



A CLOUD ADOPTION GUIDE

How midmarket companies can ensure business and IT success as they migrate to the cloud



TECH DOSSIER

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The Midmarket Business Case for Cloud Adoption

This tech dossier is a step-by-step guide for IT and business leaders of midmarket companies, to make the business case for moving applications and services to the cloud.

Agility and the ability to leverage technology can accelerate [digital business transformation](#), according to Gartner. Midmarket CIOs are in a prime position for this: their organizations have powerful agility advantages over larger enterprises, and it's far easier for them to connect and [engage with customers](#) — possibly the biggest advantage they have when it comes to digital business.

Companies of all sizes are moving applications and services to the cloud. In fact, in a recent IDG Enterprise Research Services survey, 78% of the participating IT and business leaders said they have either already made the transition or are in the process of migrating one or more on-premises apps to the cloud.

The cloud push is happening for many reasons, including the need for scalability and agility and to better manage costs. And, for many organizations, the growing pressure to migrate stems from a need to remain competitive in an increasingly digital economy. After all, today's customers have heightened service expectations.

However, agility and scalability are often difficult to achieve in cloud migrations without help. Some of the stumbling blocks or challenges, especially for midmarket companies, include:

- Dealing with complexity issues involving infrastructure limitations, legacy apps, and interoperability

- Properly allocating resources, including staff, time, and budget
- Overcoming internal politics, especially misconceptions about the cloud
- Addressing security and/or regulatory compliance concerns

Midmarket companies have unique requirements: they have fewer resources than large enterprises yet more complex IT infrastructures than small businesses. That's why it's important for midmarket organizations to develop a cloud migration strategy before moving to the cloud.

The keys to success include building the business case in advance, securing buy-in from stakeholders, and seeking assistance where best applicable. Here are five steps designed to ease the midmarket company's move to the cloud.

**STEP
1****Identify use cases**

The primary objective here is to clearly delineate the need for a cloud migration. The best way to accomplish this goal is to work directly with line-of-business (LOB) leaders to identify projects well suited for cloud migration.

Take the example of migrating a customer contact application to the cloud. Start by mapping the benefits—such as improving the customer experience by decreasing response times—and then highlight how the cloud will address the associated business pains, including a lack of resources or security concerns about customer data.

Be sure to consider each LOB. Although those business units that focus on improving the customer experience may have the C-suite's ear, aligning other LOB needs can actually help improve the effectiveness of customer-facing apps. For instance, although marketing may desire apps that help customize the customer experience, it's often manufacturing, engineering, or development teams that materialize this requirement.

**STEP
2****Determine success factors**

After identifying the use cases that make the most sense and securing LOB buy-in, it's important to clarify measurable targets and goals associated with migration.

For instance, goals associated with migrating a customer contact application to the cloud might include reducing staff time to resolve customer issues or improving customer self-service functionality. As best possible, develop measurable targets to prove success—for example, reduce customer call wait times by two minutes or decrease the number of calls to the contact center by 10%.

**STEP
3****Assess resources**

The objective of assessing resources is to analyze existing infrastructure and applications to determine how cloud migration will affect people, processes, and technology. For instance, using the customer contact example, start by understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the existing app and its use (externally and internally), management, and maintenance. Also consider its integration with current infrastructure.

Going through this process enables you to more realistically determine whether you have the in-house skills and expertise needed for a smooth migration and ongoing maintenance. It also identifies technology needs and defines the process by which the migration will occur. That said, it's important to assess service needs on an ongoing basis—before, during, and after the move to the cloud.

It's worth noting: if your company is lacking cloud expertise or skills, this step will highlight the business case for using a managed services provider (MSP).

“GKV and its cornerstone client have been receiving managed hosting services from Edge since 2014. In that time, Edge has proven to be more than a hosting vendor. They go above and beyond in the quality of their support, with a level of consistency unmatched by our previous vendor. From the technical account manager to the CISO to the CEO, Edge has been a great partner helping us deliver the most value to our client.”

