

# Don't talk to me about cloud: What CIOs really want to know

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# Is your cloud more thunder than lightning?

**T**he past decade's steady migration to cloud computing spiked in 2020 with the stampede to remote work. That, along with the burgeoning amounts of data to be stored and leveraged, has CIOs in every sector willing, even eager, to accelerate their cloud migration. Too often, however, their inquiries are met with conversations about the extraordinary benefits that await them in the cloud, rather than their unique needs that cloud solutions can fulfill.

## Cloud, in and of itself, is meaningless.

If you're like a lot of CIOs, you may be tempted to post a sign on your door that says, *Don't Talk to Me about Cloud*.

Extolling the benefits of the cloud is like championing dietary supplements: Unless you know the precise nutrient deficiency to be remedied, you're asking for trouble. The wrong supplement endangers health and wastes money. The wrong approach to cloud squanders its vast potential, runs up an organization's costs, complicates its IT ecosystem, and leaves its business needs unsolved.

Rare is the CIO who hasn't already invested heavily in cloud solutions and intends to do much more of the same. To be sure, many early cloud debuts consisted of toe-in-the-water, risk-averse, security-conscious internal cloud initiatives, only venturing further into hybrid environments as security worries diminished and benefits emerged to fund expansion.

Despite these cautious approaches, cloud usage has exploded. IDC estimates that global spending on cloud will surpass **\$1 trillion in 2024 while sustaining a double-digit Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 15.7%**.

So CIOs don't need to be coaxed to adopt cloud solutions. But they do need three things if they are to choose, with any degree of efficiency and confidence, the right cloud approach for the highly specific current and future needs of their business.



"Cloud" is an empty term without context; the wrong approach not only squanders the cloud's vast potential, but also can run up costs, complicate IT, and leave business needs unsolved.

**92%** of organization's total IT environment is at least somewhat in the cloud today



Source: IDG 2020 Cloud Computing Study

By 2022, over **90%** of enterprises worldwide will rely on hybrid cloud



Source: IDC <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prMETA46165020>



**1/3**

of IT budgets go to cloud services

Source: Spiceworks Ziff Davis

# 1. CIOs need clarity about business priorities

**B**efore making any high-impact cloud-related decisions, CIOs need clarity about which of their top business priorities can be met through cloud-related initiatives.

Business priorities can range widely, depending on the organization's financial situation, past acquisition activity, growth goals, workforce, and market standing. Maybe the challenge is the stability of the organization's system resources, in which case automatic updates via the cloud are especially appealing.

An organization under pressure to reduce costs might look to the cloud to shift from its CAPEX IT cost model to an OPEX, pay-as-you-go model.

## What kind of journey is right for you?

Today's priorities beg for cloud solutions, but each demands a markedly different cloud journey and destination. Those CIOs seeking skilled security? A Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) approach can relieve them of responsibility for security and more, e.g., updates, patches, and compliance. For CIOs who find themselves severely resource and budget constrained (state government officials, for example), the choice would be Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS). CIOs can count on up-to-date hardware and software without capital outlays, instant provisioning, resources on demand, and minimal maintenance expense with this option.

But in an organization where cost-effective development and deployment of apps is a major priority – for example, a software provider, the better cloud alternative would be Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS). By focusing on the fast-moving product development requirements and not using internal resources for administrative tasks, software developers using PaaS can remain lean and agile.

What about private vs. public cloud? Is the organization comfortable sharing hardware, storage, and network devices with other cloud tenants, thus being a good candidate for public cloud? Or is it in highly risk-averse industries (e.g., financial services, government contractors, and the healthcare industry)? Those industries have historically opted for private cloud to give them greater control and privacy or hybrid cloud that lets them move data and apps between their on-premises infrastructure and the cloud.



A rapidly growing company in need of flexibility might find itself constrained by the rigidity of its present on-premises systems and opt for the cloud's elasticity and instantaneity. Now more remote and global, the increasingly digital workforce requires collaborative capabilities that are hard to deliver in an on-prem environment. And who can doubt that many CIOs, finding it difficult to obtain top-level security resources, are eager to take advantage of the security offered by reputable cloud providers?

Experienced and knowledgeable cloud experts can provide objective guidance to assist CIOs with high-impact cloud-related decisions.



## 2. CIOs need objective guidance

**S**ettling an organization's cloud-relevant priorities does not create a direct path to the optimal cloud solution.

The cloud services market is huge, hot, crowded, and competitive, ranging from the giants of Amazon, Microsoft, and Google, to the more niche providers like Cisco and Dell, to the born-in-the-cloud vendors like Workday. Cloud service providers vary widely in terms of cost, pricing models, service options, and competitiveness of products. Some offer more frequent updates to their cloud software than others. Some deliver a consistent interface experience or a high-quality developer experience, others less so. Some offer advanced infrastructure management, some better access and identity management. They can vary in terms of overall maturity in one aspect or another.

Distinctions among cloud service providers are not self-evident. For all the experience and in-depth knowledge that providers offer an organization during its vendor selection process, their views are bound to be subjective, and their assurances of satisfying all requirements predictable.



While a cloud service provider can readily articulate its advantages, it is not reasonable to expect them to tout the relative advantages of their competitors. Therefore, unbiased input is a must.

