Your guide to cloud clarity

Explore the different ways you can approach buying and implementing a cloud model that works for your business, and everything you should consider along the way.

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Let's clear a few things up.

1 Finding clarity in the cloud

With so many vendors and so many options, navigating cloud capabilities is no easy task. The good news? Choosing a solution is less about understanding every aspect and more about understanding what will work best for you.

In this eBook, we'll walk you through every step of selecting a cloud solution for your business. But before we get going, let's get back to the basics.

2 The basics

What is a cloud, anyway?
Cloud is a smarter, service-focused IT operating model. It offers online computing services to help you manage data more effectively, deploy applications faster, and access compute power when you need it.

It's not a destination, but rather something that can be delivered anywhere — in your data center, in someone else's, or both. It provides infrastructure resources, applications, and services, and it's here to stay.

The basics (continued)

What can it help me do?

Not only does it remove the burden of deploying, integrating, and operating low-level IT infrastructure resources, but it also provides on-demand access to resources, applications, or services that can meet your business or development needs.

Cloud solutions can improve the efficiency of data management and security, reduce downtime, and minimize the need for specialized skills and maintenance. But perhaps most importantly, they can enable you to optimize your IT resources to adapt to changes in workload demand.

When done right, a cloud model can help you accelerate development, innovate faster, and adapt to meet changing application and service requirements.

How can I get there?

It's a popular misconception that organizations can "just move to the cloud." In fact, there's a lot more that goes into it. Successful cloud transformations start with a solid strategy that factors in your desired business outcomes, placement, workloads, cloud model planning, applications, team skills, and budget.

It all begins with understanding what's right for your business and needs.

3 Ways to cloud

There are two main types of cloud: public and private. No solution is better than another — it all depends on your specific needs, and how you plan to use it. In fact, many organizations require a mixture of each (but more on that in a minute).

Public clouds are clouds offered by a third party. With public clouds, the costs can quickly (and quietly) add up between capacity, compute, and networking consumption, as well as additional services.

And because you don't have complete control, it's hard to manage these costs and guarantee security with predictability.

With a **private cloud**, you manage your own dedicated pool of IT resources with cloud delivery capabilities, scalability, and self-service while retaining control of your data, security, and costs.

Private clouds may also be hosted and/or managed by a service provider.

Three ways to use them

Your cloud strategy should be designed to meet your desired business outcomes. Work with an expert to figure out what mixture is right for you, and why.

Single cloud environment

A single public or private cloud solution, on, or off-premises. While it would certainly be easier to manage all your workloads and applications on one common platform, that one platform might lack the flexibility, capability, or economy some organizations need.
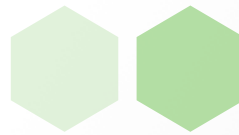
Multi-cloud environment

Using any combination of multiple cloud platforms, public or private, with or without interoperability among platforms. Suitable for distributing workload placement to the platform that best suits it, multi-cloud offers more flexibility and provider independence than a single-cloud environment.

Hybrid cloud environment

A mix of multiple cloud platforms (public or private) that are tightly integrated by a technology for seamless portability of applications and data. Typically implemented by a vendor, it offers distributed, more consistent operations, effortless mobility, and placement flexibility for your workloads and data.

4 Getting started

No two businesses are alike, so no two cloud strategies should be, either. To start understanding what you need, you need to start by looking within.

Here's a checklist of the most important things you should consider.

Consider your:

- Current infrastructure and applications
- Current workloads (and where they would work best)
- Diverse needs of all your business units
- Number and variety of services and applications to migrate
- Future workload and performance needs
- Automation potential for business and administrative processes
- How quickly your needs could change
- How you'll use your cloud for your day-to-day needs
- Industry regulations and compliance requirements
- Security and privacy needs
- Developer skill level and resourcing needs
- Complexity of dashboards and reporting
- Opportunities for future growth

