Mapping a Route on the Road to the New Normal

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A webinar entitled *Future-Proof Your Cloud Map* was hosted on November 6, 2018, by ITWC and sponsored by TeraGo. ITWC CIO and Chief Digital Officer Jim Love moderated a discussion that included the following topics:
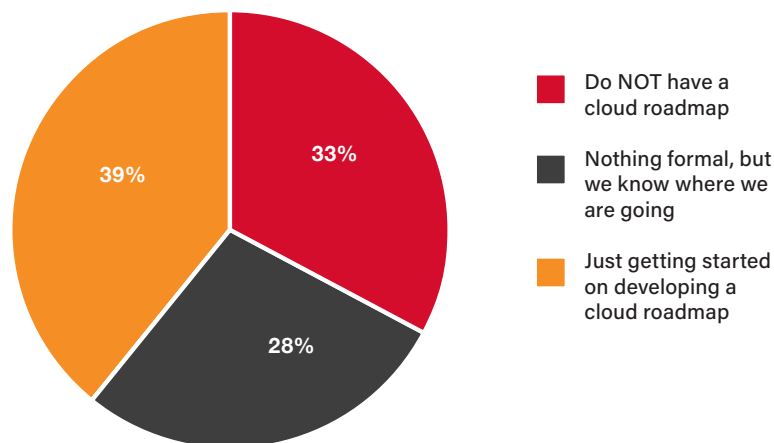
- Stories From The Road
- The Importance of Planning
- Emergent Technologies
- Tips for the Future & Best Practices

The general consensus was that cloud — something Gartner describes as the new normal — is more of a journey than a destination, and like any complicated journey, it requires planning, organization, and purpose.

Gauging the Adoption of Roadmaps to Cloud

Love opened the session with comments on the benefit of cloud implementations. After introducing TeraGo's VP, Product Management and Business Development Christopher Taylor and Solution Architect Anil Kanwar, Love presented webinar participants with the first of three poll questions:

POLL: Where are you right now in terms of a cloud roadmap?

33%

39%

28%

- Do NOT have a cloud roadmap
- Nothing formal, but we know where we are going
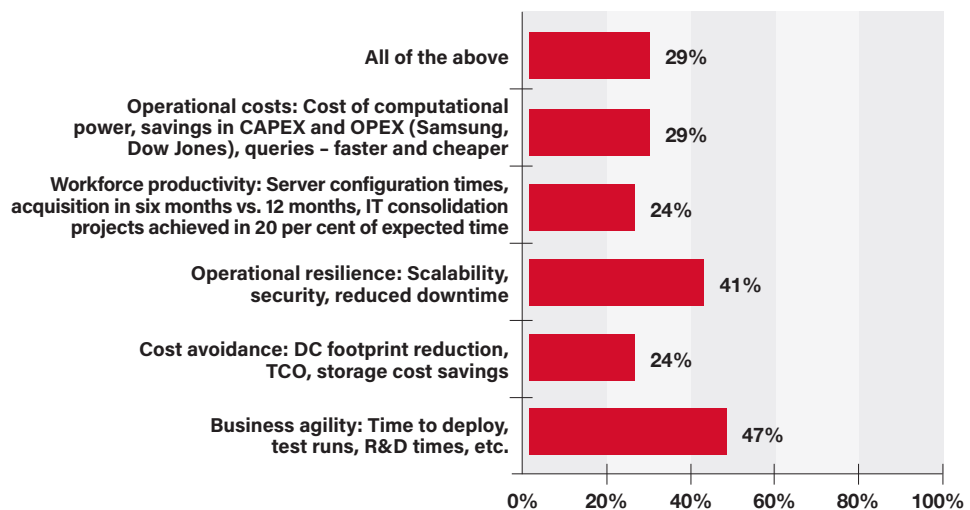- Just getting started on developing a cloud roadmap

Cloud is essential for digital business, yet Gartner estimates that less than one-third of enterprises have a documented cloud strategy. The results of the first poll question echo this finding, with 33 per cent saying their organizations do not have a cloud roadmap. A smaller number said there was nothing formal in place, but the organization knew where it was going. Almost 40 per cent said they were just getting started on developing a cloud roadmap, and everyone believed in the need for a roadmap.

