To cloud or not to cloud

Map the best course for your business with CenterBeam and HP
Right now everyone is talking about cloud. And everyone has an idea about how to get you there. But before you make a decision, make sure you’re asking the right questions.
Cloud is only as effective as the strategy behind it.

These days everyone is talking about cloud, and everyone has a solution to get you there. But before you decide “to cloud or not to cloud,” make sure you’re asking the right question: How can you best leverage your current capabilities and investments while gaining the agility to respond to your rapidly changing business environment?

Complexity is increasing while budgets remain flat. Is cloud the right answer? Is cloud even the right question?

IT complexity is increasing at breakneck speed. A decade ago it was basically just Microsoft® and IBM at the desktop. Today, IT is buried under an avalanche of mobile devices, operating systems, and applications—and your users expect you to support all of them, flawlessly, 24x7 while keeping all of the data on all of those devices secure and accessible no matter where it resides. This is no light undertaking.

As new business demands, competitive challenges, and even employee preferences combine with this proliferation of devices and operating systems, midmarket businesses are getting squeezed. After all, you face the same challenges as large enterprises, but with only a fraction of the budget.

While you try to figure out how to add more skill sets to manage all of this complexity with a flat or declining budget, you are also keenly aware that IT expenses focused on infrastructure don’t drive competitive advantage, and funneling business resources into IT means funneling it away from innovation.

This combination of factors puts most midmarket businesses at a critical crossroads. Due to the poor economy, many have been delaying IT capital expenditures for five years or more. Now they are at a place where they need to make critical decisions about how to move forward with an IT strategy that aligns with their business needs, giving them the agility to accommodate rapid business cycles and changes. At the same time, it seems cloud technology has matured enough to be a viable option for the midmarket.

So you may find yourself asking: should we continue to invest and build on-site or should we make the leap to the cloud? But that may not be the right question. Before you decide “to cloud or not to cloud,” take a step back and ask yourself this question instead:

“How can IT best support our immediate—and future—business requirements?”

Answering this question will help you put together a thoughtful strategy around delivering applications and services that leverages your current capabilities and investments, while paving the way for responding flexibly to rapidly changing business requirements. Cloud may be the answer, or it may be part of the answer. Just make sure you’re asking the right question.
Look before you leap: mapping your IT landscape

The prevalence and popularity of cloud has spawned an army of cloud providers, all of them eager to explain why you should “just move everything to the cloud.” But a thoughtful review of your current IT state and future business goals will likely reveal a more nuanced approach is in order.

Begin by performing an assessment of your current technology landscape, then mapping it against your ideal, future state. To begin, ask yourself the following questions:

• Where is your business today?
  – What technology assets are already in place to support your business?
  – What about existing skill sets?
  – Are there any gaps (especially in your security posture) that need to be addressed immediately?
  – Do you have a wish list of projects you haven’t had the resources to address?

• Where are you going?
  – What challenges and opportunities are on the horizon?
  – What needs to change in your IT landscape to be ready for them?
  – What internal resources can you continue to leverage?
  – What external resources might offer better security, reliability, and return on investment than internal options?

The answers to these questions will help you create a plan that builds on your strengths, fills any gaps, and takes full advantage of opportunities to streamline, strengthen, and secure your IT at every level.
Protect your investments while setting yourself up for future success

Now that you have a clear roadmap, it's time to get started on your journey. The strategy you use should leverage your strengths and sunk investments while enhancing your flexibility by addressing both gaps and opportunities with cost-effective, reliable, and secure solutions from third-party providers.

This "hybrid" approach to outsourced managed services is incredibly effective. It allows you to leverage and build on existing strengths while using a managed services strategy that can include:

- On-premise managed services
- SaaS
- Hosted cloud

For example: a hybrid approach to mobility support

Supporting mobile devices is a challenge for many midmarket enterprises, with highly-fragmented operating systems, security concerns, and user demand for 24x7 support keeping IT scrambling. With a hybrid approach, you can optimize mobile support using a mixture of on-site managed services and hosted cloud to lower costs while increasing security and support coverage.
A hybrid approach meets you where you are and grows with you

Now, instead of jumping “all-in” to the cloud—an option that isn’t really feasible for most midmarket businesses—you can craft a tailored, hybrid approach that allows you to:

- Leverage existing expertise and investments
- Flexibly pick the pieces you will continue to manage and those you can outsource
- Maintain close control over applications that are key business differentiators while outsourcing commodity IT services like patch management and help desk
- Minimize OpEx by using a managed services provider to take over non-core or novel processes
- Avoid CapEx by moving selected applications and services to a fully hosted environment
- Leverage the deep expertise of specialists
- Focus resources on core processes and innovation
- Extend security policies and keep them consistent across your entire environment

With a hybrid approach to your IT environment, you can continue to benefit from the investments you have already made, while avoiding over-investing in additional hardware and skill sets that don’t drive your competitive advantage. This is the key to a long-term, viable IT strategy that aligns with—and drives the success of—your business.

CenterBeam and HP

CenterBeam is a pioneer in delivering cloud computing and hosted IT services, and is focused on providing mid-sized businesses with enterprise-class IT management, services, and support. CenterBeam differentiates itself through its broad service portfolio, providing a cohesive IT solution no matter where your infrastructure resides—on-premise or in the cloud.

CenterBeam is an HP AllianceOne and CloudAgile Partner with a 13-year track record of delivering cloud-based IT services built on rock-solid HP Converged Infrastructure. Today, the company delivers more than 217,000 daily services in an integrated solution to end users on six continents across 49 countries.

CenterBeam relies on HP Converged Infrastructure because it brings all server, storage, and networking resources together into pools of resources that can be shared by many applications and managed as a service. It brings together management tools, policies, and processes so resources and applications are managed in a holistic, integrated manner. It integrates security to provide protection from today’s sophisticated security threats at both the perimeter and interior of your business. And it brings together power and cooling management capabilities so systems and facilities work together. In short, HP Converged Infrastructure enables CenterBeam to deliver services more efficiently and securely.

As an HP CloudAgile Partner, you can rest assured that CenterBeam provides secure, cost-effective services with industry-leading and award-winning customer satisfaction. Whether you’re considering a public, private, on-premise, or a hybrid solution—or you’re just trying to sort through all of the acronyms and options—HP and CenterBeam are here to help.

Learn more at:
centerbeam.com
hp.com/go/cloudagile