

Small Business TRENDS

The magazine for successful small business owners

CLOUD TRANSFORMATION DEMYSTIFIED

**25 Small Business Tasks
You Can Do Better in the Cloud**

**11 Mistakes Companies Make
Managing Cloud Policies**

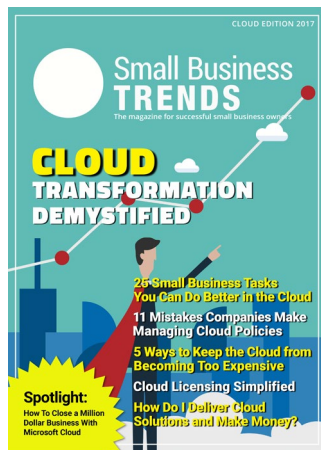
**5 Ways to Keep the Cloud from
Becoming Too Expensive**

Cloud Licensing Simplified

**How Do I Deliver Cloud
Solutions and Make Money?**

Spotlight:

**How To Close a Million
Dollar Business With
Microsoft Cloud**



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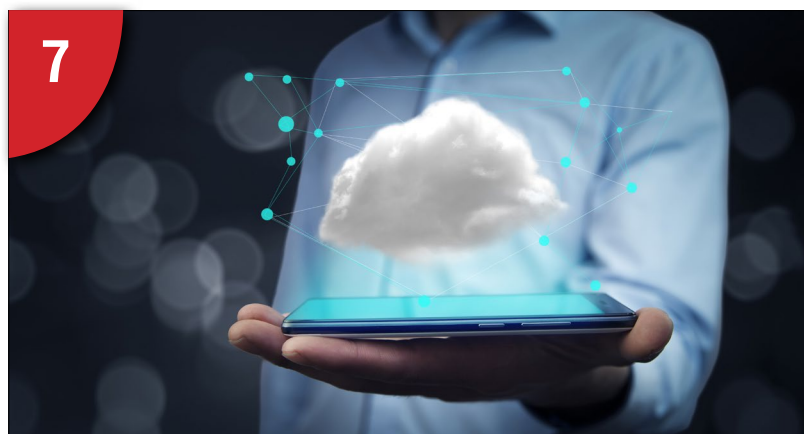
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CLOUD TRANSFORMATION DEMYSTIFIED

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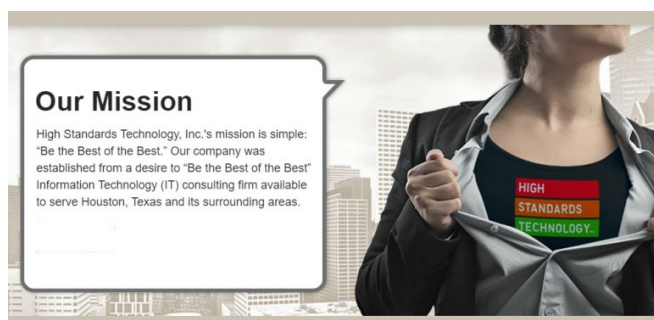
No matter where you turn these days, people are talking about the benefits of “working in the cloud” including: Saving time; Saving money; and Avoiding the hassle of managing technology yourself.

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32 I Hear My Customers Talking About Cloud, How Do I Deliver and Make Money?

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46 IT Company Builds Software Platform for Cloud-ready Companies and Those That Aren't

Business partners Rob Schenk and Dan Gordon, founders of Intivix, an IT company based in San Francisco, are serious about the Cloud. So serious that not only do they offer many cloud-based services to their clients, but they also have funded and developed a remote access solution that enables businesses to get to their files either from on-premise servers or those hosted in the cloud.

50 5 Ways to Keep the Cloud from Becoming Too Expensive

It's a long established fact that moving to the Cloud can save your small business money.

However, there are costs associated with using Cloud services and, while they may seem small at first, they can add up to a lot if you're not careful.

53 11 Mistakes Most Companies Make When Managing Cloud Policies

Cloud is already a buzz word. By the year 2020, 80% of companies will adopt cloud powered technologies. According to a recent survey by the Ponemon Institute, there are 36% of businesses that do not have a centralized cloud security policy in place.

56 How to Close a Million Dollar Business With Microsoft Cloud

Information Technology companies across the globe have woken up to the benefits of cloud technology, and the fast-movers in the industry are already reaping its benefits in the market.



The Cloud Opportunity



Anita Campbell
CEO and Publisher
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These days everybody seems to be talking about the “cloud.” And it’s no surprise why.

The cloud market opportunity is estimated at over \$3 trillion.

The cloud refers to technology that is hosted and accessed over the Internet. The world’s premier technology companies, including Microsoft, are transitioning their products toward a cloud-based model. Why? Because they know the many benefits of the cloud are what end users today expect.

In short, cloud technology is the future – but it’s already here. And companies like Meylah, cFocus Software and Cloud Enablers, the sponsor of this edition, are right there helping businesses make the jump successfully to the cloud.

Our cover story outlines how the cloud can transform businesses to become more productive, effective and profitable. We demystify how to kick start your business’s transformation.

Chances are, your company is already using the cloud for some activities. Check out the article on 25 tasks your company can do in the cloud. It may just trigger a few ideas you haven’t thought of yet.

If you’re an IT consultant or provider, we detail how to serve business clients by leveraging the cloud. We also outline cloud services your business clients can benefit from, as they look to you for help.

For end-user businesses switching to the cloud, we offer advice on what you should look for from an IT provider to transition smoothly. And we have tips on how to control the cost of operating in the cloud.

There’s all that, plus advice on writing a cloud policy for your company – and so much more.

Wishing you much success,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anita".

P.S. Please subscribe (free) so you never miss future editions of the magazine. Go to

<http://smallbiztrends.com/magazine>.

Small Business Trends News Report

The White House Has Its Head in the Cloud



And that's no joke! There may be new opportunities for startups in the cloud and cybersecurity sectors if Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's senior

advisor and son-in-law is correct. Kushner spoke recently about a White House initiative to help a new set of startups focused on modernizing government technology and making it more transparent.

While Microsoft Delivers Scalable BI



And on the subject of cloud computing, how about the availability of scaled

business intelligence -- for any business. Sure, Microsoft's new Power BI Premium may be too pricey for some in the small business market. But Microsoft's Power BI Desktop and Power BI Pro offer much more affordable options you may want to consider.

The Risks to Your Business from Ransomware go up 500 Percent



No kidding! One of the other arguments for cloud services certainly is security. And if one cybersecurity company is right, that risk went up about 500 percent in March 2017 -- just in the number

of ransomware attacks alone! Overall there's been a 231 percent increase in the attacks between Q1 of 2016 and Q1 of 2017. But that lower number probably doesn't make you feel much better.

Fortunately, Your Smartphone Rates Are Heading in the Opposite Direction



In fact, they're plunging, say reports. Try a downhill slide of 12.5 percent between May 2016 and May 2017. This

is SO much of a bigger deal than when you used these things just to make an occasional call to a client while on a business trip. These days lower rates mean it's cheaper to collaborate with your team -- and for mobile customers to find you!

Speaking of Mobile, Have You Heard of this New Bing Rollout?

If you're worried about said customers finding you on mobile, there's now one more tool to make it easier. Bing recently rolled out new mobile targeting services for its



ads. In fact, the new service allows you to target customers specifically by device: PC, tablet

or smartphone. This new move puts Bing on equal footing with other digital ad networks. So it may be time to rethink where to place your next campaign.



Shawn Hessinger

Executive Editor

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Cloud Transformation Demystified

Cloud Transformation has gained greater traction in the recent years. However, to propel your business to achieve the cloud profitability that you deserve, there are three core concepts that need to be understood.

Opportunity, Knowledge, and Actions.

It Works Like This:

- 1) Your business realizes that there's an opportunity to solve a problem or add value to the lives of many customers and make a recurring revenue from it.
- 2) You and your team acquire the knowledge that you need to take advantage of the cloud opportunity.

- 3) You and your team will execute actions based on the knowledge obtained, and your profit will be directly proportionate to how many customers you empower with Cloud technologies.

Let's Talk about the Opportunity First:

The worldwide use of public cloud services will grow at a 19.4% annual rate over the next

five years, from nearly \$70 billion in 2015 to more than \$141 billion in 2019. That's six times the growth rate of enterprise IT spending as a whole and will cause cloud spending to double during that time period, according to market researcher IDC. The \$141 billion figure was cited in IDC's release of its "Worldwide Semiannual Public Cloud Services Spending Guide," published Jan. 21 and shared by Information Week. Although the bulk of the cloud spending comes from large organizations, small companies (defined as having 500 or fewer employees) represent a growing share that will constitute 40% of the spending through the forecast period, the report added.

Simply said, the cloud opportunity is Booming, and it continues to grow at an insane rate.

Now, thanks to the Cloud Vendors and their incredible technological advances over the last few years, we are able to help our customers transition to Hybrid Cloud or Public Cloud easily.

In fact, you could build your cloud practice in 100 days or more, while creating recurring revenue with very little upfront investment.

Knowledge to Take Advantage of the Opportunity

Founder and CEO Jasson Walker Jr. started his company, cFocus Software, in 2006. Based in Largo, Maryland near Washington D.C., cFocus Software has carved out a successful niche by providing IT services for government agencies—primarily defense agencies with a slight mix of civilian agencies as well.

cFocus Software has always been focused almost exclusively on Microsoft services. Apart from that, much of their work is on SharePoint deployments, .NET development, and support for Windows Server as well as SQL Server.

Until now, cFocus Software primarily worked with on-premises deployments. Given the data security concerns inherent to working with government agencies, particularly those concerned with national defense, cFocus Software's customers have only recently become interested in cloud services.

As demand among his customers increased, however, Walker knew that he needed to pivot his organization's competencies to meet their demand.

