HOW-TO GUIDE

5 ways to meet municipal challenges with cloud migration

PUBLIC SECTOR

During the current health pandemic, state and local governments are challenged to cut costs, while also maintaining constituent trust and meeting ongoing service expectations. It's a delicate balance—and one that cannot be achieved by simply slashing budgets.

Instead, government and municipalities can look to other areas of potential efficiencies, including moving costly legacy, on-premises IT systems to the cloud. One study notes that preserving legacy systems accounts for close to 70% of IT budgets government-wide.[1] Those same legacy systems are also a drain on staff time, and put crucial services at risk for downtime.

Here are five steps toward migrating IT functions to the cloud to create a connected, modern system that offers maximum data security, uninterrupted service, and long-term financial savings.

> **"My staff can focus more on more innovation and automation instead of dealing with backups, babysitting servers, and having to plan for infrastructure upgrades, replacements, and downtime."**
>
> JIM OLLERTON
> Director of Information Technology, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District

1. Evaluate system weaknesses

An IT system's shortcomings range from the obvious, outright failures to the subtle inefficiencies. In evaluating whether it's the right time to migrate to the cloud, consider:

- Any hardware failures
- Aging hardware or software no longer supported by the vendor
- Business application functionality, and whether it allows consistent service to constituents, as well as supports a culture of continuous improvement
- How IT staff time is spent. Is the IT department spending inordinate amounts of time fixing and upgrading systems?

2. Look at how a cloud platform enhances the staff experience

Cloud migration not only offers the promise of more efficient data processing, but also improves the daily lives of workers. Cloud solutions are always patched to the latest level by the CSP—and scalability, redundancy, and disaster recovery are automatic. This provides staff the ability to be more productive and shift focus from patches and fixes to business process improvement.

The modern government workforce expects the same capabilities as the private sector:

- Intuitive, mobile applications providing quick access to information and processes
- Streamlined recruiting, hiring, training, and worker development
- Automation of typical financial, procurement, and asset management processes
- Embedded business intelligence to drive decision making

3. Achieve buy-in from leadership

Cash-strapped government and its decision makers may currently be hesitant to make any IT investment. However, the efficiencies that cloud capabilities across operations provide makes long-term financial sense, which can offer impactful motivation for budget-conscious leadership.

Consider how cloud capabilities can have dramatic improvements in employee and process performance.

4–6%
improvement in hiring manager productivity

26%
overall reduced termination risk

20-30%
reduction in equipment downtime

12–16%
improved maintenance workforce productivity

50–80%
expected reduction in number of customer enquiries

20–25%
improvement in service team productivity

These include:

- Portals for processing licenses and permits, requests for inspections and services, and bill payment
- Mobility for field personnel to complete work orders on location
- Capabilities for virtual inspections, especially when access is restricted
- Opportunities for online services versus government interactions that occur in line at a physical location
- Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT); transforming how an organization maintains its assets, schedules its employees, procures its goods, and interacts with its business partners
- Integration of disparate data to leverage interactions with both external and internal teams for better decisions and options for automation

4. Consider critical security

CNN reported in 2019 that in a period of 10 months, 140 local governments, police stations, and hospitals have been held hostage by ransomware attacks.[2] Security should be at the forefront of organizational concerns.

- Legacy applications offer cyber criminals healthy targets for hacking, data breaches, and ransomware.
- Government organizations are at risk of spending more budget resolving cybercrime and restoring public trust.
- Governments and municipalities are increasing their use of automated and online functions, collecting more data than ever before and increasing security risk.
- Cloud vendors remain at the forefront of optimum security measures.

5. Choose a solution that is FedRAMP certified

Not all cloud solutions are equal. A secure, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) risk management-based program named FedRAMP has emerged as the standard bearer. Several cloud computing providers are already compliant with FedRAMP standards, while many more are in the process of becoming compliant.

- FedRAMP provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud computing products and services.
- These solutions also increase cyber resilience.
- Continuous security monitoring builds public trust.
- Standards save time and money by providing governments insight into approved cloud security services without having to develop their own.

Rainbow Water mobilizes remote workforce in 48 hours

Rainbow Municipal Water District serves 8,300 residential and commercial customers in California. As a statewide coronavirus shutdown appeared imminent, Rainbow's cloud-based system was already poised to enable a fully remote workforce. The district worked quickly to move employees to home offices—in just 48 hours—without disruption in service or response times.

Field personnel, already equipped with iPads and Infor EAM mobile systems, were able to continue to diagnose, investigate, and resolve service issues without visiting Rainbow's offices.

[1] Office of Management and Budget, BUDGET OF THE U. S. GOVERNMENT, A New Foundation For American Greatness, Fiscal Year 2018, Accessed June 18, 2020.
[2] Allen Kim, "In the last 10 months, 140 local governments, police stations and hospitals have been held hostage by ransomware attacks," CNN Business, October 8, 2019.

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