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Configuring Success:

Leveraging Managed Cloud Hosting for Better Control and Compliance

When it comes to managed cloud services, is it sunny days ahead – or stormy weather?

In the early days of server management, database administrators (DBAs) walked the racks, armed with brick-sized cellphones and pagers dangling from their belt loops.

Today's DBAs still play an invaluable role managing and monitoring on-site data centers. However, IT teams are increasingly focused on strategic objectives, such as crafting technology strategies to support business growth and accelerate and improve operations.

Most are also tackling the growing challenge of big data: planning enterprise-level initiatives that will allow them to mine, model and exploit the vast untapped wealth of unstructured data that exists both inside and outside of the enterprise. With big data a strategic priority for two out of every three IT managers, it will be all hands on deck to mine the huge wealth of business intelligence that's being created every single day by customers, employees and Internet users around the world.¹

So why is it that some CIOs and CTOs still struggle with relinquishing physical control over their server networks? A recent survey by three analyst firms – 451 Research, Uptime Institute and Yankee Group – found that companies still allocate 41% of their IT budgets to data centers and sites they operate. While on site facilities provide companies with complete control, they also lock them into a rigid, high-cost server model that typically doesn't flex and scale with business needs.²

It seems that when it comes to cloud services, some CIOs and CTOs still fear stormy weather is ahead, while others see nothing but sunny days in their future.

Server management isn't an either-or proposition. However, companies that harness the power of the cloud now are gaining valuable experience with building agile technology networks that provide the performance, responsiveness and business intelligence the enterprise seeks. And that's a priority that's shared on both sides of the C-suite. Some 70% of CIOs will embrace a cloud-first strategy within just two years.³

This white paper looks at some of the concerns IT leaders may have about managed cloud services. It also analyzes how leading hosting companies have built a business model that not only meets IT executive needs but goes far beyond to position them for leveraging the power of big data and evolving business models.

The business is "AlwaysOn." So server networks must stand and deliver, while reaching skyward for performance.

With industries that demand rapid-fire processing and 24/7/365 availability of IT systems, slowdowns or unexpected outages are simply unacceptable. These issues can mean the disruption of critical business processes as well as client dissatisfaction and substantial loss of revenues. So it's no surprise that service-level agreements (SLAs) guaranteeing 100% uptime are now an industry standard: All major providers offer them simply to get a seat at the negotiation table.

¹"Big Data: Big Potential, Big Priority," Cisco Press Release, March 27, 2013. <http://newsroom.cisco.com/release/1158061>.

²"Hosting and Cloud Study 2014: Hosting and Cloud Go Mainstream," Survey Results Presentation, released March 19, 2014. 451 Research, Uptime Institute and Yankee Group. <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/download/presskits/cloud/docs/hostingstudy2014.pdf>.

³"IDC Releases Market Predictions for 2013: CIO Agenda," IDC Press Release, December 4, 2012. <http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS23823912>.

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IT executives want managed server hosting companies to go above – and beyond. Key items on their wish list include:

- Availability groups that provide continuous access to business-critical applications, processes and data.
- Geoload balancing to ensure that high-intensity workloads, such as analytics or reporting, are easily folded in with business-as-usual activities.
- Instant, cost-effective scalability to meet demand spikes or emerging business growth requirements.
- Self-service dashboards and customizable functionality for unique technology environments.
- Robust automatic failover capabilities from primary sites to ensure that company sites, network clusters and entire data centers are protected and execute as usual in the event of a hardware failure.
- The ability to schedule planned downtime for system maintenance without compromising business performance.
- Tried and tested disaster recovery capabilities that combine backup and replication for a total protection package.

Leading cloud service providers (CSPs) deliver all of these capabilities – and more.

With cloud computing, it's easy to create a server formation that provides total coverage.

The debate over whether to use cloud services has moved from if to how. Today, 69% use hosted infrastructure services in some capacity – a number that will grow to 83% by 2016.² The reasons why? Cloud services usually provide performance and scalability at a lower cost point than buying boxes, while enabling IT teams to focus on more strategic projects.

A recent study found that 88% of companies that had deployed cloud computing had achieved cost savings, with most plowing funds back into the business to hire staff, increase salaries and drive product innovation.

Those companies that are using clouds typically leverage a hybrid approach:

- 60.8% use on-premises private clouds with a hosted private cloud.
- 42.1% use on-premises private clouds with a public cloud.
- 39.6% use a hosted private cloud with a public cloud.⁴

The decision to favor private over public clouds is not surprising. Public clouds offer scalable computing resources on a pay-as-you-go model, but offer limited control over hardware and performance. These limitations make public clouds less desirable for global technology-driven enterprises that demand continuous uptime and peak performance on a 24/7/365 basis.

⁴ Thor Olasvrud, "How Cloud Computing Helps Cut Costs, Boost Profits, CIO, March 12, 2013. http://www.cio.com/article/730036/How_Cloud_Computing_Helps_Cut_Costs_Boost_Profits.