"Around 3 years ago, we noticed our customers asking more and more about cloud services. At the time, these services were already popular in the commercial space, but until that time they had been less prominent among customers working in the federal government." – Jasson Walker Jr., Founder, and CEO, cFocus Software

Committed to evolving with his clients, Walker knew he had to make a change.

Last summer, Walker decided to pivot the company into a cloud-based business.

After making the decision, Walker looked to Microsoft for help. As a Microsoft partner, cFocus Software received some emails and invitations to various workshops and events throughout the year. Searching through his inbox, Walker came upon an opportunity that fit his need: the Microsoft Cloud-Ready program. The workshop in Irvine, California, offered Jasson the chance to jump-start his cloud transformation. He left with a comprehensive plan in hand to transform to an Azure-focused, cloud-first organization in 100 days.

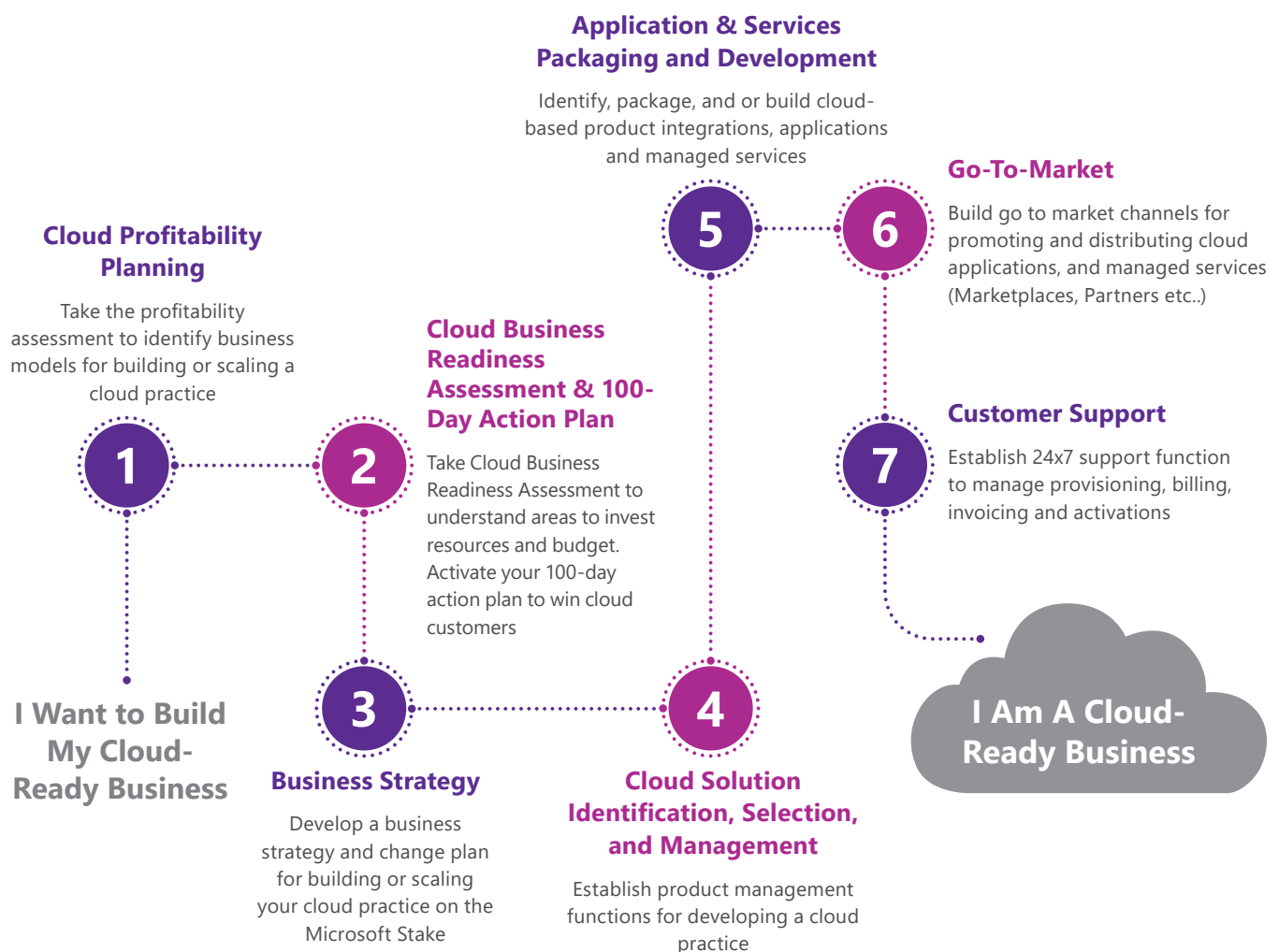
Beyond providing Jasson a plan that he could follow to transform cFocus Software, the workshop also offered Jasson insight into Microsoft's priorities—and ultimately convinced him that, of all the cloud technologies he could build a business around, Azure was the choice for cFocus Software.

While Jasson prepped for his certifications, he also devoted some time to prepare cFocus Software for its cloud transformation. He also worked through the business plan that he had outlined during the Cloud Ready workshop. He completely reconstructed his website (<https://cfocussoftware.com/>) and developed go-to-market strategies for the new services, technologies, and solutions that his new Azure focus afforded his business.

The Best News

The cloud transformation journey and 100 action plan is now available from Microsoft and is completely free. The cloud transformation journey map consists of 7 core steps. By following the journey map and putting together an action plan you can achieve cloud transformation in 100 days or less. Companies who have gone through this proven model have significantly increased their revenues, added new headcount, and attracted new customers.

CLOUD TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY MAP





The opportunity is here and the knowledge is yours for the taking. The question is, do you have the drive to execute your 100-day cloud action plan?

Will you take matters into your own hands and build a profitable cloud business?

If yes, then here are 3 steps you can take today:

1. Take a free [cloud-ready assessment](#) for your business.

2. Download free copy of the ebook: [How to build a Million Dollar Cloud Business With Microsoft Cloud](#)

3. [Connect](#) with us to learn more.



Chaitra Vedullapalli

[@cvedulla](#)



**YOU WANT TO GROW
YOUR BUSINESS?
WE KNOW HOW.**

Partnering with Microsoft pays off. The Cloud Solution Provider program helps you go beyond reselling licenses to being more involved in your customer's business.



Microsoft Partners Tackling Big Challenges with Cloud

The world has come to understand that cloud technology presents immense opportunities for organizations to grow. Microsoft has been at the forefront of cloud transformation, helping its partners make the best use of the opportunity by providing them an all-inclusive ecosystem.

It's heartening to see that many of our partners around the world are successfully tackling some of the difficult challenges by leveraging Microsoft Azure.

One of the highlights of my job is getting to travel around the world and hear from partners about the amazing innovation that they are driving with their customers across industries. I wanted to share a few of my favorite stories from the past year.

Track 'Em

Track'em

Track'em is a partner that I met last year at WPC and then had an opportunity to catch up with again in my travels to Australia. It is a great example of a partner disrupting the

manufacturing space. The software platform enables users to monitor anything and everything using a combination of a barcode, GPS, 3D analytics, RFID, and IoT technologies. This allows businesses to track the location, condition, and status of assets and resources 24/7 through all stages of its life cycle, saving companies millions of dollars in lost productivity and materials.

Track'em is a 100% Azure platform integrated with IOT Hub and Office 365. This unique suite of products is perfect for companies who need to monitor and manage assets and productivity, which in the manufacturing and engineering arena is just about anyone. Tracked data can be viewed on a map and analyzed using Power BI and other business intelligence tools. It enables businesses with the knowledge of the exact location of a scanned item, where it was scanned, and by whom. It eliminates vast amounts of wasted time and resources spent searching for materials on large worksites and reduced waste on the largest of scales.

"Asset tracking and control is a rapidly changing field with new technology and innovations being used in the last decade. Previously, projects used labor-intensive manual processing to track assets which ultimately were susceptible to higher supply chain costs due to inefficient techniques and the potential for human error. Asset tracking technology now is focused on IoT, RFID, GPS and other wireless technology in conjunction with sophisticated software applications which provides for a more accurate and efficient management system."

-Kashif Saleem, Track'em

Founder and CEO Kashif Saleem shared with me that their products have been very well received on large scale Oil and Gas, Mining and construction projects, such that referrals count for a significant portion of their business. The idea was born from Kashif's time as an IT consultant at a mine site, where he saw

that the loss and misplacement of materials cost his clients hundreds and thousands of dollars. He seized the opportunity to solve a business problem and is proud to deliver a new generation of asset control and tracking solutions to the industry.

KenSci



Right here in my backyard, Seattle-based partner KenSci was founded in 2015 as a spinoff of a University of Washington research project. They are currently building the world's first vertically integrated machine learning platform in the healthcare marketplace, offering a risk prediction platform and apps for healthcare providers. The company's mission is to make healthcare more proactive, more coordinated, and more accountable through data-driven methodology and technology. To accomplish this, they use Azure to help predict health outcomes in patients.

KenSci as a company comprises an interesting mix of doctors and data scientists to capitalize on the knowledge and information offered within the field of data analytics. Patients inevitably worry about two things after a diagnosis: first, whether they're going to be ok, and second, how much care will cost them. Since doctors only have so much time and resources to diagnose individual patients, the insights, KenSci offers can provide a more in-depth diagnosis process than many patients could otherwise afford. I loved the way Sunny puts it:

"Physicians and health systems have too much data and too little time. We challenged ourselves to rethink how we can help Clinical and Operational teams use data they already have and deliver better outcomes rapidly. Once we bring together care, cost and operational data, the opportunities to innovate via predictive analytics multiply."

