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TECHNOLOGY FOCUS



## Side by side: taking a dual approach to technology development

Innovative ways of working attract initial attention for their novelty, but they succeed or fail on their utility. Technologists positively downplay the gee-whiz factor these days, rightly focusing on the benefits of new developments. But there tends to be less stress on one big reality of all technological change: since truly radical breaks with the past are vanishingly rare, innovations have to work alongside what is already in place.

As Greg Ness explores in our guest article this month, cloud computing is set to follow this now-classic path of innovation. The cloud is not going to be the answer to every question, but it will have a strong role to play in many business processes. It is for decision-makers to understand where they can best exploit this technology in their own settings. That is likely to mean a mixed approach.

We can only get real value from technology when we domesticate it. It is there to serve, not dazzle. Cloud computing is an important development in our ability to treat processing and storage as commodities. However, it does not remove the need to understand what is best for the business. ■

Gregory Maciag is president and chief executive of ACORD. He can be reached by email at [gmaciag@acord.org](mailto:gmaciag@acord.org)



# Build your own cloud?

Designing a hybrid cloud for your company could be the way forward



Gregory Ness,  
vice-president  
of marketing  
CloudVelocity

Amazon has become the leader in the public cloud infrastructure market with an estimated \$2bn expected in 2012 public cloud revenues. The company has executed well (except for a few high-profile outages) and has captured the attention of virtually every IT pro with its public cloud offerings. Yet is the public cloud today right for your firm?

Many larger enterprises, especially those processing financial transactions, have opted to keep their mission-critical apps out of the public cloud. Some have dabbled in cloud, including deploying private clouds with server virtualisation technology in their own data centres.

Yet on the horizon many chief information officers (CIOs) are tracking a new cloud operating model: hybrid cloud.

### Why hybrid?

The adoption of new hybrid cloud operating models promises to transform the cloud industry in a profound way. Hybrid cloud solutions will drive adoption by automating the processes that allow apps and services to operate seamlessly across data centres and clouds. The approach will appeal to CIOs who want the operating benefits of public and private cloud models but prefer to keep operational control of their apps and services. That is, no lock-in within a service provider's cloud or having to standardise all apps and services on a single virtualisation vendor's platform.

With hybrid cloud, enterprises seamlessly leverage their existing apps in existing data centres along with external cloud and colocation. Enterprises build and own their clouds as they run across multiple infrastructures and data centres.

Silicon Valley is buzzing with breakthroughs that could make this a reality sooner than you think.

### The barrier: process complexity

Today there are substantial deployment and operating challenges



The adoption of new hybrid cloud models 'promises to transform the cloud industry in a profound way'

with hybrid cloud deployment. Most are addressed by specialised consultants and often require months of preparation.

Technologies that enable cloud-integrated data centres are new to market and yet evolving quickly. Many of them require substantial manual labour and high-risk processes, especially with existing multi-tier apps and services. Some require virtualisation or are limited to a single server or app.

Yet the ability to integrate a cloud with a data centre is the "killer app" for the accelerated adoption of cloud within the enterprise. Even half-steps are steps forward.

Many cloud providers will have powerful incentives to deliver on the hybrid cloud promise. Those that can integrate their infrastructures and services with enterprise data centres quickly and with low risk have the potential to dominate the market. Datamation recently predicted hybrid cloud management will top \$3.6bn by 2016. That is heady growth for a market today dominated by early stage technologies.

### Room to manoeuvre

CIOs do not want to be locked into a third party's offering and unable to move easily to another offering if the need arises. They want to apply technologies when and

where they need them. They want control. In the words of Virtustream chief executive Rodney Rogers: "Unlike those sexy startups, I have a lot of time, capital and expertise invested in my IT infrastructure. Flip a switch to holistic unsupported self-service commodity public cloud? No. I'm going to use existing assets where it makes sense, leverage new technologies (potentially yours included) for the same reason and apply those new technologies by required use-case. There might be something to this hybrid cloud thing after all..."

Hybrid cloud is about operating apps and services across apps and data centres without vendor or service provider lock-in. That leaves the hybrid cloud door open for other companies to pass through as the market develops.

### How hybrid cloud will be likely to evolve

Hybrid cloud is an optimum software development and test environment because critical services can be identical between clouds and corporate data centres. Apps can be updated with minimal errors because they can be tested in a close replica of the true operating environment. This supports the idea of agile software development, an initiative within many firms.

Hybrid cloud could also be used for cloud failover, or used in case of an outage on premises or in another cloud region. Of course, with the evolution of hybrid cloud, enterprises will look beyond cloud migration and into cloud integration. They get the mobility and control they want with the economics of cloud.

### Cloud is not always cheaper

Public cloud has been trumpeted as a cost-savings measure, yet it is not always cheaper. For predictable workloads, cloud computing can actually be more expensive than dedicated infrastructure.

Early in 2012 some CIOs started talking about the advantage of "owning the base, renting the spike" versus being stuck in a single cloud. Yet most companies do not have the expertise to deploy their apps for cloud bursting, the next promising hybrid cloud solution. When cloud bursting arrives it could be even more economical than public and private cloud as well as premise infrastructure. Expect automated cloud bursting solutions to arrive end of this year and next. ■

Gregory Ness' Archimedeus blog is among the world's top blogs on cloud computing.