"From a long-term, or even midterm perspective, lots and lots of people just don't have a roadmap," said Taylor. "They know they need a plan, and may have one for the short term or maybe even for the next quarter, but they haven't secured a long-range roadmap."

Driving the Move to Cloud

The second poll question delved more deeply into participants' motivation for using or intending to use cloud. The highest score went to support for business agility, followed closely by operational resilience, including scalability, security, and reduced downtime. Operational costs came next, with 24 per cent of participants identifying workforce productivity and cost avoidance as motivators.

All of the above — 29%
Operational costs: Cost of computational power, savings in CAPEX and OPEX (Samsung, Dow Jones), queries – faster and cheaper — 29%
Workforce productivity: Server configuration times, acquisition in six months vs. 12 months, IT consolidation projects achieved in 20 per cent of expected time — 24%
Operational resilience: Scalability, security, reduced downtime — 41%
Cost avoidance: DC footprint reduction, TCO, storage cost savings — 24%
Business agility: Time to deploy, test runs, R&D times, etc. — 47%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

The third poll question also concerned proposed usage for cloud, asking participants to consider benefits such as deployment speed, support for a mobile workforce, improved security, and disaster recovery.
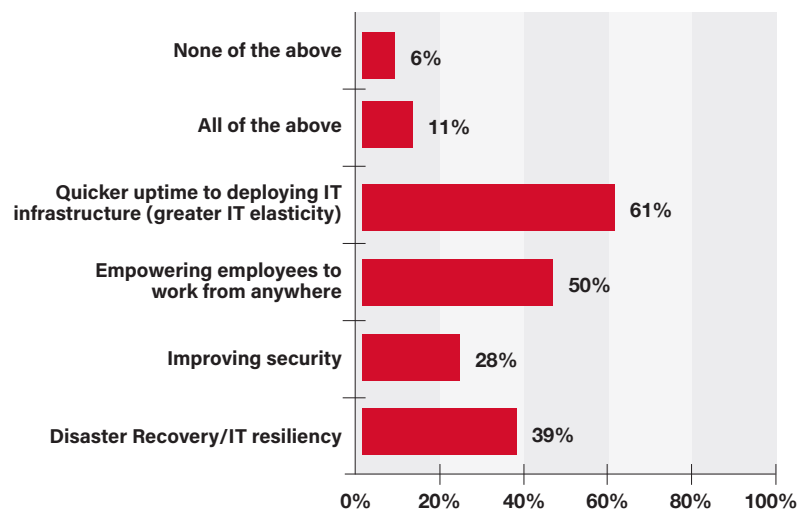
More than 60 per cent of respondents said cloud would be used to increase the speed of deploying IT infrastructure. Half thought it would empower employees to work from anywhere, and almost 40 per cent saw Disaster Recovery (DR) as a key benefit. Surprisingly, given the current cyber-threat landscape, less than one third saw improved security as a compelling reason to use cloud.

"Disaster Recovery has been an especially unexplored area," said Kanwar. "With the cloud, you can bring up your servers, test them, and then roll it back."

Exposing the Myths

According to Taylor, there is education required if customers are to understand the capabilities of cloud when it comes to DR. "There's a myth that data is better protected in an on-premises environment, within your own walls," he said. "The reality is that if you move the bulk of your information to the cloud, security actually increases."

" Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

— *Abraham Lincoln, US President 1861-65*

Another myth discussed is that SaaS models and Office 365 eliminate the need for a backup strategy. "That's simply not true," said Taylor. "When people realize that, they call in and ask us for help. It's one of the top three requests that TeraGo gets."

The Complex Landscape of Multi-cloud

Taylor and Kanwar agree that the need to protect data by having another copy is one of the reasons to have a multi-cloud approach, yet they say there are several major stumbling blocks to this approach, beginning with a misperception of multi-cloud.

"People will tell me that they are multi-cloud, but the truth is that they are only multi-cloud because they are using a number of clouds and leveraging them on an ad hoc basis," said Kanwar. "One department may be leveraging Google for one thing and another department may be using AWS for something else. There's no real strategy with regard to a multi-cloud approach."

The Tail Wagging the Dog

Another difficulty is that many businesses use product demos to define their cloud adoption strategy. "The dealers come in and their products look awesome, but it's problematic to let these products define your strategy," said Taylor. "It's really important to get out ahead of the RFP before you issue it, and nail down your business and technical requirements."