– Sunny Neogi, Head of Marketing and Growth, KenSci

Genetec



Genetec has helped transform the retail industry with their in-store security solutions. They provide cloud-based video surveillance footage and real-time analytics, producing actionable intelligence about store operations, buying patterns, and consumer trends. Marketing, operational, and merchandising staff can analyze and correlate data from customer security systems and point-of-sale systems to gain a deeper understanding of their customers' behaviors, needs, and preferences. For example, the application will inform store management when checkout lanes or changing room lines become overly long so they can reassign staff as necessary.

"Consumers that choose to shop in brick-and-mortar stores are not only looking for merchandise; they're looking for an experience. Genetec Retail Intelligence allows retailers to enhance the customer experience and react in real-time."

– Derek Arcuri, Product Marketing Manager at Genetec

Powered by Microsoft Azure, Genetec's Retail Intelligence service provides powerful insight into the customer experience through a single pane of glass. It allows customers to work with an array of edge devices and third-party systems while providing a uniquely flexible and reliable service that permits the solution to grow with the changing needs of their customers.

Cloud transformation has revolutionized the technology space. We at Microsoft, along with our partners are ready to take it to the next level and these stories are testimonials of that.



Gavriella Schuster

Corporate VP, Worldwide Channels & Programs, Microsoft

@gavriels1



How Does Cloud Licensing Work for Your Environment?

One of the first obstacles you'll face when moving to the cloud is the bewildering array of licensing options available.

While working your way through the legal and financial terms can be painful, it can also help you select the right vendor and save your small business a lot of money.

To give yourself a head start on understanding cloud licensing, use this introductory guide to learn how software licensing, and Cloud licensing in particular, works.

The Perpetual License

Back in the day, there was the perpetual license. Your software came on a physical

disc and you were allowed to use it forever based on the terms of the End User License Agreement (EULA).

Think of the EULA as the rule book for a piece of software. It told you things like on how many machines you could install the software, for how long you were eligible for free upgrades, and how little liability the company was willing

to take if something went wrong when while you used their software.

The perpetual license is still alive and well today however, as more software vendors move their offerings to the cloud, it's becoming less relevant.

The Site License

As the use of software grew, a company often required a license for more than one person. For example, installing Microsoft Word installed on each computer required a new kind of license called the site, or sometime volume, license.

A site license worked very similarly to a perpetual license except it applies to everyone in the office. The biggest difference was that as the number of people using the software at one site grew, the price per user dropped. This was, and still is, called a volume discount.

“Before the advent of the Cloud, there was a sort of in-between phase where software lived on local servers and could be accessed by a number of people.”

The Seat License or Named User License

Before the advent of the Cloud, there was a sort of in-between phase where software lived on local servers and could be accessed by a number of people. A business would pay to use the software by “seat”. In other words, the number of seats they purchased were the number of licenses they had for that software,

or the number of people who were allowed to use the software.

Here Comes the Cloud

With the rise of cloud computing, software licensing began to change mostly due to the very nature of working online and to drive adoption of products on a daily basis. While the seat license model is slowly transition (mostly due to volume discounts), many companies are actively moving towards Cloud licensing to capture new market share.

Subscription Licenses

Thanks to the Cloud, customers began to expect the ability to pay month-to-month and cancel at any time if they were not happy with their experience. These expectations led to the recurring types of licensing models.

Month-to-month and annual subscription licenses are standard fare in the Cloud. Paying these regular fees enables you to use the software or service for the next month or year respectively.

Note:

- Paying month-to-month give your small business the flexibility it needs to change vendors or stop using the Cloud for a particular service altogether. This is a significant advantage over the older types of licenses where you paid a higher one-time fee up front.
- That said, paying for an annual license can lead to significant cost saving as many vendors heavily discount the price-per-month if you do so.
- Many vendors allow you to start with a month-by-month license and then move to a pro-rated annual license if you decide to do so.

Examples are:

- Office365 is user based subscription model to setup and manage your secure Office for your business
- Meylah mobile ready store is subscription based solution to run your online business. The solution caters to freemium pricing model to premium pricing model (\$20/month)
- Canva.com is a great solution for creating creative content. Canva makes design simple for everyone. Create designs for Web or print: blog graphics, presentations, Facebook covers, flyers, posters, invitations and so much more.

Working your way through the legal and financial terms can be painful, but it can save your small business a lot of money.

Pay-As-You-Go Licenses

Technical advances have enabled vendors to track usage of their software and services accurately, opening the door for a different type of license: pay-as-you-go.

- Pay-as-You-Go is just that: you pay for how much of the system you use. This use can be measured in many ways including the:
- Number of processes run on the vendor's server;
- Amount of disk space your business uses; and
- Size of your database and/or number of database queries.

Note:

- This licensing model enables your small business to scale with growth without buying infrastructure or hardware. As you grow, you use the software or hardware more however, because you're growing, you can afford it.
- Vendors often use this licensing model to create very specific offerings such as Module A and B, but not C. This is advantageous to your small business as you're only paying for what you need to use.
- Pay-as-you-go licensing enable vendors to track usage across devices, removing the hassle, for both the customer and the vendor, of trying to license the software on each device separately.

Examples:

- Microsoft Azure is an open, flexible, enterprise-grade cloud computing platform and services. They provide virtual machines, SQL databases, Active directories and many more to run your applications online.
- Rackspace Inc. is a managed cloud computing company and enables "Fanatical Support" offering to focus on cloud service and support.

Pay-by-Instance Licenses

The final type of license applies more to Cloud services such as IaaS and PaaS.

In this scenario, you pay for each server or server instance that the vendor spins up for you.

Note:

- This licensing model has many of the same advantages as the pay-as-you-go license

because you're only paying for what you need and/or use.

- This is a very cost effective license model for small businesses that want to spin up an instance to try something or run a proof of concept and then spin it down once they're done.

Examples:

- Private Cloud for hosting your applications for your company
- Power BI installation for your business to create dashboards and reports
- Custom application for internal use

Conclusion

While cloud licensing may seem confusing at first, it helps if you break it down into the types of licenses discussed above. That way, you can weigh the pros and cons of each option more clearly.

One last warning: no matter what type of license you select, make sure you read all the fine print to avoid surprises down the road. If you are confused with cloud licensing and need assistance, sign up to receive 1:1 free cloud licensing consultation (\$500 value) for your business.



Matt Mansfield

Staff Writer

[@MattSMansfield](#)

FREE
\$500 value



1:1 FREE CLOUD LICENSING CONSULTATION

Assess and develop an understanding how the cloud solution can save \$\$ and time for your business. Request FREE consultation.

APPLY





25 Small Business Tasks You Can Do Better in the Cloud

No matter where you turn these days, people are talking about the benefits of “working in the cloud” including:

- Saving time;
- Saving money; and
- Avoiding the hassle of managing technology yourself.

While all that sound great, it can often be hard to figure out where to start. That’s especially true if you’re a busy small business owner.

If this sounds like you, then you’re going to love this list of 25 business tasks you could do better in the cloud. To get the most from the list:

- First scan the headings to find the tasks that cost you the most to manage, take the most time to manage, and are a hassle to manage.
- Then, head on over to your favorite search engine and type the category name

followed by the word software to find online tools to help you do that task better in the cloud.

1. Appointment Scheduling

Nothing can eat up more time than scheduling client appointments. Nothing that is except for canceling and changing client appointments.

Happily, there are a number of cloud tools that take the task out of your hands by empowering your clients to manage the whole process.

2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Creating a relationship with your customers takes time and effort, including a ton of tracking. It's so much more efficient however, if you have the right cloud tool backing you up.

CRM solutions abound in the cloud so if you want to cut the amount of time you spend nurturing customers without sacrificing current and future relationships, then go take a look.

"The whole goal of building relationships is to make sales. Once again the cloud comes to the rescue with online selling tools."

3. Sales

Of course, the whole goal of building relationships is to make sales. Once again the cloud comes to the rescue with online selling tools such as Meylah online stores that help you organize and manage your sales process end-to-end.

4. Customer Support

Once you land a client, you'll need to support them. Helpdesk solutions such as AzureDesk help you coordinate and manage customer complaints and suggestions.

They even let customers help themselves and other customers via a knowledge base and community, saving you both time and money.

5. Recruiting and Hiring

Recruiting and hiring is a complex, time-intensive process. That's why you should look at the latest online tools for doing both.

These systems can handle everything for you from posting to several job sites at once to tracking the hiring process, and making the final offer to the winning candidate.

6. Hiring Freelancers

It seems that more companies are hiring freelancers these days than full-time employees. If you're looking to jump into the gig economy, then you should check out the freelance marketplaces, such as Upwork, Guru, and Fiverr, online.

Not only do these cloud solutions help you find and hire the right freelancer, they also offer project management and communication tools as well as payment options.

7. Workforce Management

Once you have your employees and freelancers onboard, you need to manage the team. Cloud-based workforce management solutions can help you manage everything from onboarding to training, professional development, reviews, and even shift scheduling for hourly employees.

8. Payroll

Paying your employees and freelancers is a complex process, fraught with regulations and tax laws. Online payroll solutions often have all those rules built-in so you can rest assured that all your i's are dotted and t's are crossed.

9. Invoicing

Getting paid yourself is always a challenge. Cloud-based invoicing takes away some of the hassle by enabling your clients to pay directly from their email, automatically alerting clients when their bill is past due, and providing end-of-year reporting that makes tax preparation that much easier.

10. Accounting

Unless you're an accountant, you probably did not go into business because you wanted to keep the books. Happily, there are tons of online options for bookkeeping, many of which enable you to give access directly to your accountant so they can handle the work.

In addition, these solutions are typically up-to-date with the latest compliance and tax regulations so you can rest easy knowing that you didn't miss something that can cost you lots down the road.

11. Time Management

Let's face it, you're busy and it's easy to lose track of what you should be working on, when. Online time management apps help you plan well, become more productive, and more importantly stay focused on your core business operations.

12. Task List Management

Aside from managing your time, you also need to manage your to-do list. Cloud-based task list tools will help you do just that with reminders, repeating tasks, and even reusable checklists.