What a CIO needs during this process is equally experienced and knowledgeable guidance from cloud experts who are familiar with the relative merits of vendors but thoroughly objective as to the compatibility of each vendor offering with the CIO's business needs.



### 3. CIOs need to ask the right questions at each stage

**V**endor selection is only a small step in the long cloud journey. Realizing the best outcomes begins with asking the right questions at each stage of transformation: readiness, implementation, management, and evolution. The process of asking – and answering these questions – provides much-needed perspective to take the long view and anticipate expected challenges and benefits at various intervals.



#### Readiness

During the readiness stage, the questions are mainly about the organization's current state and aspirations: its current IT state, security and risk posture, governance, skills components, and the challenges posed by its legacy systems and organizational structures. It also involves a detailed cloud strategy and design tightly tied to the planned business outcomes, paying special attention to the challenges posed by legacy systems and organizational structures.



#### Implementation

Implementation questions focus on establishing the most effective processes and technologies to execute the cloud migration. This involves extensive discovery, validation, assessment, and planning. What data and applications are to be migrated? How will the infrastructure be rationalized? And of prime importance, how will cloud security challenges be assessed and remediated?



#### Management

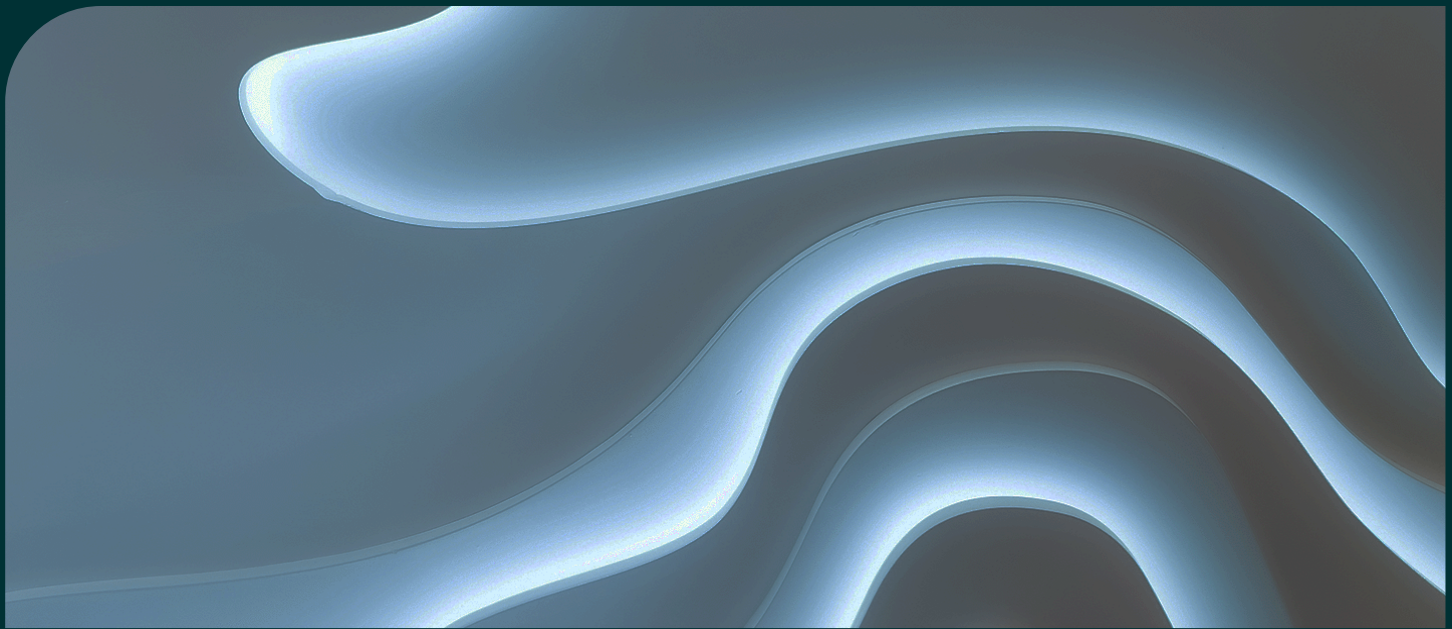
Once solutions are running in the cloud, organizations face decisions about simplifying ongoing cloud management, particularly related to hybrid and/or multi cloud scenarios. CIOs need to ask and answer questions that strengthen security and compliance governance, enhance computing performance, and control costs. Budgets can take unexpected turns that need to be addressed. Are usage predictions unfolding as expected? Are vendors meeting SLAs?



#### Evolution

The evolution stage challenges CIOs to take the longest view of all. Questions and answers in this stage almost always focus on how to reduce the organization's cloud spend and Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). These questions seek to identify mismanaged resources, eliminate waste, review performance levels, and establish the optimal capacity. Clearly, each stage requires extensive guidance by cloud-knowledgeable professionals deeply experienced in each of these four crucial stages.

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## Conclusion

Today's ever more remote, global, and data-intensive organizations have all the incentive and motivation they need to continue their migration to the cloud. At every step of the way, they will be making high-impact decisions and investments that merit the most rigorous assessments, objective guidance, and informed counsel.

Now you're ready to talk about cloud.

## Why Unisys?

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With over 1,300+ certified personnel in 110 countries, we have the global resources and talent to manage even the most complex data center environments. Each service engagement is custom tailored to your specific requirements. We provide services to assess, plan, and model any transformation project.



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