

Six Pillars to Optimize Your Cloud

Going beyond cost optimization

With digital transformation remaining a top priority for organizations across industries, business and IT leaders around the world continue to work toward optimizing their value extraction of cloud-based technologies and infrastructure. While the myriad operational benefits may be well known, many businesses are learning that cloud optimization is a process of maturation that occurs over time. Organizations should expect to encounter five common challenges. And they should focus on six pillars to drive optimization successfully.

Cloud optimization is the process of continuously maturing cloud-related processes within the enterprise, which drives accelerated business outcomes, thereby maximizing the organization's value derived from its cloud investments.

In our work with IT leaders, we have identified the following five challenges as being the most common, and perhaps the most difficult, for businesses to navigate during the cloud optimization initiative:

Security – In theory, cloud environments should improve security, but due largely to the persistence of human error (misconfiguration, insecure code, phishing, etc.), many businesses are finding themselves increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats. In fact, Kaspersky Lab reports that nearly 90% of cloud breaches are the result of human error.¹

Compliance – Industry-specific and constantly evolving regulations surrounding digital technology are becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. This challenge grows with the introduction of multicloud and hybrid-cloud systems, often leading to an inefficient state with inefficient processes.

¹ "Understanding Security of the Cloud: From Adoption Benefits to Threats and Concerns," Kaspersky Lab, www.kaspersky.com/blog/understanding-security-of-the-cloud/.

Governance – Even though cloud optimization requires a multidisciplinary approach spanning multiple components and focus areas across an organization, many businesses have poorly defined governance processes or lack them entirely. In the absence of clearly established ownership related to each component, organizations face ongoing operational inefficiencies, as well as resilience and control effectiveness concerns, ultimately preventing the true value of the cloud from being realized.

Talent – Various factors have caused organizations to rush into digital transformations without the necessary upskilling or cross-skilling efforts. As a result, many still lack the talent to manage optimization effectively, particularly amid ongoing challenges to recruit and retain qualified technology professionals.

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Cost – Many organizations view cloud optimization primarily as a vehicle for cutting costs; thus, they naturally become frustrated when the need to address any of the above challenges results in increased spending. By limiting their focus to becoming cost-effective, businesses lose sight of the cloud's true value opportunities. In other words, businesses are missing the forest for the trees.

The only proven way to overcome these common challenges is to look beyond cost optimization and toward an optimized implementation of cloud technology and infrastructure.

Six pillars for cloud optimization success

The first step to maximizing value through cloud optimization is learning to see beyond the perceived cost savings. Cost optimization will happen over time, but only as the result of a focused and strategic build-out and implementation of the cloud environment.

Following are six pillars of success to help businesses hone a strategy that suits their individual operations and infrastructure and, most importantly, prioritizes effective cloud optimization.

Six Pillars

1. Efficiency
2. Security
3. Transparency
4. Culture
5. Enhancement
6. Innovation

Efficiency – Well-designed processes are critical to optimizing the value extraction from cloud services, specifically those avoiding increased spend related to recurring bottlenecks throughout implementation. Operational efficiency should be assessed regularly to identify and mitigate underconsumption or performance issues. Additionally, businesses should have clearly defined principles surrounding interoperability and sustainability, as this will pave the way to a seamless utilization of the cloud across multiple segments of the organization.

Security – A strong and reliable security posture is one that leans into automation and minimizes human intervention. To combat security threats effectively, existing control measures should be evaluated to determine which processes may need to be improved or replaced. Businesses should also strongly consider integrating zero trust architecture or tools like continuous verification of configurations and permissions.

Transparency – When it comes to cloud optimization, creating an environment of transparency throughout the organization is essential as it works to eliminate the frequent missteps that result from siloed operations. To unify optimization efforts, businesses should implement a centralized governance strategy to increase visibility and enforce leading practices. Additionally, establishing specific cloud success metrics will help guide operations and provide a more in-depth overview of how each separate initiative is progressing.

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Culture – Building an effective culture means organizing teams and departments around the shared objective of cloud optimization. As the business migrates to the cloud, communication is key to ensuring everyone is on the same page and working efficiently toward that collective goal. In practice, this might mean establishing a cloud center of excellence or a team of specialists that can manage capabilities and improve the adoption of leading practices across the organization. On the security side, businesses should optimize their development, security and operations (DevSecOps) efforts to the point that they become a way of life.

Enhancement – The optimization process should enhance existing capabilities. Otherwise, the overall value of optimizing the cloud is diminished. If existing capabilities are not enhanced and the organization is encountering unforeseen complications during each phase, the organization may need to reevaluate its approach and begin leveraging new tools. For example, deploying machine learning and artificial intelligence tools enable businesses to continually enhance processes through automation. Similarly, businesses should implement a data mobility strategy

to complement their operations, which is a way to ensure that data not only is accessed and shared, but also produces positive impacts as efficiently as possible.

Innovation – Embracing innovative practices is one of the biggest drivers behind cloud migration and optimization. A migration to the cloud can lead to other innovations as well. Simply put, the cloud has become one of the key mechanisms to adopt leading-edge technologies, such as quantum computing, artificial intelligence and edge computing. Innovation also proves to be the key to realizing the “value beyond cost” proposition. When the cloud environment is optimized, it can be leveraged to develop new revenue models, simplify processes, and enhance experiences both inside and outside of the organization. Perhaps more than anything, the cloud is a vehicle for growth and evolution. It allows a traditional financial services company, for example, to become an innovator in the fintech space, or a healthcare organization to emerge as a leader in the burgeoning health-tech industry.

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Call to action

Businesses today can maximize their investments into the cloud by optimizing both planning and deployment, while also realizing that there are some intangible aspects to the savings that can be realized.

How Protiviti can help

Determining whether your cloud is truly optimized can be incredibly difficult without a clear assessment of current efforts, as well as a comprehensive roadmap for improvement. Through the utilization of our six pillars for success, Protiviti's Cloud Solutions practice offers ongoing assessments of cloud optimization strategies and implementations, providing the feedback, tools and leading practices necessary to overcome common challenges and maximize the value of ongoing digital transformations. Our experts will help you assess your situation, develop a plan and implement a solution to extend the value of the cloud and drive cloud optimization.

Regardless of where you are on your cloud journey, Protiviti can help. Our experts have a wide range of experience in everything from accelerating deployments and integrating comprehensive cloud governance strategies to improving security postures and simplifying the accessibility of thousands of previously isolated resources.

Our cloud services include:

- **Advisory:** Define the strategy for governing and managing cloud operations.
- **Security:** Protect your most valuable data and successfully operate your business in the cloud through policy controls, architecture and automation.
- **Transformation:** Enable cloud solutions that fit the needs of cloud adoption teams, employee awareness of leading practices, and a thoughtful approach toward cloud transformation.
- **Management:** Ensure resource consistency, deployment acceleration, security and identity baselines, cost and performance optimization.
- **Innovation:** Encourage and identify opportunities for leading cloud practices, continual learning, growth, and use of the cloud and emerging technologies to drive organizational growth.

To learn more about Protiviti's cloud solutions and how to realize the true value of digital transformation, contact us at technologyconsulting@protiviti.com.

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