Check off a task never felt so good.



13. Video Conferencing

While face-to-face meetings are the ideal, geographically dispersed clients and employees often make that nonviable.

Online video conferencing is the answer. Long past the days when meeting online was a frame-by-frame experience, today's solutions offer smooth video, clear audio, and all sorts of collaborative and interactive tools.

14. Collaborating

Speaking of collaborating, there's no better place to work together than in the cloud. Whether you collaborate in real time or jump in and out to exchange comments and updates, you and your team will never feel more connected, even if they're geographically separate.

15. Messaging

With the growth of tools like such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Project, it's never been easier to stay in touch with your team. Online instant messaging has long been a favorite way for businesses to connect, and it's still an efficient way to quickly communicate.

16. Cloud Storage

Your business produces a lot of digital documents. That's why you need a place to store it all. Cloud-based storage solutions are the go-to tools when you need a virtual file cabinet.

In addition to storing, some tools also enable you to index and search more easily and even share your documents selectively. In addition, you can also move your entire server and applications to platforms such as azure. If you are interested in exploring solutions, signup for free advisory services.

17. Sharing

And speaking of sharing, even if you don't have a cloud storage solution in place, you can still share your files, especially those that are too big for email, using online sharing tools.

18. Marketing Automation

Marketing is a essential to every business, but it can also be time consuming. Cloud-based marketing automation tools enable you to well, automate a lot of the tasks associated with your marketing campaigns so you can focus on the rest of your business.

19. Social Media Management

Talk about time consuming, social media can suck your whole day away. To avoid that pitfall,

make use of online social media management solutions. These tools enable you to schedule updates far in advance, track your mentions on social networks, and get alerts when you need to respond to someone.

Nothing can eat up more time than scheduling client appointments ... except for canceling and changing client appointments.

20. Email Marketing

Email marketing is alive and well, supported by a number of cloud-based solutions. You can use these tools to build a list of customers who are interested in your product, send emails manually or automatically, and track every detail like open, click-throughs, and conversions.

21. Project Management

The collaborative nature of the cloud makes it a perfect spot to manage projects. You can get the whole team on board with solutions like Microsoft Planner for Office 365 and track every step so you always know the status of a project in real time.

22. Business Intelligence

If you like numbers, then you will love cloud-based dashboards. Many of these solutions collect data related to your business, even from your own systems, and present it in colorful and easy-to-interpret charts and reports. These tools really help you stay on top of your business.



23. Automated Integration

In the old days, you used to need a team of programmers to make two solutions work together. Today, you can use online tools like Microsoft Flow to create chains of workflow that move between separate systems. The best part? No coding required!

24. Website Design

You no longer need to hire a web designer or developer to put up a good-looking, well-functioning website with eCommerce functionality. Cloud-based tools such as Microsoft ASP.NET and Visual Studio can be used to build and manage your site more easily and less expensively.

25. Back Office Management

Everything from logistics to supplies, shipping, and fleet management can be handled using online software. No matter what you need to run your business, there's likely an online solution that will keep your back office purring along smoothly.



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Microsoft One Commercial Partner Group Helps IT Providers Become Cloud Ready

IT companies are being forced to reshape their business models in a world where technologies are moving to the cloud in droves. Many need help making the transition, which is where companies like Microsoft, through the Microsoft Partner Network (MPN), play a vital role.

MPN equips Microsoft partners with training, resources and support, enabling them to become more competitive in today's marketplace.

One person responsible for helping partners take the leap into cloud-readiness is Karen Fassio, marketing director for the Worldwide Partner Group at Microsoft, the group that manages MPN. She recently spoke with Small Business Trends via telephone to discuss why IT providers should be transitioning to the Microsoft Cloud and share resources Microsoft can offer to aid in that process.

Fassio describes her role as helping IT providers take a look at the opportunities that becoming cloud-ready presents and figure out how they can reshape their business, their solutions and even the talent on their teams.

She uses a variety of approaches to accomplish that task: The Microsoft Partner Network portal, the Cloud Ready Analyzer

(a tool that helps IT companies assess their cloud-readiness) and working with teams to do partner-facing events and activities.

She also communicates regularly with the partner support community, which she says numbers in the “hundreds of thousands,” through digital media to make them (the partners) aware of all the resources Microsoft has available.

“There is a lot of marketing transformation that I’m leading with our team so that we are ensuring that Microsoft is connecting and creating a relationship with our partners in a more personalized manner,” she said. “In that way, they start experiencing a more connected, cohesive message from Microsoft.”

In addition to listing her direct responsibilities, Fassio outlined some of the ways the Worldwide Partner Group working through the MPN helps IT companies make the shift to becoming cloud-ready.

“A lot of the licensing that comes with these solutions can all be served through the cloud solution provider program”

Microsoft Cloud as Integration Point

Fassio said that through its cloud-based products and services (Office 365, Azure, CRM, etc.), Microsoft’s role is to serve as an integration point for IT providers — a backend solution that providers can build on in configuring solutions to problems their customers have. In some cases, that means a mix of on-premise and some cloud components, all in the cloud, or a hybrid of Microsoft products and other technologies.

Cloud Migration and Licensing Administration

Two additional areas where Microsoft can assist partners, according to Fassio, is in helping them migrate their customers to the cloud and in licensing, to help them close deals.

Regarding migration, she said, “We have created paths and migration solutions that make that easier to do because it sits inside a connected Microsoft technology suite.”

She added that with the advent of the cloud, administration of licensing has become more sophisticated.

“A lot of the licensing that comes with these solutions can all be served through the cloud solution provider program,” she said, “It takes the bulk of the licensing administration, tracking and utilization out of the realm of having a partner needing to manage that. Now the partner can focus on the solutions they are building for their clients while licensing-related tasks are managed by the indirect provider.”

Proof of Concept and Managed Services

Fassio emphasized two critical aspects of becoming a cloud-ready business are using proof of concept, which she refers to as a “trial or starter engagement to get a customer moving in the direction of the cloud,” and managed services.

“Managed services enables providers to utilize a subscription model that creates long-term recurring revenue rather than a point in time solution or licensing-only opportunity,” she said. “With both the proof of concept and managed service, you can move into more custom engagement, which is where a lot of our partners provide more differentiated value and earn stronger margins.”

Working with Other Partners

Fassio cited another advantage of becoming cloud-ready is that providers can move beyond their area of expertise by aligning with other partners who have differing skill sets.

“By going to the cloud, you have more options for stitching together different solutions that don’t necessarily have to be in your own skill set,” she said. “That way, you can build something that is much more comprehensive with other partners that are also in that space.”

“By going to the cloud, you have more options for stitching together different solutions that don’t necessarily have to be in your own skill set”

Cloud Competency Partner

Not only does MPN help IT companies shift to the cloud, but it also helps them gain expertise through the cloud platform competency program, which, according to Fassio, is a training and support program focused on a particular area of competency.

“For example, we have competencies that are focused on what we see partners building their practices on,” she said. “We also have a competency centered on productivity, for those partners doing a lot of Office 365 engagement and who are moving customers from a client based model to online models that can easily scale by customer demand and usage.”

Fassio added that MPN has other competency programs focused on Azure and Dynamics CRM.

Regarding competency, she said, “Partners who are part of this program are basically identifying themselves as having expertise in a particular technical area. You’ve made an investment to become cloud-ready, and now Microsoft knows who you are and can help put you in front of customers so that when they are looking for solutions in your area of expertise, your business can show up inside our customer engagement engines.”

Cloud Ready Analyzer

The Cloud Ready Analyzer mentioned previously, is a tool designed to help IT companies that are struggling with the transition to becoming cloud-ready. Partners take a self-assessment of their current states and compare that to where they want to go.

“I think what most people find is that the Analyzer helps break down each of the key areas of transformation in a very consumable, actionable way,” Fassio said, “so that you can see the next step to get your business ready for the cloud.”

Additional Resources

Microsoft has no shortage of resources to help IT companies not only become cloud-ready and gain proficiency but also to grow their business.

“We have tracks for independent software vendors, managed service provider and resellers,” Fassio said. “There are different types of scenarios that try to base them off of to help a partner go from where they are to where they want to do.”

She recommended that partners start by delving into the MPN profitability resources, which, she said can “help people think not only about the market and where the customers are but also how peers like themselves are thinking about transition.”

Providing End-to-End Solution

Fassio stressed that the Microsoft Partner Network is an end-to-end solution where partners can learn how to build and grow their business.

"We have tools that help you assess your marketing state; we provide guidance on the types of marketing activities you should engage in, and we have tools and templates and guided resources to help you develop a different marketing approach," she said.

Besides that, the network has peer-to-peer communities and in-person events that let partners connect and build relationships, enabling them to support and learn from each other.

In concluding her remarks, Fassio stated that MPN's goal is very pragmatic:

"When it comes down to it, our goal is to help our partners understand that Microsoft is on this journey with our partners. As we learn, we share. As we see new opportunities, we surface these and put resources in place to help partners take advantage of them as demonstrated through guided resources we've provided that help partners determine their personal business transformation and configure their profitability in the cloud."

Visit the Microsoft Partner Network website to learn about all the resources Microsoft has available to help partners transition to the cloud and grow their business in the process.



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HOW TO BUILD A MILLION DOLLAR BUSINESS WITH MICROSOFT CLOUD



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Our Mission

High Standards Technology, Inc.'s mission is simple: "Be the Best of the Best." Our company was established from a desire to "Be the Best of the Best" Information Technology (IT) consulting firm available to serve Houston, Texas and its surrounding areas.



IT Company Becomes Cloud-Ready Service Provider Thanks to Daughter's Insistence

Sometimes, it's a good idea to take your child's advice.

That's what Stana Steen, founder and president of High Standards Technology, Inc., an information technology company based in Houston, Texas, realized when she considered making the move from providing traditional IT solutions to becoming a cloud-ready managed services provider.

