

Reach for the Cloud: Choosing the Right Model to Help Your Mission Soar

In a recent [survey](#), 42 percent of 300 Federal IT leaders said at least half the IT they use for work needs to be updated, with one in two respondents saying that cloud should be one of the most important agency technologies.

And while there has been a tremendous push to modernize and build resilient government services over the past year, Federal leaders emphasized the need to consider modernization a continuous project at a joint [conference](#) in January, sponsored by MeriTalk, ACT-IAC, and Partnership for Public Service.

“Resiliency in IT modernization needs to be treated like a marathon and not a sprint,” [said](#) Department of Labor CIO Gundeep Ahluwalia.

Officials also discussed the importance of making sure agencies are utilizing cloud services in the correct ways. “There was a time if you recall when people would say, ‘I don’t want my data in the cloud, I’m afraid,’” Dorothy Aronson, CIO for the National Science Foundation, [said](#). “The world has changed completely ... now sometimes people will say I want this in the cloud, and you have to really decide if that’s the right thing to do.”

Rob Davies, chief operating officer at ViON Corporation agrees, emphasizing that cloud models – whether public or private and on-premise – offer the greatest opportunity to address modernization challenges. He cautions that cloud does not always mean public cloud, and that not all clouds are created equal.

At Dell Technologies, Chief Technology Officer Cameron Chehreh says hybrid or multi-clouds are the best way to keep data secure, as they lower complexity and risk, and create systems that are transparent and efficient.

“By building on a consistent hybrid cloud – across private and multiple public clouds – organizations can quickly respond to a changing technology landscape and protect their investment with an adaptable solution,” he said.

Davies agrees, saying on-premise private clouds are often the right choice for Federal workloads. “Fundamentally, they can help agencies manage risk by diversifying operations and avoiding consolidating all data and applications into one platform. Additionally, in today’s environment, where agencies are accessing historical data for AI and advanced analytics, they won’t have to contend with the high cost of moving data in and out of the cloud. IT organizations are still astounded at the real cost of having data move in/out of the public cloud.”

Cloud Requires New Operational and Management Tools

Managing cloud environments is a whole new ballgame from an enterprise perspective, says Andy Flick, director of cloud services at ViON. Agencies need cost-effective scalability. An as-a-Service IT consumption model (whether in a public or private cloud) gives agencies

better cost control, vendor accountability, and visibility into asset utilization.

“Agencies are starting to see the importance of streamlining procurement cycles as a critical feature to cloud models,” says Flick. “Using as-a-Service procurements, many agencies have regained valuable engineering time for their staffs. All IT capacity purchased is ‘ready for use’ in the as-a-Service model, which makes the procurement process easier and less time consuming. And perhaps most importantly, agencies can more quickly adapt to new scenarios and take advantage of new technologies.”

Flick says the shift to cloud requires new operational tools to monitor and analyze system performance; and new management tools, to collect, correlate, and report information vital to the business of data centers. As a result, reskilling the workforce to take advantage of these tools is essential to cloud migration.

“The impact we’ve seen in agencies that have moved to as-a-Service or consumption-based models is huge,” said Flick.

“Their staff have more meaningful jobs,” he said. “Agency leaders have the information they need and when a new question arises, they have a service provider to help them. The agencies are now working with service providers whose contracts are *directly* tied to the outcomes needed to support mission requirements.”

Cloud adoption reduces an agency’s management and operational complexities. Agencies get faster access to technology without making continuous upgrades to storage, networking, and computing systems. With cloud, there’s less need to focus on workloads, performance, security, and software availability.

“IT leaders properly align and tune the organization so they spend less time comparing what technology is where, and more time supporting teams with the right tools,” said Davies.

“The focus is put exactly where it should be – on the mission,” he said.