A third obstacle, from Kanwar's perspective, is a failure by many organizations to adopt an enterprise architecture view at the infrastructure or application level. "Without a roadmap or plan, everyone is using a different infrastructure solution to meet business requirements," he said. "Another issue is that people are trending towards point solutions because they have not evaluated their overall strategy."

Conducting a Cloud Assessment

Taylor offered the following words from Abraham Lincoln as a way of crystallizing his thoughts on the optimum path to cloud: *Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.*

"That's one of the big takeaways here," he said. "At TeraGo, we do cloud assessments to help our clients understand cloud, and understand the value of cloud. It's worth spending the time up front to gather your priorities."

A typical cloud assessment involves getting to know customers and analyzing expenditures related to servers, storage, networks, data centres, and personnel. Based on target dates, customers are presented with options that include VMware cloud, Hyperscale, and Amazon Web Services. "An assessment like this is a good place to begin if you want to analyze your current landscape and reduce investment costs," said Kanwar.

TeraGo uses a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) calculator to produce a detailed comparison of the cost of an on-premises hosting environment and cloud. "The TCO analysis we do is based not only on software licenses and hardware inventory," said Kanwar, "but also includes all the costs of a data center, including the people who run it and maintain it."

Love linked the assessment process to the Lincoln quote. "It's like sharpening your axe," he said. "You have to ask what your time is worth, and what your organization's time is worth. If there's knowledge to be had, start from there."

Doing it Differently – Getting it Right
Planning may sound like the natural solution to successful operations, yet according to Love it has a bad reputation in some enterprises. "In the old days, we created a lot of paper and a lot of plans that were never executed," he said. "But just because we made the mistake of over-planning in the past doesn't mean we can't do it differently now and get it right."

A cloud assessment enables experts like Kanwar to help customers move their data centres to the cloud. "Refactoring is required in order to leverage foundational cloud components such as scalability," he explained. "The next step is deciding which cloud is best for your applications."

Taylor gave the example of a problem TeraGo is frequently asked to resolve for customers. "Their architecture is a bit of a basket weave, and communications are tightly integrated back and forth," he said. "Throw in another application and a few more lines and it's going to be very difficult to scale." The preferred approach, he says, and one that goes a long way in connecting on premises services with cloud services, is Integration Platform as a Service (IPaaS).

Planning for Change

"In our experience, the iterative approach to development and integration is critical," said Taylor. "Your design will invariably change over time, so build your cloud roadmap, but be sure to leave room for emergent technologies such as software-defined scale, software-defined networks, automation, containerization, and Kubernetes."

> " People don't know what they don't know. The architecture's out there, so go get somebody who has done it before.
>
> — *Jim Love, CIO and Chief Digital Officer, ITWC*

The real benefits, says Love, occur when infrastructure architecture jibes with the organization's movement towards agile. "There are incredible opportunities in cloud," he said. "Linking your architecture to agile best practices is where you will get the biggest bang for your buck."

You Don't Have to Go it Alone

The webinar concluded with a Q&A, including questions relating to Office 365 backup, hybrid IT, and the typical cost savings of moving most of an organization's applications to the cloud. Taylor recommended that webinar participants reach out to a partner like TeraGo, at least for consultation.

"Build the relationship early by having a conversation," said Love. "People will tell you things that will keep you from making mistakes. As somebody who went into cloud and learned the hard way, I can tell you that people don't know what they don't know. The architecture's out there, so go get somebody who has done it before."

View the webinar Future-Proof Your Cloud Map for more information on developing a roadmap that takes your cloud program to the next level and sets you up for the future.

About TeraGo

TeraGo provides businesses across Canada with cloud, colocation and connectivity services. TeraGo manages over 3,000 cloud workloads, operates five data centres in the Greater Toronto Area, the Greater Vancouver Area, and Kelowna, and owns and manages its own IP network. The Company serves business customers in major markets across Canada including Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Winnipeg. TeraGo Networks is a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) and was recognized by IDC as a Major Player in its MarketScape Cloud Vendor Assessment. TeraGo Networks was also selected as one of Canada's Top Small and Medium Employers for 2017.

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