"We need to get on this cloud thing," is what her daughter (who also happens to be the company's operations director) stated emphatically during a discussion of the topic.

"I had my reservations," Steen told Small Business Trends in a telephone interview. "I had seen a lot of hype about technologies that didn't come to fruition. I told my daughter to

hold off and let's see what happens first. I just kept putting her off despite her insistence."

Steen said the tipping point came when clients began to approach her about the cloud.

"I began to receive push back from clients asking about the cloud, and was seeing companies such as Microsoft, Amazon and

Google offering cloud-based products,” she said. “I remember thinking, ‘I guess there is something to this cloud thing.’ At that point, we went to Microsoft, got certified and started onboarding clients. Now, every time we bring a client on to cloud platform, my daughter never fails to remind me that it was her idea!”

How High Standards Got Its Start

Steen started the company in 2002 based on a desire to provide, in her words, “honest” services.

“I wanted to start an IT company that was honest and told the truth to the client,” she said. “I found that not that many IT companies in our area put the needs of clients first. We wanted to differentiate ourselves in that respect, which is largely the reason we included ‘High Standards’ in the company name.

Resistance from clients usually arises for two different reasons: employees who resist change and executives concerned about costs.

Services High Standards Provides

High Standards is a Microsoft Silver midmarket cloud-ready managed services partner that serves businesses in the greater Houston area. The company also has a particular focus on providing HIPAA and PCI compliant security services.

However, to quote Steen, “We do just about anything that has to do with IT.”

The company currently employs seven staff members (including Steen’s insistent daughter).

Handling Client Resistance to Transition

Steen said that resistance from clients usually arises from two quarters, for two different reasons: employees who resist change to their work habits and executives concerned about costs.

“Employees fear that moving to the cloud will make their jobs harder and that they will have to learn new ways of doing things,” she said. “Our task is to educate them on the benefits of the cloud, convincing them that the transition will actually make doing their jobs easier and faster.”

For company executives, it’s all about the money.

“CFOs and CEOs express concerns over how moving to the cloud will affect financial data, particularly who will have access to it and be able to see it,” she said.

There are also concerns over implementation costs.

“CEOs and business owners think they own the cloud-based software and have trouble realizing that’s not the case,” she said. “We have to explain that the fee they pay each month for managed services is better from an ROI perspective. They don’t incur large expenditures from buying and maintaining a fixed server or from data migration. We try to get them to see it as an investment long-term.”

Steen says she relies on education to get clients over their fear of moving to the cloud.

“We explain how the data centers operate, how redundancies and encryption protect data and cite statistics that support our case,” she said. “We also enlighten clients on how moving to the cloud eliminates downtime, fosters group collaboration and provides anytime access.

When business owners see how a group of employees can work on one document in the SharePoint environment, that's usually all it takes to push them over to a yes."

Steen added that because the cloud has been around for a while, people are more comfortable with the idea of moving to it.

"Convincing a client usually takes anywhere from 30 to 60 days," she said. "But depending where the client's head is at, it could be as little as two weeks."

That process is often expedited when clients experience some type of disaster, such as a server crash resulting in the loss of data or even when the client realizes he can't access information when out of the office.

"We had a law firm that absolutely refused to move to the cloud," Steen said. "The company became the victim of ransomware through a phishing scheme. Files got encrypted, and the firm had to pay the ransom to retrieve them. That's when we received a call."

She was quick to point out that had the firm been a managed services client, it would "never have gotten that email in the first place."

Steen said that she often uses incentives in the form of free training to convince clients to convert.

"We provide free training through the local Microsoft retail store," she said. "It doesn't cost us anything, and we work closely with the store to provide training. I also speak there, on occasion."

Cloud Transition Timetable, Costs

Steen indicated that implementation could take as little as one to two hours per user, and that includes training. Costs average

around \$350 per user, which covers all aspects: Microsoft licensing for one year, data migration and training.

Midmarket companies with many employees could see expenditures rise into the five-figure range, but, according to Steen, costs for a company with 20 users, for example, could be as little as \$2,000.



Where the Transition Process Starts

Typically, Steen starts by migrating email, whether that involves a POP environment or in-house Exchange server.

"The reason we start with email is that it has a low impact on the client," she said. "It includes new features the client didn't have before and does not require them to change the way they work. If the company has been using Outlook, for instance, it continues to do so. It's not an imposition on their time, which makes them think, 'This cloud thing is really easy.' That's when we take them to the next step."



Challenges Cloud-ready Managed Services Providers Face

The primary challenge when moving a client to the cloud is trying to make too many changes at one time, Steen said.

“We had a law firm that absolutely refused to move to the cloud. The company became the victim of ransomware. The firm had to pay the ransom. That’s when we received a call.”

“We don’t want to overwhelm the client with all this new technology,” she said. “Our challenge is to move them through the process slowly, step-by-step. We get them onto email, and then progress to other products over time.”

Conclusion

Becoming a cloud-ready managed services provider has enabled Steen to realize her vision of providing a high standard of service that places the needs of the client ahead of her own. It’s something for which she is grateful, even if she has to give her daughter the credit.



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I Hear My Customers Talking About Cloud, How Do I Deliver and Make Money?

Customers want the cloud. They expect it. They demand it.

The only problem is, some IT providers aren't giving them what they've heard about and want.

IT companies that serve SMBs are having a tough time making the transition from providing traditional solutions to offering services in the cloud, says one industry expert.

Why is that? According to Chaitra Vedullapalli, cloud architect and CMO of Meylah, one reason is "they don't know the simple steps that will get them to add cloud offerings and still be profitable." She adds, "It's not because IT providers don't want to satisfy or wow their customers — they desperately do. It's just they are struggling for how to get there."

She went on to add, "Here's the sort of thing we hear from IT providers: 'we don't have the ability to sell and support comprehensive cloud based solutions.' My company did a survey of 300+ SMB IT firms, and that's an actual quote from one who has been in business for 5+ years. He knows it requires business change, but the owner said he didn't know how to go to market with strong recurring cloud offerings."

Vedullapalli went on to say that a phenomenon is occurring where IT infrastructure and

architecture are moving from the traditional on-premises approach and into the cloud. She adds that IT providers, many of which are small businesses themselves, are struggling to adapt with the trend.

“IT is changing because of the cloud,” Vedullapalli said. “Not too long ago, everything was housed in the organization on-site — servers, firewalls, databases and backups. Now, IT companies have to think like managed service providers and take care of their customers by stitching hardware, software, services and support together in the cloud.”

She added that the focus has shifted from “Exchange servers and Oracle databases” to mobile, cloud, big data and social.

“The tech stack is changing to accommodate mobile users, so you can’t have the data sitting on a local server any longer,” Vedullapalli said. “You need big data for analytics and social because people are connecting.”

The Cloud Ready Business Opportunity

According to a 2016 IDC report, cloud spending will exceed \$500 billion by 2020. This includes software as a service, platform as a service, infrastructure as a service and all the professional and managed services around cloud technology, as well as the supporting software and hardware to make cloud implementations happen.

“Cloud-oriented partners with more than 50 percent of their revenue in the cloud will see twice the growth and one-and-a-half times the gross profit of other partners,” Vedullapalli said, citing the report. “It’s become clear that cloud-ready businesses are more profitable and grow at a faster rate than other non-cloud providers.”

“It’s become clear that cloud-ready businesses are more profitable and grow at a faster rate than other non-cloud providers.”



4 Ways to Make Money from the Cloud

No one doubts that the cloud affords a wealth of opportunity, but the question is how to profit from its adoption. Vedullapalli outlined four ways cloud-ready businesses can make money:

- **Proof of Concept (POC).** “In the old world of IT, providers would sell licenses and someone else would implement the services,” she said. “In the new cloud world, the approach to winning the customer differs. Cloud services or managed services providers need to pitch a proof of concept. This helps both the companies to learn and tinker with the process so that they can implement on scale. Without a Proof of Concept (POC), the service provider may

A phenomenon is occurring where IT infrastructure and architecture are moving from the traditional on-premises approach and into the cloud.

never get the opportunity to attract users or engage the prospective client in a business transaction.”

- **Monthly Recurring Revenue.** In the past, IT companies would often focus on project-based engagements, which meant that when one project was completed, they had to chase down another. With the cloud, providers can now use a software subscription model that enables them

to become a managed solution provider and offer services and maintenance year-round, reducing customer churn.

- **Monthly Recurring Margins.** Vendors can make money by reselling enterprise software. “Now, everyone is a reseller,” Vedullapalli said.
- **Upsell via Custom Projects.** A fourth way to accrue income is through custom projects.

These are four ways to make money providing cloud based solutions. Are you prepared to make money?



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I'm Ready to Make Cloud Part of My Offerings To Customers; What Do I Do Next?

So you've decided you're ready to make the cloud part of your offerings to your customers.

But what's your next step to make sure you ready for this new phase of your IT business?

Once you've come to that all-important decision, it's time to really do a self-assessment, says Chaitra Vedullapalli, cloud architect and CMO of Meylah.

"I usually tell people, 'Start with the self-assessment to know where you are to help you decide where you want to be in the cloud business,'" says Vedullapalli. "It's very important to know where you are in terms of cloud readiness

before you decide what needs to be done so you can go out and get the help you need."

Among the things you should determine are how you're going to integrate cloud services into your other offerings? The business model has already been discussed. You've already taken into consideration the ways in which the new business can make you money. Now what are the steps you need to take to offer these services?