— Mike Hilton, VP, Director of IT, GKV Communications

**STEP
4****Address options**

No two cloud migrations are identical, nor is the process equal among different companies. As a result, taking the time to analyze the different cloud models—public, private, hybrid—will help determine which is the best fit for the application or service under consideration.

Using the customer contact application example, there are certain security, compliance, and interoperability factors that will influence the cloud model decision. Take the time to understand specifically how each approach affects these concerns.

For instance, a private cloud may provide the necessary security for a customer contact app. But if the data within that app doesn't include personal identifiers or sensitive customer information, the company will be better off benefiting from the economies of scale afforded by a public cloud model.

Or perhaps a hybrid configuration would make the most sense—leveraging the public cloud when scalability and cost efficiencies are needed, while isolating sensitive data in the private cloud.

Industry regulations may also play a role in determining which route is most appropriate. Highly regulated industries must demonstrate compliance, which naturally includes cloud deployments. Also, international regulations have added a few wrinkles, forcing organizations to pay closer attention to how data is handled.

**STEP
5****Map out migration**

Having a roadmap is the best route to success. Establish the structure—including people, processes, and technology—as the organization goes through cloud migration, keeping the project on task while also allowing for adjustments as necessary.

Key aspects include establishing a timeframe for completion, determining who will lead the migration, and lining up outside expertise for ongoing and evolving needs.

Conclusion

The cloud has become an enabling force for midmarket businesses looking to reduce complexity, improve agility, and become more competitive. A well-orchestrated cloud migration that complements rather than replaces existing infrastructure can play a pivotal role.

“We get the benefit of the Edge learning curve. They are managing cloud applications for hundreds of clients, and we get that knowledge, which improves our ability to provide the best service to our clients.”

— Doug Rempfer, COO, Surgical Information Systems



The Business Value of Working with an MSP

Midmarket companies can greatly benefit from working with an experienced strategic managed services provider when migrating applications and ongoing services to the cloud.

The cloud enables companies to gain agility, scale more easily with growth, and reduce costs. But for midmarket companies, which are often dealing with limited resources and complex IT architectures, cloud migrations can be challenging.

That's why organizations are increasingly turning to managed services providers (MSPs) for support and guidance. According to a recent IDG Research Quick Pulse survey focused on cloud migration, 43% of companies now leverage a third party to manage cloud applications.

This article outlines the benefits of working with a strategic partner and how, by doing so, midmarket companies can establish a more effective IT environment, enabling IT to serve as a revenue enabler.

The Benefits of Partnership

Ideally, working with an MSP should not only fill any gaps the IT organization may have but the partnership should also be a source of continued support, enablement, and innovation.

Here are some considerations for midmarket companies as they seek an MSP partnership:

EXPERTISE. At a time when businesses are constantly asking their IT departments to do more, the reality is that the in-house IT staff is often stretched beyond its limits. In addition, many companies don't have extensive cloud experience on hand. Even those that do can use an MSP to free IT staff for more-strategic projects that focus on revenue generation, for example.

An MSP should provide insights into how to best leverage the cloud offering and how to capitalize on opportunities to maximize the cloud. For example, an experienced MSP can demonstrate how effective cloud utilization can help a midsize organization capitalize on the mounds of data it collects and keep it secure.

Midmarket companies recognize this need for experience. Specifically, many of the IDG survey respondents (76%) place significant value on an MSP's expertise with cloud architecture and engineering. Additionally, 59% said they are looking for in-demand skill sets.

COMPLIANCE AND SECURITY ENABLEMENT. Compliance regulations are growing in volume, with constantly evolving security considerations for sensitive data. To help navigate this complex environment, organizations need an MSP that goes beyond checking compliance boxes. They must be able to leverage security best practices and compliance frameworks, based on experience, certifications, and expertise.

Also, due to today's digital economy, compliance has become an issue that affects the entire organization. According to the CSO and PwC "2017 Global State of Information Security Survey," the growing need for compliance is resulting in international legislation designed to better hold organizations accountable. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for instance, will fine an organization up to 4% of its global revenue for being noncompliant.

