**YOU CAN TAKE GREATER CONTROL WITH THE CLOUD**

Loss of IT operational control is possibly the most common misconception about cloud computing. Yes, unless you stick entirely to a private cloud model, the cloud does require a certain amount of IT and infrastructure outsourcing. But what makes the cloud such a paradigm shift is that you’re not locked into an all-or-nothing approach. Work carefully with your cloud provider and make sure it can offer you all the control your IT operation needs.

Any form of outsourcing requires the loss of some direct control, but compared to traditional outsourcing, the cloud offers far more options for maintaining a controlled and entirely customized cloud computing experience. To gain the most from these options, you can:

* **Leverage all the right cloud models for your enterprise.** You’re not locked into a single cloud model. Make sure that your on-premises and off-premises cloud models are designed to work together with a common management model, a common identity model, and a common application development model. By utilizing cloud models on a workload basis, you can maintain physical control over assets or work streams that simply can’t be outsourced, and you can still take advantage of public cloud benefits for the rest of your portfolio. Work with your cloud provider to build an SLA that protects your company’s processes, and investigate updates to your current IT management software tools to make sure that your IT staff has visibility and control over all assets whether on-premises or off.
* **Protect your critical data.** Fear of losing control over critical company data is often another stumbling block in cloud adoption. The truth, however, is that cloud computing can give you as much or even more control over your data, not less. For example, data that can’t be moved can stay on-premises and cloud providers offer a plethora of options for protecting the data entrusted to them – sometimes more than your in-house IT staff and budget could make available. In all situations, however, data sovereignty should belong to you. Stay away from cloud providers that cannot guarantee that your data won’t be mined or used for another organization’s commercial purposes. Work up a detailed list of requirements that will both satisfy your need to control your IT infrastructure and leverage the benefits of cloud computing.
* **Detail requirements with your SLA.** If you’re worried about runaway costs, just remember your SLA. Plan your migration carefully and involve your cloud provider as much as possible. Choose a cloud provider that can meet up-front costs easily. Choosing one that already supports an application stack compatible with the apps you’re running in-house will help lessen migration and integration costs and protect the financial investment you’ve already made in your current software portfolio. Ask about compatible management tools; making sure the cloud provider supports tools that your IT staff is familiar with or already using will help you save money on both new tool purchases and staff training.

Make sure these and any other requirements necessary for your business are detailed in your SLA. Definitely cover the basics – 99.9% up-time and 24/7 customer support are good places to start – but take the time to go as deep as your organization needs. Your cloud provider must recognize that not all software is ready to run in the cloud today – and not just for technical reasons. The beauty of the cloud is that you’re not locked into a single model. Outsource what makes sense, and keep the rest on-premises. If your prospective cloud provider can’t support that to your satisfaction, keep looking.

The other most common misconception about cloud computing is security. Moving critical data to the cloud is a difficult proposition for many CIOs worried about data security. Fortunately, if you look closely, you’ll find that competitive cloud providers, with highly trained on-premises staff and enterprise-class datacenter facilities, can offer as much or more security for your data than what most companies are using now. Start the conversation with your cloud provider today, and ask the tough questions. Use the cloud’s unprecedented flexibility to build a cloud computing solution that both enhances your IT capabilities and helps protect your critical data.

**Getting started.** Not losing control starts with knowing what needs to be controlled. An accurate list of requirements is paramount here, and that’s a discussion for your IT department. Matching that list to your cloud provider’s capabilities comes next followed by customization to get that final level of control while decreasing costs.