Here are some further things to consider:

6 Areas that Distinguish Cloud Readiness

According to Vedullapalli, six distinct areas encompass the various aspects of cloud readiness:

- **Business Model.** The cloud-ready business model is the foundation and a vital key to building a cloud practice. Therefore, establishing a clear business direction and strategic game plan is necessary to achieve the revenue growth.
- **Cloud Technology.** Choosing a reliable and profitable cloud technology stack will help IT companies successfully transition customer solutions to the cloud.
- **Talent Readiness.** Identifying the right people to lead the cloud transformation initiative is critical. The cloud requires a different skill set than traditional IT, Vedullapalli said.
- **Product Management and Delivery.** Cloud solutions call for constant care and feeding. If you are building a cloud product, then establishing a cloud product management team and delivery team will ease the transformation. If you are stitching cloud products from multiple vendors to create a solution, then you need to have establish vendor relationships and product competency to support the customer needs on a regular basis.
- **Sales and Marketing.** Acquiring customers demands that companies think differently about sales and marketing and focus on marketplaces, partnerships, proof of concept as an irresistible offer and use of digital media campaigns.
- **Customer Support.** Cloud solutions require a new way of supporting customers. They

focus on onboarding, addressing billing and provisioning questions, and working proactively with the product development team to address the customer challenges.

The cloud-ready business model is the foundation and a vital key to building a cloud practice.

Differences Between Traditional IT and the Cloud

The shift from traditional, on-premise infrastructure to cloud-based solutions is seismic, bringing dramatic changes that touch each of the core areas mentioned above.

For example, licensing is no longer based on annual renewals but on pay-as-you-go subscriptions that provide recurring revenue. Software releases used to only take place bi-annually. Now, they occur quarterly or even monthly. In the old days, the time to adoption could take six months to a year. Now, it requires just hours or even minutes. With all the changes, it's no wonder that IT providers have difficulty keeping up!

7 Steps to Becoming a Cloud Ready Business

Without a doubt, the invention of the cloud has disrupted the traditional IT business model and practice. And while IT companies know why they need to become cloud ready, what they don't know is how.

That's where Vedullapalli's company, Meylah, can help. Meylah offers providers a 7-step roadmap to becoming a cloud-ready business. Companies that have adopted these steps have seen success in helping existing customers and attracting new ones.

According to Stana Steen, Founder of High Standards, a cloud ready company that has implemented the seven step roadmap, “Cloud coaching is just what I needed to push my Microsoft Cloud business forward. I have been selling some Office 365 but the cloud coaching has enabled me to truly define the Microsoft offerings to be able to present them in a way to clients where they are not overwhelmed and they can really see the value in the products.

“You added accountability, which has forced me to focus on what I needed to do to move forward instead of letting my other responsibility push this planning to the back burner. My clients and future clients will benefit from my coaching as when I am well informed and understand our business model they receive better information, faster adoption, and better service.”

The steps are as follows:

- **Determine Your Profitability.** Conduct profitability planning to identify business models for building or scaling a cloud practice.
- **Assess Your Readiness.** Next, assess your readiness to understand the areas where you should invest resources and budget. Microsoft and Meylah has partnered to provide a readiness assessment tool, to make the process easier and quicker for IT companies.
- **Decide on Your Business Model and Strategy.** Develop a business strategy and change plan for building or scaling your cloud practice. Vedullapalli recommends that you work with a company who can help you focus on building a cloud business model and identify the first 100 day action plan.
- **Identify and Select Your Cloud Solutions.** Establish product management functions for developing a cloud practice. Vedullapalli recommends that you sell a cloud stack from companies such as Microsoft, Google or VMWare plus a partner solution, which could

include migration, business intelligence, ongoing maintenance, integration or customer training and support. “You are selling a comprehensive business solution that stitches a variety of products and services together, not just the cloud stack,” she said. “The more services you offer, the ‘stickier’ you become to your customers. Stitching software is the new game.”

- **Build Cloud Solution Configurations.** Identify, package and build cloud-based product integrations, applications and managed services.
- **Create a Go to Market Plan.** Develop go to market channels for promoting and distributing cloud applications and services. These could include marketplaces and via partners.
- **Develop a Customer Support Plan.** Establish a 24X7/365 customer support function to manage provisioning, billing, invoicing and activations.

Going through the process of profitability planning, determining your readiness, building a business model, identifying the customer segment you want to reach and the products you will sell, will give you clear picture of how to make yours a cloud-ready business,” Vedullapalli said. “Follow through with building out a go-to-market strategy and customer service plan and your chances of success will improve greatly.”

To learn more about how to becoming a cloud-ready business, take the FREE Microsoft cloud readiness assessment at iamreadycloud.com. Those who take the assessment will also receive a free report detailing the cloud-ready journey.



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I Have a Customer Who Wants the Cloud, How Do I Write My First Proposal?

Information technology companies transitioning to become cloud-ready not only have to rethink their approach to servicing their small business clients but also hiring the types and categories of employees they will need to be successful.

For the answer, Small Business Trends turned to Chaitra Vedullapalli, cloud architect and CMO of Meylah, a cloud and software-as-a-service strategic advisory and consulting practice.

She listed the following steps:

1. Educate the Client on What to Expect

“Before submitting a proposal, the IT provider should meet with the prospective client to

educate him on what the cloud experience will look like,” Vedullapalli said. “This meeting is designed to bring the client into alignment with how moving to the cloud can impact his business.”

The amount of detail and number of topics to be covered may require a series of meetings.

“Two to four is typical,” she said. “This is an all-important first step and must not be overlooked.”

During the meeting, the IT provider should articulate his employees' expertise, the company's operational experience and the ongoing costs for maintenance after implementing the plan, along with any new roles it will create.

The provider should also explain the pricing model, which includes the Proof of Concept (POC) and managed services subscription costs.

"Leave the meeting by validating the client's challenges and opportunities, and then get an agreement to send the proposal," she said.

The IT provider should draft a proposal that implements a complete solution.

2. Draft the Proposal Around a Complete Solution

Vedullapalli said that the IT provider should draft a proposal that implements a complete solution — "What the customer will need both now and in the future."

It should address the following data points:

Executive Summary. Describe the opportunity, cloud solution and business impact.

"Use this section to summarize the customer opportunity and solutions you will stitch together to achieve the business outcome," she said.

Define the Problem Statement and Benefits. Articulate the current landscape and challenges clients face today. This section can help providers organize the challenges in order of urgency, strategic priority, customer satisfaction and operational efficiencies.

Also, describe the benefits to the client that come by implementing a cloud solution.

"The benefits have to be quantified and tangible," Vedullapalli said. "Use metrics and

data to showcase the value you will provide by enabling a cloud solution."

- **Proposed Cloud Solution.** In this section, review the cloud solution being offered.
- **Roles and Responsibilities.** State the roles and people who will be working on the project.
- "Here, you can take the liberty to brag a little," she said. "Mention any relevant education, industry-specific training, certifications, years of experience or successful projects that relate to what you're offering. Defining roles and responsibilities upfront will help you secure alignment and commitment from your customer."
- **Pricing Estimate.** Disclose the cost, payment and schedule for delivery.
- **Case Studies and Reference Materials.** Include two or three case studies as examples and any other reference materials that would help convince the prospect to purchase the cloud solution.

Upon completion, send the proposal, and schedule a 30-minute meeting with the client to review it, get feedback and make necessary adjustments. After that, send the revised version for approval and Proof of Concept implementation.

"The IT provider should make the proposal turnkey so the prospective client can see and understand things clearly," Vedullapalli said.

She stated that the provider should also show the client a clear ROI and impact on business — what will change as a result of implementing the solution.

"This could include such factors as productivity, cost savings or new business leads," she said. "Don't say, 'We are going to enhance your business process,' but rather, 'We're going to help you reduce 30 percent cost savings by implementing the cloud solution.'"

The Proof of Concept (POC) will prove that data point, so when you go mainstream it's consistent relative to your proposal."

Vedullapalli added that, when drafting the agreement, providers should write down the objective and what the program will look like. Specify the client's responsibilities and the IT provider's role and responsibilities — what each party agrees to do and not do as the case may be.

Also, include the financial terms, timelines and good faith and non-disclosure agreements. If a Proof of Concept (POC) is involved, consider adding an incentive, such as a discount, special offer or other enhancement, to induce the client to sign, she advised.

"Providers should also refer to the contract as 'Cloud Partnership' agreement rather than a 'Project' agreement because it more accurately reflects the nature of the contract," she added.

Articulate the current landscape and challenges clients face today.

3. Define the Proof of Concept

The Proof of Concept phase comes next, and providers should base its use on metrics — the things the client wants to be accomplished.

"The Proof of Concept (POC) is a test drive to see if the proposed solution can solve the client's problem," Vedullapalli said. "It's limited in scope and time — 90 days is typical."

She said that the IT provider needs to conduct a series of educational sessions during the Proof of Concept (POC) period, training the client and his employees on topics such as how to access the cloud, what life in the cloud looks like and what the company should expect regarding its experience.

"The IT provider should make the proposal turnkey so the prospective client can see and understand things clearly."

4. Go Mainstream

Once the Proof of Concept (POC) is successful, the client should be ready to take the solution mainstream, opening it up across the breadth of the organization.

Additional Advice

Vedullapalli provided the following tips:

- **Know Your Customer.** To create a successful proposal, it's vital that providers have a thorough understanding of the client, particularly the decision-maker. "Know who the decision-maker is — the person who can champion or drive the transformation," she said. "You want someone who is 'checked in,' the right leader. It takes leadership on the part of the client to make this work."
- **Provide a Turnkey Solution.** Make sure the solution is turnkey and very clear — not something "hodge-podge," to use her term. Include start and end dates, and showcase only the product or solution that is ideally suited to the customer," she said.
- **Clarify What the POC Includes.** In the proposal, explain exactly what the POC will involve. "Don't say it will cover everything," she said. "Be specific. If it's only about email, then say that. Keep the Proof of Concept very targeted."



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I'm Ready to Offer Cloud as a Service, How Do I Assemble My Dream Team?

Information technology companies transitioning to become cloud-ready not only have to rethink their approach to servicing their small business clients but also hiring the types and categories of employees they will need to be successful.

