Is COVID-19 a catalyst for hybrid-cloud adoption?

In the current testing times, internet traffic usage has soared, and organisations are scrambling to ensure that their business can continue to operate effectively. Early estimates show that internet traffic has increased 50-70% mainly due to a combination of working from home and increased video streaming.

Where is this traffic coming from?

Looking at these use cases individually, video streaming has risen more than 20% overall and up to 40% for daytime streaming (8 am-5 pm) globally during the COVID-19 lockdown. This increased usage, coupled with new online video services being rollout out (Disney+) have put a significant strain on providers who support these services. Google, AWS and Microsoft Azure have all seen an increased number of outages as a result of COVID-19 usage and thus each of them has chosen to prioritise workloads and throttle non-critical services.

The response

In the corporate environment, organisations have been hurriedly rolling out new services and enhancing existing ones to meet business demands while companies with limited or no work-from-home policies have had to rapidly rethink their working models. Full-time working from home has increased from

around 5% of the UK workforce to around 60% with the strain starting to show on existing technology services.

Many companies have been implementing their carefully crafted business continuity plans only to realise that many of these models were based on short-term outages of 1-5 business days. As a result, they have had to prioritise resources for critical staff members, rollout many new physical laptops and virtual desktops, and accelerate the deployment of emerging collaboration tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams. This is evident in the 100% increase in Microsoft Teams usage over the last 2 months.

This accelerated adoption of digital services has led to a popular joke making the rounds:

Who led the digital transformation of your company?

    CEO

    CTO

    COVID-19

Jokes aside, this really highlights how unprepared many organisations are for such a global outage and true collaborative working, but also highlights how quickly IT departments can respond when they really need to.

The global increase in technology usage has required IT departments to rapidly scale both their ageing infrastructure and their cloud services. This has led to some cloud providers like Microsoft Azure 'rationing' their cloud capacity to focus on its online service (O365) and away from customers mission-critical workloads.

Whilst this is happening, organisations who own their data centres or manage their technology in colocation facilities are trying to increase their compute and virtual desktop capacity quickly, leading to shortages in the availability of hardware infrastructure that is mostly provided by China, one of the areas most affected.

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What does all this rapid change mean for organisations and IT departments?

While implementing digital workplace services and moving to the cloud have been on many IT strategic roadmaps for the past 5 years, the adoption of these services has been slow. Changing an IT operating model to have a 50%+ bias towards the cloud and cloud services is a big change for most organisations and one that is coupled with a perceived high risk in migrating critical business services.

COVID-19 – A catalyst for change

The COVID-19 pandemic will teach us many things, but when it comes to IT, Wavestone foresees that it will particularly highlight the shortfalls in how organisations support their IT while being a major catalyst for the adoption of more hybrid cloud models. The cloud and network outages caused by the increased cloud usage during 2020 have demonstrated that having a single solution and provider model presents risks that many organisations cannot tolerate.

The focus for organisations, beyond COVID-19

Adoption of a truly hybrid cloud model will become a priority for many organisations, which will involve changes to how applications are architected and the migration of existing services to new providers.

Alastair Ballantyne, Senior Manager at Wavestone has a background in Data Centre design and optimisation, with over 15 years experience providing bespoke and industry-leading solutions to various industries, specifically financial services.

Wavestone has more than 3,500 collaborators in eight countries. It is one of the leading independent consultancy firms in Europe and is the number 1 independent consultancy firm in France.

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