

CLOUD AUTOMATION IN AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMY

CLOUD-BASED AUTOMATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT CAN SLASH COSTS, SPEED APPLICATION DEPLOYMENT, AND PROVIDE A FOUNDATION FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

"IT budgeting is challenging at the best of times, but for 2020 an extra helping of political and economic instability – possibly even global recession – will make things even harder for CIOs."¹ That was according to ZDNet in September 2019 – nearly six months before a global pandemic began wreaking true budgetary havoc.

Today's economic realities have CIOs taking a hard look at how they can save dollars. Cloud automation is at the top of their to-do list. Enterprises continue to grow their cloud investments. They're pursuing an increasingly multi-cloud strategy. And they're bringing on new methodologies and roles that promote automation. [See the Figure.]

But cloud automation can do more than trim costs. It can also act as a foundation for digital transformation that sets you up to nimbly adapt to market developments and rapidly respond to changing customer demands.

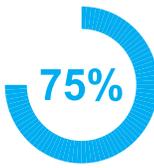
FIGURE: MOVING TOWARDS CLOUD AUTOMATION


6.3%

Year-over-year growth of worldwide public cloud services market, from \$242.7B in 2019 to \$257.9B in 2020²


65%

Application development that will be achieved by low-code methods by 2024⁴


75%

Large and midsize organizations that will have adopted a multicloud and/or hybrid IT strategy by 2021³


90%

Enterprises that will have an automation architect, up from less than 20% in 2019⁵

A CLOUD FOR EVERY WORKLOAD

The cloud can make sense for both existing and new workloads, says Chris Norris, senior director of the Data Center/Cloud Discipline for Computacenter. But simply migrating workloads doesn't yield all the cloud's benefits.

For starters, large-scale cost savings begin to accrue only when you source enough compute power from the cloud that you can start shutting down on-premises datacenters. "Turning off even a small datacenter can save on real estate, electricity, heating and cooling, and the expertise to manage those systems," Norris points out.

But the real advantages of cloud are driven by automation, which digitizes the management of your IT infrastructure and the provisioning of application services to your lines of business (LoBs). "In early cloud implementations, organizations simply moved legacy applications to the cloud server," says Jason Lamb, cloud/software-defined infrastructure technology strategist for Intel, a Computacenter partner. "But all the management processes remained unchanged."

A fully software-defined cloud, in contrast, can automate every process that supports your applications. The labor-intensive tasks of an IT architect to configure servers and set up associated network and storage equipment become a thing of the past. Instead, your LoBs simply request resources, and the cloud automatically allocates them. An undertaking that previously required weeks can be completed in a matter of hours, with almost no human intervention.

“Cloud automation represents a sea change in how organizations manage their infrastructure,” Lamb believes. “It actually enables digital transformation, because it allows you to quickly respond to business needs.”

FROM BEST PRACTICES TO CLOUD TRANSFORMATION

Some enterprises will choose to achieve automation through on-premises private clouds. But that still requires CapEx investment. So, many organizations will opt for public clouds. “With cloud services from AWS, Microsoft, and Google, most of the necessary automation software and data is already in place,” Norris says. “You can’t quite flip a switch and get instant automation, but you can automate quickly and smoothly.”

Whether you operate with a private, public, or multi-cloud environment, it’s important to have a uniform cloud policy, with a single set of rules for performance, security, cost, and so on. “Automation tools enable you to enforce those rules,” Lamb says, “with real-time monitoring of cloud infrastructures and the ability to move workloads between clouds.”

Likewise, you want consistent automation processes. “You don’t want to lock yourself into a single cloud provider,” Norris advises. “But you do want to standardize as much as possible.” That way, you can offer your LoBs an established catalog of services, reducing costs for procurement, implementation, and support.

Cloud automation will also require a change of mindset for your IT team. Transitioning from manual on-premises tasks to automated cloud processes will require new skills and approaches. “We sometimes refer to it as ‘pets vs. cattle,’” Norris explains. “You’re no longer treating individual servers like pets. Instead, you’re automating a herd of servers.” By keeping the entire herd healthy, you always have the compute resources your LoBs need.

The change in thinking extends to your LoBs. “To respond to the speed of today’s markets, you need close partnership between your infrastructure team and your lines of business,” Lamb emphasizes. “Startups that were born in the cloud inherently understand this. The rest of us have to adapt to the new reality.” One way to drive this new thinking is to incentivize both IT and your LoBs based on the same outcomes.

Finally, consider working with a consulting partner whose main focus is your business success, not just selling you a cloud subscription. A partner can help you understand the applications in your portfolio, who uses them, and how they’re interconnected. It can then work with you to create a road map to the cloud automation you want in 12 to 18 months. Concludes Lamb: “The decisions you make early on will have a big impact on the success of your automation efforts, and on your ability to use automation to improve your business.”

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Cloud automation represents a sea change in how organizations manage their infrastructure. It actually enables digital transformation. To learn more about cloud-based automation of infrastructure management, visit us at www.computacenter.com/us.

1 “IT Budgets 2020: How the Money Will Be Spent, and Who Will Spend It,” ZDNet, September 2019

2 “Forecast: Public Cloud Services, Worldwide, 2018-2024, 2Q20 Update,” Gartner, July 2020

3 “Predicts 2019: Increasing Reliance on Cloud Computing Transforms IT and Business Practices,” Gartner, December 2018

4 “Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Low-Code Application Platforms,” Gartner, August 2019

5 “Gartner Top 10 Trends Impacting Infrastructure & Operations for 2020,” Gartner, December 2019



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