Following is a list of roles, broken out by category, that comprise what might be referred to as a cloud-based IT business “dream team.” To some extent, it differs from the roles played by employees in traditional IT companies.

It's worth noting that, depending on the size of the enterprise, employees could shoulder more than one role. Smaller companies — those with 25 or fewer employees — may consider outsourcing some of the functions to trusted third-party providers.

Business Leadership

Decision Maker

Every IT company needs a decision maker who focuses on building a successful cloud business. This person may or may not be the CEO.

Regardless of title, the decision maker concentrates on identifying opportunities, establishing cloud capacity and allocating the right investments to achieve the company's financial goals.

Attorney

Every cloud-based IT business needs an attorney who understands and approves all cloud service contracts. This person helps to establish contractual commitments, identify risks and provide win-win solutions between the various cloud service provider partners and the IT company.

Accountant

The key to building a successful cloud business lies in generating monthly recurring revenue from multiple sources.

A cloud accountant should be proficient in understanding cloud revenue models, provide guidance around tracking solutions and prepare the correct tax report for the business.

Technology

Chief Information Officer (CIO)

The CIO plays a key role in implementing cloud solutions with customers, enhancing automation, and running cloud solutions closely with all teams — product, product management and sales and marketing. He also coordinates with customer support and ensures legal sign-off.

Cloud Security, Compliance and Privacy

This role is responsible for defining the cloud security, compliance and privacy policy and signing off on the cloud-ready plan.

Every cloud-based IT business needs an attorney who understands and approves all cloud service contracts.



Sales and Marketing

Business Development

Cloud companies need to invest in business development managers as they collaborate with cloud vendors, channel partners and distributors to identify new market opportunities.

Cloud Solution Sales

The cloud solution sales role sells cloud solutions directly to customers.

Marketing

The marketing team seeks to drive customer leads through all marketing channels, such as events, social media, email and advertising.

Product Management

Cloud Architects

Cloud architects are responsible for administering a company's cloud computing

strategy. This includes cloud adoption plans, application design and cloud management and monitoring.

Product Managers

Those who serve this role define, prioritize and plan product specifications of cloud solutions prescribed by the company.

Developers

This group spearheads the development and implementation of cloud solutions.

Designers

Designers create the right UI/UX for a cloud solution.

The decision maker identifying opportunities, establishing cloud capacity and allocating the right investments.

Customer Support

Tier 1 Support Engineers

Tier 1 engineers work directly with customers and with Tier 2/3 to resolve any issues or challenges faced.

Tier 2/3 – DevOps

This group operates internally with all the necessary teams to find a resolution.

Conclusion

As you can see, the roles a cloud-ready IT business needs are broad and varied. While some small to medium-sized businesses need expert help from the outset, others may require intervention at different levels. The right mix of employees can enable an IT provider to offer cloud services across the entire spectrum.



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MyWorkDrive

Web File Manager

IT Company Builds Software Platform for Cloud-ready Companies and Those That Aren't

Business partners Rob Schenk and Dan Gordon, founders of Intivix, an IT company based in San Francisco, are serious about the Cloud. So serious that not only do they offer many cloud-based services to their clients, but they also have funded and developed a remote access solution that enables businesses to get to their files either from on-premise servers or those hosted in the cloud.

The solution, called MyWorkDrive, was designed with simplicity in mind, born out of clients' frustrations over problems with accessibility.

"I just want to be able to access my work files reliably without a bunch of hassles," said Gordon in a telephone interview with Small Business Trends, referring to complaints he had received from clients.

In the past, remote access required the use of complex VPNs and error-prone syncing software — a problem Schenk and Gordon determined to resolve. Furthermore, other clients didn't feel comfortable moving all their files to a cloud-only based service like DropBox.

"Clients wanted the flexibility of gaining access to files from anywhere, just as if they were in their office," he said. "We tested and reviewed

many solutions and ended up not finding anything that was the right fit. Platforms were either very expensive, very cumbersome or challenging to maintain.”

Instead of a third-party platform, Schenk and Gordon built MyWorkDrive, a direct and easy way for customers to get to their files from any location, using both desktop and mobile devices (browser-based or the familiar mapped drive mechanism).

“MyWorkDrive natively integrates with the security and permissions of Active Directory that’s already set up for all our customers, so we didn’t have to reinvent that stuff,” Gordon said. “We wanted something very simple, very targeted and tied right into Microsoft Active Directory. That’s where we’re at today.”

Gordon added that, with marketing efforts now in place, many MSPs are beginning to use the product, in addition to all of Intivix’s clients.

A unique feature only available with MyWorkDrive, according to Gordon, lets users double-click on a document right from the web, edit it directly in Office or in Office 365 and save it back to the local or cloud-based server.

“We can open it in Office 365 and conduct searches on the file server, to give people a full experience without them having to install anything on their computer,” he said. “We have a patented connector that they can enable (with no firewall rules or certificates to deal with), and then their server will be available online once we install the software, which takes about 20 minutes.”

Gordon cited one company that has a large file server consisting of eight terabytes of data as an example of MyWorkDrive’s capabilities.

“The company has a lot of staff who have to go out and take a number of photos in the field,” he said. “Being able to access those [photos]

from anywhere, with indexed search, along with the ability to upload massive amounts of files from a service at gigabit speed, makes MyWorkDrive a good option for them.”

Pricing for MyWorkDrive ranges from \$49.99 per month for up to 20 users to \$1,200 for an enterprise license that supports 500 users. The company makes custom pricing available for corporations with a larger user base. In addition, they are actively collaborating with Managed Service Providers around the world to join their partner channel with compelling partner discount and internal use rights.

“Clients wanted the flexibility of gaining access to files from anywhere, just as if they were in their office.”

While MyWorkDrive takes up much of Schenk’s and Gordon’s time, Intivix does offer other cloud-based services, including hosting through Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services, as well as migration to Office 365 and Google for Work.

When asked about the risks and problems associated with transitioning clients to the cloud, Gordon takes a measured tone, saying that people get sold on cloud solutions without thinking through all the ramifications.

“We’ve picked up clients who didn’t do proper requirements gathering before they migrated to a cloud solution and have been unhappy with the results.” he said. “Ultimately, they end up going through a migration with another provider and realize later that it doesn’t support all their requirements like Office 365 Email does. ‘It doesn’t have the Outlook feature that our users want’ they say, for example. In the

end, we have worked with clients where we had to redo the migration away from other cloud solutions.”

“We’ve picked up clients who didn’t do proper requirements gathering before they migrated to a cloud solution and have been unhappy with the results”

Gordon feels that many times, customers simply give in to the hype surrounding the benefits the cloud is supposed to provide, but that fall short when put into practice.

“They don’t really even know or understand what the word ‘cloud’ means,” he said. “They think, ‘It’s going to save me money. It’s going to make my life easier.’ When that doesn’t happen then they have to deal with the ramifications.”

While Gordon asserts that the cloud isn’t right for everyone, he believes certain applications could be beneficial.

“I would say there are targeted cloud applications that make a huge amount of sense for companies,” he said, “but it’s not for everyone at this point.”

He cited Office 365 as an example.

“I think you’ve seen a lot of people moving to Office 365,” he said. “That’s a very targeted solution that makes a lot of sense, that makes emails what the phone used to be.”

Regarding full implementation, however, Gordon said that as long as security and bandwidth aren’t an issue using cloud-based applications can be a useful strategy but can also be a disaster if not well thought through.

He does agree that in five to ten years, the cloud may be more ubiquitous but at this juncture, there are legacy-type businesses whose workflows, training and knowledge levels have not sufficiently advanced to the point where full adoption makes sense. It’s a pragmatic approach that takes into account where his client companies are regarding readiness.

“Companies are biting off more than they can chew in moving to the cloud when all they’re looking for, in many cases, is akin to what they already have,” he said. “That’s why MyWorkDrive isn’t exclusively cloud-based but also incorporates access to on-premise servers. It’s a solution that can accommodate everyone. It allows companies space to move to the cloud at their own pace.”



MyWorkDrive invites all Managed Services Providers around the globe to explore their solution as a simple pathway to creating additional cloud recurring revenue by participating in their partner channel.



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5 Ways to Keep the Cloud from Becoming Too Expensive

It's a long established fact that moving to the Cloud can save your small business money.

However, there are costs associated with using Cloud services and, while they may seem small at first, they can add up to a lot if you're not careful.

If you want to continue to reap the bottom-line benefits of working in the Cloud, you need to take steps to keep your Cloud computing costs down. To do so, here are some tips on how to keep the Cloud from becoming too expensive.

No Standalones

Cloud services come in all shapes and sizes. Many services are standalone and that can contribute to rising Cloud costs.

As mentioned above, the cost of Cloud computing can really add up if you're not careful. With standalone services, that risk is higher. It's easy to fall into the "How can \$50 a month here and \$100 a month there really hurt?" trap. Before you know it, you've blown your Cloud budget sky high.

One of the best ways to combat this problem is to find a service provider that offers a suite

of products that all work together. This is often a less expensive solution than group of standalone products.

In addition, buying from one provider gives you a central point of problem resolution and that can save you a lot of time, and thus money, down the road.

Find a service provider that offers a suite of products that all work together.

Experience Counts

If you do have to integrate a standalone Cloud service with your suite, make sure you hire an experienced integration consultant to do the work.

Integration is often complex and an experienced consultant can typically finish the job in less time, leading to a lower cost.

In addition, integration mistakes can cause downtime and errors, both of which eat up lots of resources. Make sure your consultant knows what they're doing before you bring them on board.

Prioritize Backups

If you treat all of your data the same, the storage of your cloud backups can get very expensive, really fast. To keep that cost low, you need to examine what you're storing in the Cloud against questions like these:

- How many versions of this data do you need to store long-term? The more versions you store, the more Cloud storage will cost.
- What regulatory demands do you need to meet? Some of your data may need to be accessible for say, five years, while you may be able to delete other data after ninety days.
- How quickly would you need to access the backup? If you can wait a day or two, you can archive that data to a less expensive server or even offline at your provider's data center.

