



10 ways to make the cloud work better

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The cloud continues to evolve, and those who adopt it are reaping its benefits. But the amount of return on your cloud investments and the quality of your cloud experience can vary greatly due to differences in network architectures, managed service providers and SaaS providers. For example, in the past couple of years, SaaS powerhouses including Salesforce, Google and Amazon have experienced some major cloud problems, proof that cloud outages and slipups occur even for some of the world's smartest, most innovative companies.

Though you can't control the delivery of SaaS applications, you can get smarter about the cloud overall. This will result in greater ROI, better application performance, enhanced security and reliability, and happier end users. Here's how:

1. **Scrap the centralized cloud model.** Putting all your eggs in one basket is never a good idea, especially when it comes to the cloud. By using a centralized cloud, companies are not only sacrificing performance and speed, but are putting assets at risk should a natural disaster, power outage or security breach occur. Instead, opt for a global, managed network architecture that utilizes regional cloud centers distributed around the world.
2. **Get smart about mobile device management (MDM).** These days, almost every company is grappling with MDM. Companies should look for cloud-based solutions to help them manage mobility—solutions that can manage and secure devices and protect against over usage, expensive roaming and security breaches. These solutions should also support all major mobile platforms and operators.
3. **Optimize your network.** As more enterprise users access cloud-based applications, speed and performance become major concerns. To remedy this, consider using technologies such as WAN or application optimization. They optimize the network, creating safe, clear pathways for applications—leading to increased productivity and happier end users.
4. **Tap the expertise of managed service providers.** Using a managed service provider doesn't inherently make the cloud safer or more reliable. But the reality is that managed service providers often have resources that may not otherwise be available to your company. Managed service providers are the folks who have the time, expertise, industry partnerships and sometimes, even the cloud infrastructure needed to successfully deploy the cloud.



5. **Go asset light.** Not all managed service providers offer the same services and capabilities. Consider leveraging a partner with comprehensive capabilities and a strong suite of services. And, when selecting a provider, consider choosing a model that *does not require capital investment*. Look at ways to adopt technologies from managed service providers that eliminate the need for unnecessary, expensive hardware.
6. **Ensure your network can handle high-bandwidth cloud applications.** Chances are you're already using or are thinking about adopting SaaS solutions. Unfortunately, many companies are surprised to discover that a traditional WAN architecture can't accommodate skyrocketing Internet traffic, especially from high-power SaaS applications. Look for a service provider with a cloud-ready architecture that you can leverage as a managed service to supplement your legacy network infrastructure. It will enhance performance and help you get the most bang for your buck from your SaaS solutions.
7. **Take advantage of predictive analytics capabilities.** Waiting for network or infrastructure issues to occur and then responding to them can have costly consequences like business interruption. Organizations that proactively anticipate outages and failures can prevent painful downtime and day to day, better serve their customers. Predictive analytics are a powerful tool that companies working in the cloud should take advantage of to help ensure staff productivity, end-user satisfaction and business continuity.
8. **Tap into the power and ease of software-defined networking (SDN).** Wouldn't it be great if you could activate cloud services like application acceleration with a click? Well, you can. Service providers with SDN capabilities can automatically activate and configure cloud services within minutes via a simple online portal.
9. **Demand real-time visibility.** If you're leveraging a managed service provider for cloud, network and other services, consider playing a more active role by demanding visibility into your cloud environment. Your service provider should be able to provide you with real-time, up-to-date information on the health of your IT environment and network so you can monitor what's going on.
10. **Have a roadmap and clearly defined service.** Finally, you can't get there if you don't know where you're going. It sounds simple, but if you're going to deploy the cloud, have a comprehensive, forward-looking plan in place. A dedicated, highly accessible managed service provider can serve as a partner in developing your cloud strategy. But don't stop there. Demand rigid service-level agreements (SLAs) that can help ensure successful cloud adoption.