That's why working with a managed services provider that has deep security and compliance expertise is taking on even greater importance.

FASTER ADOPTION OF THE CLOUD. Time to market is crucial for survival in today's business environment. For midmarket organizations, this means having the apps within the cloud to effectively engage the customer as well as to power the business.

A properly chosen partner will provide best practices, economies of scale, and experience in bringing together people, processes, and technology to speed cloud adoption.

EFFICIENCY AND REDUCTION OF COMPLEXITY. To remain competitive, midmarket companies must be agile, not held back by complex legacy infrastructure and interoperability issues. A proven MSP will enable the organization to nimbly and effectively achieve economies of scale with a fully integrated suite of managed services.

Moving mission-critical apps from a legacy environment to a cloud deployment (whether public, private, or hybrid) often takes significant effort. Not only will the right partner understand your objectives and applications but they will also leverage this knowledge to craft an architectural design strategy to drive the best-possible outcome, given your resources and business goals.

STRATEGIC VALUE. Partnership with an MSP should go beyond functionality. The right partner will provide strategic infrastructure recommendations, scaling advice, and knowledge of how the cloud can help you achieve your business goals.

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— CSO and PwC 2017 Global State of Information Security Survey

An MSP relationship should provide ongoing services at a predictable cost that not only reduces the burden on internal IT resources but also enables the business to achieve all the critical benefits and economies of scale the cloud brings.

Companies seeking to improve the customer experience or capitalize on an opportunity to be first to market with a new service offering need an MSP that doesn't get caught up in the technology. A true strategic partner will understand goals and effectively articulate how its services will help realize business objectives.

Bottom Line

Today's data-fueled environment presents a unique opportunity for IT to enable new growth opportunities.

For IT departments in midmarket organizations to serve as revenue generators, IT requires the flexibility, scalability, and agility that comes from an effectively managed cloud deployment. Having the right partner on board can play a pivotal role in making this a reality.



Working with the Right Partner

Eliminate iterations and shorten time to market with an experienced partner.

At Edge, we're ok with being the unsung hero. The one that keeps you and your company moving at the speed of business.

We differentiate ourselves from competing managed service providers by creating a personal, hands-on experience from start to finish that has been developed over two decades as a proven process to drive customer success.

Deep Consultation

Starting with how you arrived at your current state, a partner should ask relevant, in-depth questions about the nature of your business and how you define success. Your thorough and candid answers will ensure that the partner can support your needs now and in the future, including any compliance demands.

Understanding mutual needs and strengths ensures that the partner is ready to own the responsibility you feel comfortable delegating.

We believe a strong partner will have as rigorous a vetting process as you will in the search for the right partner. Honing in on six priority areas can ensure a good match and foster the right working chemistry. Typically, companies that require a partner for their strategic cloud initiatives will want to prioritize across cost, compliance, availability, support, security, and scale.

Simply put, these areas can't all be a No. 1 priority. By rating which of these areas (CCASSS) are most important, companies can ensure strong alignment with their cloud services partner to determine the most successful outcome based on the optimal solution for their business strategy.



Identifying Your Custom Environment

The degree to which a partner must consult depends greatly on the resources you have available to support the effort. The more information, the better your partner can design the optimal solution and anticipate any issues to proactively address them. Your partner will have spent time getting to know you, your pain points, goals, and what you're looking for in a cloud services partner.

Once priorities are established, consider your options for solutions, for example:

1. The optimal configuration

This environment will have all the bells and whistles. It will demonstrate vision and demonstrate risk points where the partner can provide coverage.

2. Problem-solving approach

This is pragmatic and not about fixing "what ain't broke"; instead it's about optimizing your environment and offering best practices learned over years of experience.