Integration is often complex and an experienced consultant can typically finish the job in less time, leading to a lower cost.



It's useful to schedule a regular audit, once every six months to a year, to assure that your user list in the Cloud is up to date.

Remove Users

Many Cloud service providers charge fees by the number of users your business has in their system. If you don't maintain your list of users, you could be paying for people who've left the company long after they're gone.

To avoid this, you need to put processes into place that remove users from the system when necessary. In addition, it's useful to schedule a regular audit, once every six months to a year, to assure that your user list in the Cloud is up to date.

Proactively Monitor

Lastly, ask your Cloud provider if they can proactively monitor your account so they can

warn you of an issue before it becomes a real problem. This is especially important if you have a "pay-as-you-go" license that charges based on resource and storage use.

This will help you avoid a big surprise when you open the monthly bill from your Cloud service provider.

If you do receive a surprise, work with your service provider to monitor your usage in the future. In addition, ask them for cost management advice. It may seem counter-intuitive to ask your service provider how you can keep the Cloud from becoming too expensive; however, your value as a long-term customer is higher than a higher monthly fee.



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11 Mistakes Most Companies Make When Managing Cloud Policies

Cloud is already a buzz word. By the year 2020, 80% of companies will adopt cloud powered technologies. According to a recent survey by the Ponemon Institute, there are 36% of businesses that do not have a centralized cloud security policy in place.

You might think the big technology companies know exactly how to encrypt their data, allow their employees to work remotely and increase their profitability by moving to the cloud.

But it turns out this observation is still incorrect. In fact, most successful cloud companies tend to automate their policies, schedule their common tasks and focus on winning customers.

So, are you looking to win customers, keep your employees happy or increase your profitability, here are few common mistakes you should fix immediately. Your customers will appreciate your automation and so will you.

1. Backup is the mantra every developer should follow. However, it is a time-consuming task if done manually. In addition, you are not taking advantage of cloud backup solution.

2. Lack of Cloud Encryption to store your data and files: Cloud encryption is a service offered by cloud storage providers whereby data, or text, is transformed using encryption algorithms and is then placed in a storage cloud. However, your company is not implementing policies to adopt cloud encryption.

“Backup is the mantra every developer should follow. However, it is a time-consuming task if done manually”

3. Data syncing is not happening: Synchronization is a fundamental element of software development and data sharing. Employees are getting frustrated because of not being able to sync their code or data using the current tools causing productivity losses.

4. Scaling and downsizing of the cloud environment is a big challenge: Your cloud environment is not setup for auto-scaling and downsizing to meet demand. Your customers are facing poor experience with your applications.

5. You are not able to implement customer compliance standards which in turn impacts your future contracts

6. Unable to track Cloud Inventory which is creating a licensing nightmare and is impacting your profitability

7. Scheduling of cloud activities is all done manually which requires you to have a dedicated headcount.

8. You are not tracking cloud policy violations every day which may impact your bottom line.

9. You are not monitoring cloud performance hence you don't know what to expect

10. You are not able to see daily Data Logs which will impact your ability to triage any issues around hacks or outages.

11. Roles and Responsibilities are not enforced in the customer environment

The great news is that we can address all the 11 mistakes in less than a week. Sounds crazy, right?

We have recently found a platform called CoreStack by CloudEnablers which solves these challenges. CoreStack is designed to help companies adopt cloud or hybrid cloud by automating cloud policies in days. It offers dashboards, templates and automation scripts to help your teams streamline your operational needs to increase productivity and efficiency.

“Your cloud environment is not setup for auto-scaling and downsizing to meet demand”

You and your team will bring down the regular deployment and monitoring time by 80% of what it is right now.

If you are thinking of adopting cloud, request a demo to learn how CloudEnablers can simplify your cloud journey.



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How to Close a Million Dollar Business With Microsoft Cloud

Information Technology companies across the globe have woken up to the benefits of cloud technology, and the fast-movers in the industry are already reaping its benefits in the market.

There are many instances of how cloud transformation has helped companies catapult their businesses and bag million dollar deals. Here's the story of how Florida-based ACTS Solutions, a multi-gold cloud competency nationally-managed partner of Microsoft, closed a million dollar business using Microsoft Cloud.

Addressing Client Challenges Through Cloud

ACTS Solutions was an established ISV

and technology solution provider when a large transportation and logistics company approached it to explore IT solutions towards achieving multiple goals. A technology specialist company with 15 years in the market, ACTS was asked to help the client strengthen its in-house operational efficiencies, improve product innovation and create long-term value in the market.

A closer look at the client's business helped ACTS, assess where the company stood in terms of each of its goals:

- **Operational Efficiencies:**

This prospective client had already invested significantly to maintain their infrastructure. The company's management team wanted to identify operational efficiencies across-the-board and, was aware that ongoing operational costs could be reduced by deployment of Cloud technology.

- **Product Innovation:**

Customer analytics was not traditionally provided to partners, and there was a desire to be more competitive by giving strategic insights and benchmarking tools to help everyone achieve their goals. There was evidently a need for transparency and better tools for running their business.

- **Lifetime Value:**

The company strives to add significant value to their customer base. They wanted to know how to identify customer value points through their data so that they could ensure those programs get right investments to create long-term satisfied customers.

As the ACTS team analyzed the client's goals and operational environment, the challenges in the way also emerged. For instance, the company was using a rigid on-premise IT infrastructure. It was not easy to make quick changes to the business to cater to the needs of customers were cumbersome. Moreover, the existing business intelligence and data visualization platforms were inadequate to draw deeper insights from humungous amount of dynamic data they produced every day.

How ACTS Went About it

Analysis

Based on the business analysis, ACTS understood that the transportation company was already using some legacy SharePoint and web-based technologies to engage with their customers. ACTS studied different business situations with them and identified potential solutions. They encapsulated good value propositions that could be built with better business insights and predictive capabilities from Microsoft on the Azure platform, leveraging aspects of the Cortana Intelligent Suite.

Customer was very happy with the POC results and asked ACTS to provide a complete proposal for Cloud Transformation

Proof of Concept: 4 weeks

ACTS put together a Proof of Concept (POC) on the fly in just a week and iterated it with the customer's feedback in less than 60 hours. This provided the needed insights to help them identify the right value products in which they should increase their investment.

ACTS Architected a Cloud Solution to Achieve Their Vision:

Started with enabling Business Intelligence and Insights to identify value offering and provided relevant insights to the leadership team to jumpstart product innovation.

Proposed to the leadership team to invest in Cloud Transformation program. ACTS identified 5 core ideas to invest in the Cloud First program:

- Migrations
- Product Innovation
- Data and Business Intelligence
- Machine Learning
- Ongoing Managed Services

In their million-dollar proposal, they put together a comprehensive solution map that focused on the following areas:

- Change Management
- Rapid Product Innovation Environment on Azure
- Migration of Servers to Drive Innovation and Data Insights
- BI and Insights Solutions using Power BI/ Power BI Embedded
- Managing Production Environments
- Hosting
- Managed Services for Managing Cloud Solutions

Making it Happen With the Customer

- Established Cloud education for the leadership team and their respective teams: The customer did not understand the business opportunity that would come with migrating to Azure. Thus, there was resistance from the leadership team to Cloud transition and IT staffers were insecure as they felt their jobs were at risk.
- The IT leadership was weary of the possible downtime, security, and privacy issues and ACTS addressed these concerns.

- ACTS made the leadership team understand that the transition didn't just offer a technology feature set but an opportunity to save a tremendous amount of cost and to earn more revenue.
- It also talked to the IT team, assuring them that it was an opportunity to enhance their skillsets with in-demand technologies and not to see it as a job risk.
- ACTS created Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) spreadsheets, an executive PowerPoint deck, and came up with the best message for the customer to take all roles into consideration during the decision-making phase.
- They made the customer feel comfortable with the speed and agility of the Cloud solutions on offer.



Collaborated With Microsoft Teams

- Secured Business Investment Funds (BIF) funds to cover the Proof of Concept (POC) overhead costs
- Leveraged Advanced Partner Advisory services
- Used Internal Use Rights (IUR) benefits to

setup Power BI environment

- Invited the Microsoft leadership folks to connect with their company leadership team to discuss security, privacy, and downtime related to Azure
- Established ongoing checkpoints to explore new technologies to drive technology innovations

Outcome for ACTS

- Won over 1 million dollars of business in the form of monthly recurring revenue (MRR) with Azure and Power BI solutions and ongoing maintenance/services
- Acquired a long-term customer
- Created a blueprint for a predictable revenue model for future client engagements

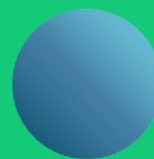
To ACTS, winning the million dollar deal began with understanding the client's organizational premises and plugging the gaps in their infrastructure with more agile and efficient Cloud solutions. A successful Proof of Concept (POC) implementation was followed up with education to the client that adopting Cloud solutions promised better value to time and investment. ACTS succeeded by assisting the client all along the transformation, while collaborating with Microsoft teams in the journey and overall, by following a slick business plan.



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Sometimes the business world makes my job so easy.

Take 'SaaS.' It's a nice little acronym with some odd capitalization and a palindrome for fun. And as soon as I saw it, this cartoon wrote itself.

I'm assuming this is software as a service as a service, but I think you could make that last "s" whatever you'd like.

Any other ideas what it might stand for?



Mark Anderson

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Mark Anderson's cartoons appear in publications including. *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reader's Digest*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Forbes*. Anderson is the creator of the popular cartoon website, Andertoons.com. The cartoonist also creates custom cartoons for companies looking to associate his gentle wit with their products and brands. He blogs at: Andertoons Cartoon Blog.

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