It's also important to know what cloud can really do for you (and what it can't). **Cloud expectations don't always meet reality**, so be sure to consider cost, performance, and team implications. By right-sizing your team's expectations, you can right-size your results, too.
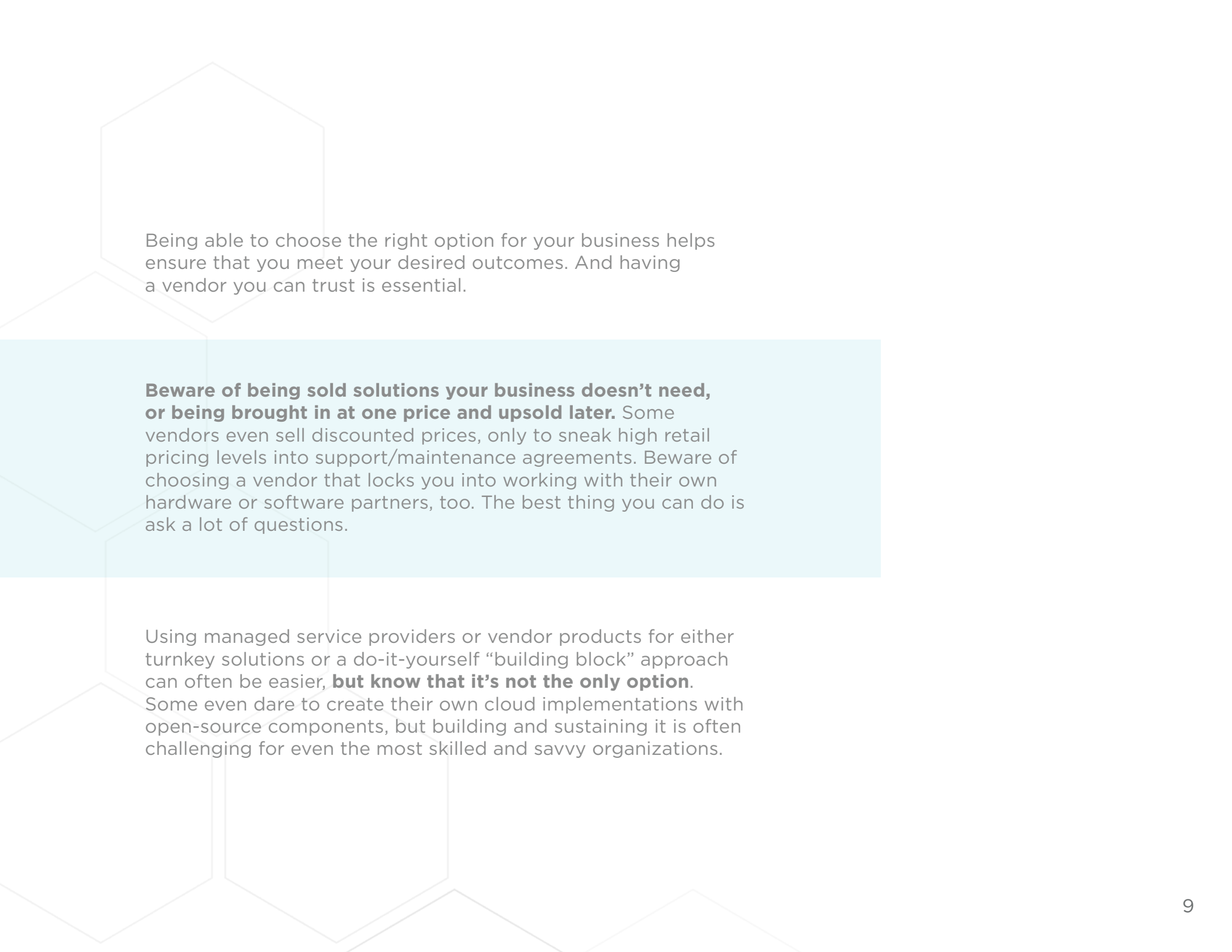
5 Choosing a vendor

There are so many companies out there, with so many solutions to show off, all making huge claims. How can you figure out what's the truth, and what's just hype? And how do you find the solution that's best for you?

This might go without saying, but consider all your options. The vendor you have now may not be the best for your future needs, strategy, or even budget. Make a point to look into multiple vendors, knowing that what might seem like the simplest solution may not pay off in the long run.

Things to look for in a vendor:
- Quality of the hardware and software involved
- Ability to integrate with your current infrastructure
- Level of service beyond initial implementation
- Customizable solutions for your specific needs
- No vendor lock-in for additional needs or services
- Scalability for today, and tomorrow

Being able to choose the right option for your business helps ensure that you meet your desired outcomes. And having a vendor you can trust is essential.

Beware of being sold solutions your business doesn't need, or being brought in at one price and upsold later. Some vendors even sell discounted prices, only to sneak high retail pricing levels into support/maintenance agreements. Beware of choosing a vendor that locks you into working with their own hardware or software partners, too. The best thing you can do is ask a lot of questions.

Using managed service providers or vendor products for either turnkey solutions or a do-it-yourself "building block" approach can often be easier, **but know that it's not the only option**. Some even dare to create their own cloud implementations with open-source components, but building and sustaining it is often challenging for even the most skilled and savvy organizations.

Consider going subscription

Pay-for-what-you-use options can ease that up-front cost by allowing you to — you guessed it — pay for what you use. Essentially, it means you're renting your infrastructure while owning the services and all of your data.

