

# Move Beyond Cloud Migration to Cloud Innovation: How to Ensure a Future-Proof Solution



There's no doubt that the single biggest driver of digital transformation in the last few years is cloud computing. The cloud has irrevocably changed how we think about work and productivity, and in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have taken this disruption as an opportunity to review their cloud commitments and determine whether any improvements can be made.

While many people point to the pandemic as a driver of large-scale cloud adoption, the reality is that businesses were already moving in that direction<sup>1</sup> before the beginning of 2020. However, the pandemic did speed up that timeline. 40% of businesses surveyed in 451's "Voice of the Enterprise: Cloud, Hosting & Managed Services, Budgets & Outlook 2021" survey reported that they had increased their usage of the public cloud due to the pandemic. Among those that were happy with the change, 85% said that this move would be permanent.

In addition to speeding up usage, there are other factors at play. Short-term fixes that were put in place during the pandemic could have long term repercussions. Work-around solutions to support remote workers may not be viable in the long-term, as many companies are moving to bring workers back to the office either full- or part-time. Moreover, when business continuity was the priority, security and feature functionality concerns may have taken a back seat – or not been considered at all.

As we emerge from “panic mode” to the long-term reality that hybrid workforces are here to stay, IT leaders must take a long hard look to re-evaluate their current cloud adoption or migration plan and rethink any strategies that are not offering the desired combination of value, cost, and features.

The best cloud solutions are not the ones that simply offer a safe and accessible place for your data, apps, and programs. Instead, your cloud services should be innovative and offer unlimited opportunities that can facilitate the digital transformation of your organization. A closer look at the challenges of cloud innovation can show how businesses can ensure their solutions support their needs both now and in the future.

## The Challenges of Cloud Innovation

Even the most adept IT leaders find it challenging to keep up with advancements in cloud technology. After migration, cloud solutions need to be continually updated and new apps installed, managed, and taught to colleagues so they can be used appropriately. Knowing which apps to pick, how to manage them correctly, and what vendors should be chosen is a continuous learning experience.

In addition to the hands-on management of the business's cloud solutions, CISOs also need to be continually innovating the performance and security of their user's connection to cloud applications.

Many CISOs are supporting multi-site integration and varied tech communication needs across their workforce, including teams that are increasingly remote or working in a flexible, hybrid model. The CISO's ability to balance platform agility and security will take on increasing importance.

In order to do more with less, CISOs and their teams must choose vendors, products, and services that ensure network reliability and security while also supporting emerging business requirements and realities. Practically, this means 24/7 customer support and the ability to add and remove features without renegotiating the entire package or deal.

## Why Choose SD-WAN?

With so many challenges facing CISOs today, it's no surprise that many of the most forward-thinking IT experts are choosing SD-WAN as a way to facilitate communication and collaboration between coworkers and customers.

Gartner predicts by 2024, to enhance agility and support for cloud applications, 60% of enterprises will have implemented SD-WAN, compared with about 30% in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

SD-WAN, or software-defined wide area networking, won acceptance as an alternative to the traditional MPLS circuits that were used to connect geographically separated offices, branches, or campuses to the business-critical data and

applications that were hosted on servers either at a data center or at company HQ. This approach worked in the past, but now that the cloud is an essential consideration, SD-WAN needs have evolved in terms of accessibility, flexibility, or security.

### The Benefits of SD-WAN

Using SD-WAN for your cloud migration can help mitigate most issues and ensure a more consistent and reliable experience as you make this important change, particularly in the areas of security, flexibility, and management.

#### Increased Security

While many organizations are moving to the cloud, the reality is that the cloud applications need to be secured just like any other applications. If it is not configured properly, it increases an organization's exposure – leaving critical gaps that could be exploited by cyber criminals and other bad actors.

With data breaches soaring and ransomware costs expected to reach \$265 billion by 2031,<sup>3</sup> organizations cannot simply treat cyber security as an afterthought. Instead of laying a cyber security blanket over their cloud system, they must ensure that it is integrated at every level of their infrastructure. While most SD-WAN solutions include at least session layer security, companies still require application layer security. This can be achieved by including an application layer firewall in the solution, or an integrated, secure, SD-WAN solution that incorporates the application firewall and the SD-WAN traffic management in a single device.

#### Flexibility

In addition to considering security, IT leaders should also be seeking out solutions that offer flexibility. SD-WAN can be configured to optimize WAN connections, offering a greater amount of flexibility than traditional MPLS. Plus, SD-WAN can scale easily, which means that adding or removing locations is simple and straightforward, particularly when internet bandwidth is readily available. This is a huge benefit when your workforce needs the flexibility to choose between in-person or remote work.

#### Easy, Centralized Management

SD-WAN solutions offer centralized management platforms which not only provide an integrated view of service performance but also streamline installation and management of SD-WAN networks, whether managed directly by the customer or by their service provider. This means faster installations and identification and resolution of potential service issues before they become service outages.

#### Securing Remote Access With SASE

As the industry evolves, we see a convergence of networking and security. SD-WAN platforms are responding by adding more robust security features to meet a broader range of customer needs that traditionally required different equipment and platforms.

SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) is a cyber security concept defined by Gartner that combines the features of SD-WAN with security deployed as a service in a single, cloud-delivered service model. This eliminates the need to have security routed through one central chokepoint, and instead allows it to be deployed throughout the cloud so it's accessible to every connection regardless of its location.

A SASE architecture identifies users and devices, applies policy-based security, and delivers secure access to the appropriate application or data. IT leaders looking to develop a smart approach to SASE should focus on combining industry-leading security with SD-WAN capabilities in order to deliver exceptional user experiences while reducing security risk.

#### How To Choose the Right Provider

While it's clear that SD-WAN is helping IT teams move at the speed of today's digital innovation, what's not clear is how to pick the best provider in a crowded market with many disparate technology and service options. CIOs and CTOs need to consider many factors including developing a manageable migration plan, reducing risk by implementing the best security, and, perhaps most importantly, eliminating complexity and redundant vendors. It's important to work with a partner who understands your needs and goals and can help you develop a

plan that addresses your needs today while preparing you for tomorrow.

As a next-generation aggregator, Spectrotel takes a unique approach in working with customers. Our experienced solutions architects collaborate with you to understand your specific requirements and take an expansive but unified approach to crafting a solution with the right technology mix. We understand the importance of designing, implementing, and managing customer-specific solutions that make sense for your business, from your pain points to your long-term goals and everything in between.

#### Sources:

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3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chuckbrooks/2021/10/24/more-alarming-cybersecurity-stats-for-2021/>

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