to invest heavily in hardware or scale their onsite infrastructure.

Here are some tips for successful cloud implementation:

1. Start small working with a few apps and use cases to see how your SME might best use the cloud.
2. Put together a cloud implementation team from across functions or departments. This will help you address role-specific pain points and unlock the power of business synergy.
3. Focus on your main business objectives and goals and create a strategy for how you can use the power of the cloud to achieve them. Figure out what KPIs will matter most.
4. Make a list of apps and tools that will be most beneficial for your SME, and consider a cloud implementation that maximises their effectiveness
5. Look for gaps in your list of apps and tools. If you can't find a pre-existing digital solution, can you create your own low-code or no-code app to solve the problem?
6. Create a data management strategy that meets regulatory requirements, maximises the potential benefits of your data, and helps to drive productivity.

7. Evaluate how your legacy systems will be affected by cloud implementation. For example, how will your CRM fit in? Do you need to create a bespoke solution?
8. Consider how cloud implementation might affect the workforce. Look for any digital skills gaps and see if they can be addressed through on-demand training.
9. Brainstorm any potential new business models, cost-saving opportunities and revenue streams. For instance, how might access to a global workforce transform your SME?
10. Run a cost analysis. Compare how much a PaaS, SaaS or IaaS solution will cost versus onsite solution. Look at the costs of ongoing maintenance in addition to initial outlay.

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