3. Mutually beneficial relationship

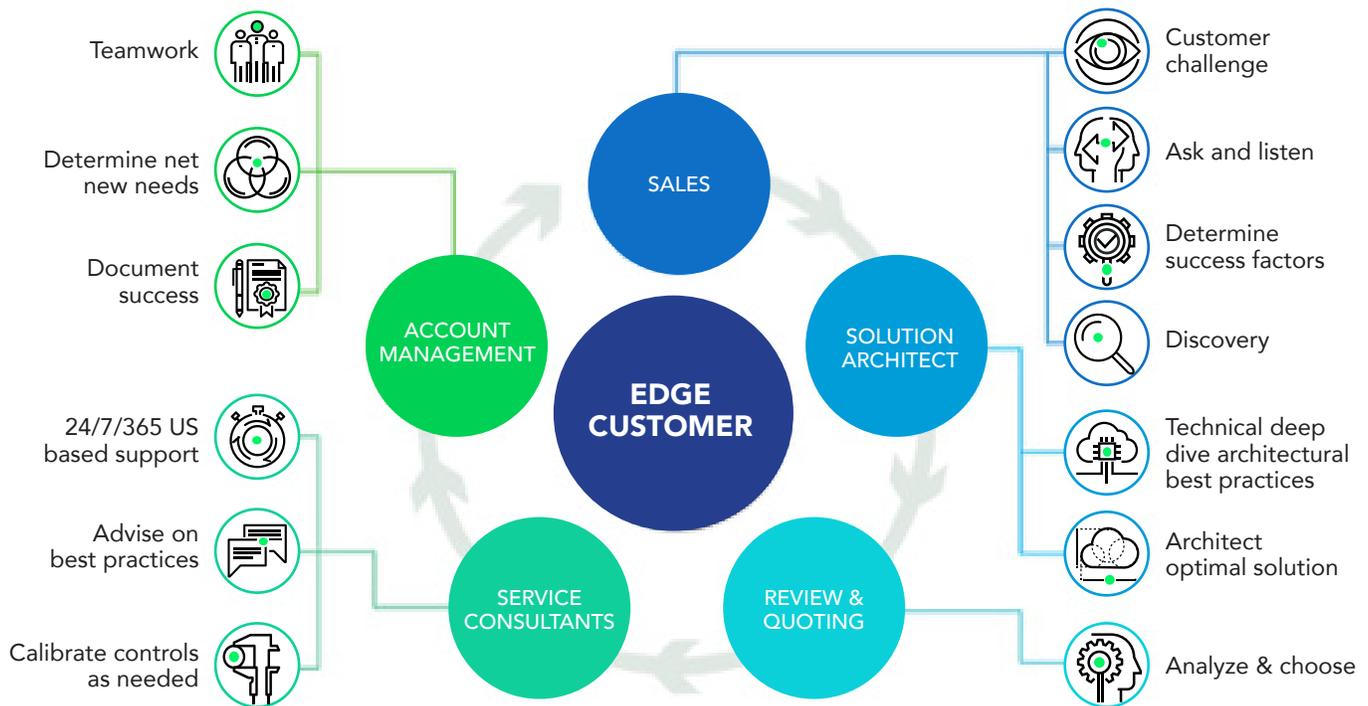
This environment will require more involvement on your side, which may be your preference or because there is technical acumen on the side of the customer that is enhanced by a partnership.

4. The customer's wish

This configuration is to your specifications. The partner has listened to what you want and is providing that at an exact cost. Although this won't include any additional recommendations or other considerations, some businesses have their sights set on something and the right partner can provide it, as long as the partner sees it as a secure and viable option.