This model offers flexibility and scalability, without the investment or capacity commitment. Just beware that many vendors require a significant up-front purchase commitment and will only provide this subscription model for the projected balance of your future consumption. So be sure to compare plans between vendors if you think subscription is the solution for you.

Learn more about Lenovo's TruScale™ Infrastructure Services.

6 | Getting internal buy-in

Selling things internally isn't easy — especially when it's something that impacts the day-to-day and the bottom line. But the more tailored your plan is to your organization, the easier it'll be (and the better it'll go). Here are a few tips:

1 | Detail your plan
Know what your organization is ultimately trying to achieve, and tailor your plan to align with your company, senior leadership, and future goals.

2 | Write a clear budget
Outline every aspect you can, and be sure to remind your team that ROI isn't always immediate. It's an investment, so instead of immediate savings, try to focus on the total cost of ownership.

3 | Include the add-ons
When laying out the numbers, don't forget to include all of what you get — from storage, to support, to how quickly you can scale. The more your team sees they're getting, the more likely they are to say yes.

4

Make it tangible
Show a full timeline, predict some results, and maybe even present some case studies to show how others saw success. (Tip: Ask your vendors for support here because this is their first chance to show off their customer service.)

5

Make it applicable
Tailor what you're talking about, to who you're talking to. Check out our handy guide on the next page to see what we mean. (It might sound tedious, but it really can help.)

6

Show the alternative
Include a "what if we do nothing" perspective, contrasting the potential benefit and opportunity cost into your plan to show why migrating to a cloud model is business-critical. Because sometimes, the greatest risk of all is not taking one.

7

Relate it to business success
How can your cloud operating model do more than just improve efficiency? This is a big investment, so don't forget to include the impact it can make on your business's goals and bottom line.

How to reach your peers

CIO/CTO

Tell a big picture, efficiency story. Businesses are moving to cloud models because they want agility, speed, and smoother operations, and yours is no different. Every business benefits from being able to align with changing business and technical needs. Migrating is no longer just a technology decision; it's a business decision.

CISO

Speak about security at a higher level, but include the realities of having to change backup and disaster recovery plans. Be sure to dive into how much of your data your vendor will be able to see if you are recommending a managed solution, too.

Head of IT

Show how your product will lead to stronger, more successful IT operations, allowing you to focus on your actual business differentiation. These folks are savvy, so talk tech and mobility, as well as the greater service and partnership offerings a potential cloud provider could offer.

Network Engineer

Since this will likely impact their day-to-day, speak about the benefits of agility and speed, but don't shy away from the details.

CFO

Skip the tech talk, and talk money and predictability. How will your cloud strategy improve your bottom line? How can you optimize the distribution of CapEx and OpEx to best serve your business? What will make a change of this size worthwhile?

7   Making sure it goes smoothly

Modernizing your tech is a big deal. How you deliver it is even bigger. It impacts everyone in your organization, with the potential to impact your service, productivity, and customers, too. Here's how you can make it as pain-free as possible.

Plan accordingly
Talk to different teams within your organization, as well as any customers who rely on your services to be always on. When a few minutes of downtime could mean thousands of dollars lost, you need to make sure you are making bigger changes at times that have the least impact on productivity.

Staff up
The first few weeks might come with some unexpected issues. Make sure your team is equipped to handle anything that comes up. And talk to your vendor, if you choose to work with one — they may be able to send over their staff, so they're on-hand to help, too.

Rethink your data protection plans
Expect to redesign and re-implement your data protection and disaster recovery plans to incorporate your specific cloud solutions. This can be tricky and where a vendor could be hugely helpful.

Prep your team
Ease folks into this transition for a smoother experience. Think about how it'll affect their day-to-day, and how you can help make sure the only impact is a positive one. Should you hold training? Send out an email? Throw a party to get everyone excited? Think about your team and how to handle it best.

Keep your eye on the prize
Regardless of what challenges you may encounter, remember that this is a huge deal, and one that leads to even bigger ones. It's one step closer to achieving your business's desired outcomes. Stay positive!

8 Summing it all up

Of course, transforming to a cloud model is a lot more complicated than we can fit in just eight steps. But if this eBook helps with anything, it's this:

An effective cloud strategy should factor in your existing IT operations, along with your future goals. With the right solutions and right partner, your cloud could take your business sky-high.

A smarter approach to cloud transformation

With Lenovo Cloud solutions, powered by Intel®, you get more than a piece of hardware. You get a partner. And planning services that balance security, scalability, and agility. And a system designed around your needs – public, private, or hosted – that works within whatever technology ecosystem you're currently running. And even turnkey options with vendor-supported building blocks. All tailored to your desired business outcomes, workloads, migration planning, team skills, and budget.

Interested in getting started or learning more?

Schedule a consultation