Moving Infrastructure Online

To operate or host? That is the question. Today, companies are increasingly opting for hosted infrastructure services.

CSPs offer their customers capabilities that provide added value and greater peace-of-mind. According to the "**Hosting and Cloud Study 2014**" published by 451 Research, Uptime Institute and Yankee Group, here's what those customers are buying:

Website hosting	70%
Storage	64%
Backup/restore services	64%
Dedicated servers	56%
Database hosting	54%
Disaster recovery/ business continuity servers	45%
Virtual machines on shared/ multi-tenant servers	41%
Virtual desktop hosting/ hosted VDI	35%

CSPs worth their salt can provide all of the database and storage services above, as well as ancillary services such as website and desktop hosting.

Private clouds allow IT managers to use dedicated servers to maintain tighter control of user authentication, security and performance than is possible with public clouds. As such, private clouds are a natural fit for industry companies that rely on ultra-fast business processes or are subject to industry, federal or overseas regulations.

With hybrid models, companies are poised to assemble the best cloud formation to meet their business needs and budget goals, while protecting both their operations and data from performance or regulatory issues.

Gain an eye in the sky with a customer portal that provides total visibility.

It's understandable that handing over the keys to the server network kingdom can make DBAs nervous. So it's important to empower them with rich self-service tools.

Most companies allow their enterprise users to monitor capacity, oversee patch deployments and submit support tickets. Leading providers elevate the functionality, enabling DBAs to manage DNS issues, cloud server configurations and performance, replication and recovery services and load balancing from a unified customer portal. The worst-case scenario for switching over from a primary to active secondary site? Just four to seven seconds.

DBAs can also use online portals to add new computing power easily, gaining access to additional computing in just a few minutes.

With these tools and enterprise visibility, it's easy to keep control in-house and under one roof – even when applications and infrastructures span the globe.

Build compliant applications on infrastructures that are tested and true.

When it comes to compliance, industry companies have to build their systems on solid ground. They must demonstrate to industry regulators and auditors that they know where and how their confidential data is stored, accessed and used.

That's why it's not enough to offer hybrid cloud solutions with exceptional security: You have to audit them independently.

With 100% audit assurance, organizations can rest assured that any industry-compliant applications they build on hybrid cloud infrastructures will pass regulatory audits with flying colors. This guarantee enables highly regulated companies in the healthcare, financial services and retail industries, among others, to use hybrid clouds while demonstrating compliance with rigorous HIPAA, PCI and SOX regulations.

Gartner has repeatedly recognized HOSTING's cloud-enabled solutions, placing them in the top 10 in its Managed Hosting Magic Quadrant for "ability to execute" and "completeness of vision" year after year.



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HOSTING partners with Microsoft to offer exceptional server architecture design, hosting and technical support services.

As one of the world's leading providers of managed cloud and dedicated server services, HOSTING provides its enterprise customers with a lifecycle approach to server management that helps clients design, build, migrate, manage and protect their business-critical infrastructures.

HOSTING is proud to team with Microsoft to offer the industry-leading Microsoft SQL Server 2012 platform to its global enterprise customer base. Together, HOSTING and Microsoft SQL Server 2012 provide customers with managed server hosting services that deliver "AlwaysOn" reliability, business intelligence and access to modern data management tools. HOSTING's team of managed server and database experts also provide assessments and system design, managed database services and swift and secure migration services.

HOSTING provides:

- Expert consulting services to design a server platform that meets enterprise business needs and application requirements and to manage and scale it over time.
- The ability to mix and match server architectures – private and public cloud, dedicated server and colocation options – to meet a company's unique requirements.
- A server platform, Microsoft SQL Server 2012, that leads the industry in availability, security and ease of management.
- An innovative online customer portal that provides rich self-service functionality and the ability to manage and monitor server network performance in real time.
- Access to multi-geography availability groups with geographic load balancing, failover clustering and cross-data-center failover.
- Six world-class data centers that are strategically located throughout the United States for best-of-breed performance.
- Iron-clad, intrasite disaster recovery capabilities, with AlwaysOn, multisite replication.
- Licensing services to remove administrative headaches and ease the path to migration.

For companies that want to leverage managed cloud services but don't want to compromise on control or compliance, the choice is clear: Contact HOSTING today to learn how you can achieve soaring business objectives with an industry-trusted server network that keeps your operations on firm footing.

ABOUT HOSTING

HOSTING helps organizations design, build, migrate, manage and protect their cloud and database environments.

Leveraging enterprise-class networking and connectivity technologies, **HOSTING** provides the highest levels of compliance, availability, recovery, security and performance.

HOSTING owns and operates six geographically dispersed data centers under an ITIL-based control environment validated for compliance against HIPAA, PCI DSS and SOC frameworks.

HOSTING's cloud-enabled solutions have been repeatedly recognized by Gartner Group, placing them in the top 10 in its *Managed Hosting Magic Quadrant* for "ability to execute" and "completeness of vision" year after year.

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