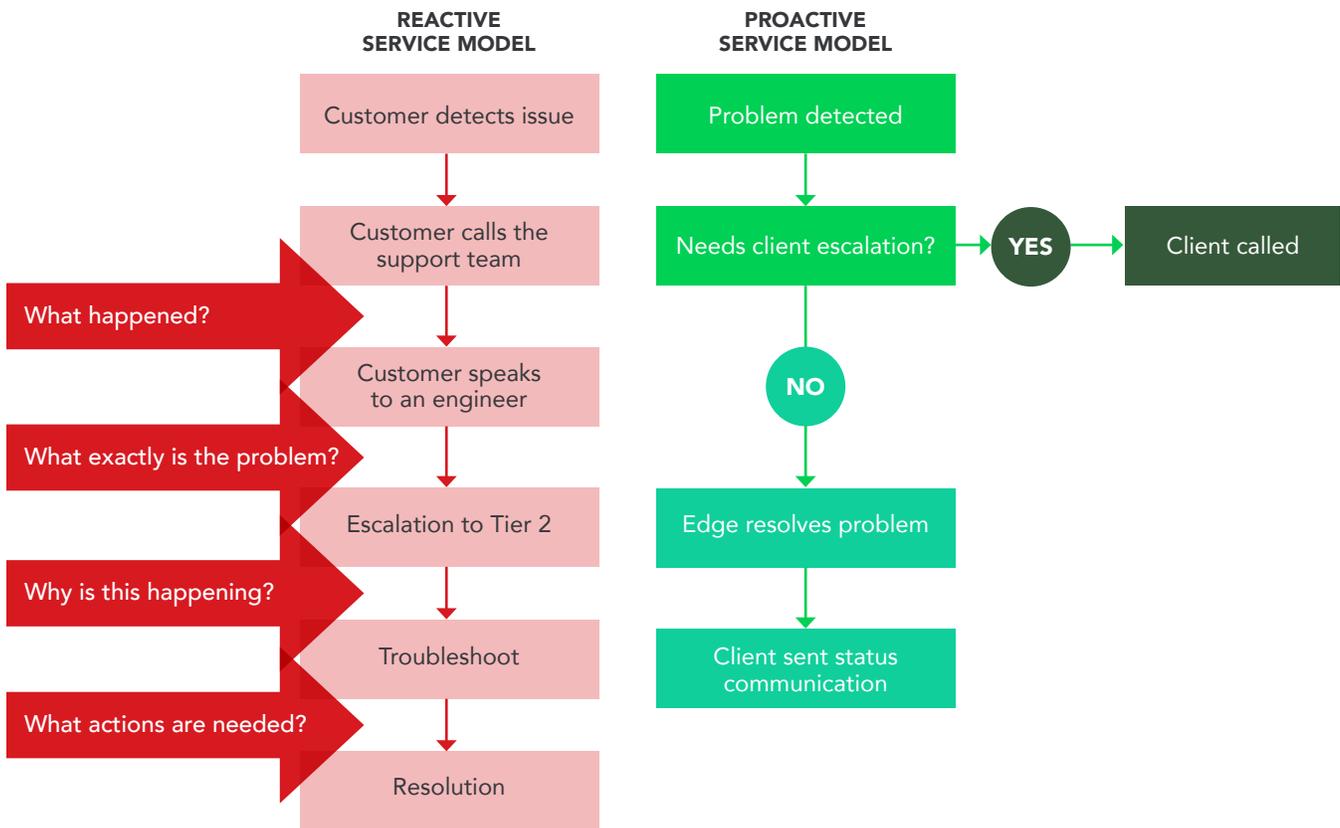
No matter which option you select, commitment to mutual integrity and transparency is key to success.

The Discovery and Qualification Process



The Proactive Partner Process for Issue Resolution

Most managed service providers make it incumbent upon their customers to detect an issue or react to an alarm. Then the customer must spend time working with multiple tiers of support to resolve the issue. Although this may end well, it is a distraction from your business focus and not something you want to deal with in the middle of the night. The right partner will proactively detect an issue, inform you that it's being handled, resolve it, and guide you on how to prevent it from happening again.



From incident management to real-time stats on the health of your environment, a key ingredient of a successful partnership is ongoing transparency. Look for a partner that offers 24 x 7 access—anywhere, anytime—to a sophisticated portal for the business, including dashboards for security, compliance, audit documentation, and capacity management. Having this portal is especially helpful if you need to prove the value of fully managed services.

Finally, from the outset, your partner should seek to discover your needs and objectives so that you can benefit from the best-possible solution. Whatever your cloud initiative, delivering value to internal and external stakeholders is paramount. Look for a commitment to quality and excellence for technical solutions as well as proactive customer service.

Get Your **Edge**

Discover why midmarket firms are turning to **Edge Hosting**, a DataBank company, for managed solutions and services.