how to avoid a cloud migration failure

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what are the main causes of a failed cloud migration?

Cloud migration projects vary greatly in complexity and scope. And every one, regardless of scale or the technology involved, carries risk.

From seemingly 'small' proposals such as moving email services from an on-premises Exchange server to Exchange Online, to larger scale migration of multiple services like file shares, databases, bespoke applications, emails, and mobile device management to SharePoint, Exchange Online, Azure Virtual Machines / SQL instances, Endpoint Manager, and so on – they all demand knowledge, confidence and undivided attention to take them successfully past the finish line.

Planning and implementing migrations on a regular basis has meant that our Professional Services team have seen a lot of hurdles. Here they have shared their top oversights that can hinder your way to the cloud.

Nearly 1/3 of cloud migrations fail

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planning to fail

One of the most common causes behind a poor migration is lack of planning. Without sufficient analysis, migrations are much more likely to encounter complications and potentially fail altogether. That's why it is extremely important, regardless of the size of the migration project, that all work is planned and managed strategically.

The first step in creating a strategic plan for you migration is to fully understand your current infrastructure. The following members of your dedicated migration team will take you, and other stakeholders, through a project scope and change management process to determine the elements that will govern the migration.

If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail

Technical Account Manager

Dedicated to the delivery of IT services and improvements, our experienced Technical Account Managers ascertain your infrastructure, needs and capabilities, and turn that information into strategic technical roadmaps.

They will work with you to understand your current painpoints and outline the primary objectives of the migration.

Solution Architect

Often, the IT solutions we propose are complex and require a deep technical understanding across multiple technologies such as cloud, security, networking and infrastructure. Our Solution Architects are specifically chosen for their proven track record of designing technical infrastructure solutions, including the scoping, designing and optimising of cloud migrations.

They will critically evaluate your environment and how it all interconnects to develop a comprehensive migration plan. Their scoping and designing lays the core foundation for the whole migration project.

Technical Project Manager

Migrations are challenging for even the most cloud-savvy professionals. Every migration will be unique, every stage will have complex moving parts. That's why we assign a dedicated Technical Project Manager to each migration.

Holding every team member involved to our high standards, they will manage, track, and communicate the progress of the project including execution, construction, budget, risks, issues, and change.

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skipping the preparation phase

Detailed technical analysis is key to a smooth execution

A cloud migration isn't as simple as picking up data and applications from a server and dropping them into the cloud. During the initial stages of a migration project, it is imperative to outline the project approach and perform any necessary preparational tasks to make sure it runs as smoothly as possible. These tasks tend to be split into data preparation and systems configurations.

Data migration

Data migration is a complex task. Let's take a SharePoint migration project as an example. During various migration projects, we validate your existing data to make sure that it is fir for transfer and wont be lost during transit across the services.

Common data preparation tasks we undertake include:

| Checking file names for any special characters that are incompatible with the cloud environment
| Checking the transferred data be able to be stored and opened successfully by other applications
| Removing any empty files or corrupted data
| Identifying any data that wont be supported for use or storage
| Assigning the correct data permissions for your employees

System tasks

Systems configuration tasks make sure your environment is prepared for optimal performance and security.

Common systems tasks we undertake include:

| Connecting domains
| Testing connectivity
| Configuring security policies and protection
| Adding users and licenses
| Checking the required compute still applicable to a virtual machine
| Managing costs and billing, checking to see of any cost savings can be made
| Checking the server's applications and operating system still function as before when moved to the cloud
| Ensuring the solution will work in a modern environment

The preparation stage can seem daunting, which is why we have a team of seasoned engineers in the background, delivering the end-to-end technical activity for a seamless implementation across all key stages.

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not prioritising communication

When we partner with a client on a migration project, we put a lot of emphasis on the importance of great collaboration. Without both parties committing to effective and honest communication it would be very difficult to carry out a successful migration project.

Poor comms leads to poor planning. Poor planning leads to confusion. And confusion leads to a failed or bungled migration. For example, if the information discussed in the planning stages isn't discussed candidly, inaccuracies will snowball and drastically impact the technical implementation and final solution.

What sets successful cloud migrations apart from mediocre ones is open conversations and reliable updates. Our Technical Project Managers mange a full communications plan, keeping stakeholders in the loop with a project schedule, regular meetings and reports.

Project communication should be honest, open, and two-way

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being too old

It might sound surprising, but the improvements themselves can carry a risk where there may be incompatibility with older, less advanced systems. For the migration this means that the benefits may not be realised until the other solutions are also upgraded or replaced.

As an example, think of a Microsoft Excel installation using an older addon for some financial application, or toolbar functions. Excel is now installed as a 64bit application because it is much faster and able to utilise more RAM.

The problem arises when the addin needs to be reactivated – it only works with the older 32bit Excel. This presents a barrier to using the new technology. Either 32bit Excel must be used (thus providing no benefits to the users or business), or the addin must be replaced. However, this may also not be possible because it is too old and no 64bit version is available. Again, no benefit is provided.

So how can this risk be avoided? Planning! Providing that access is given, and sufficient time is spent analysing the current environment, these risks can be identified and tackled early.

Empowered by the cloud, but hindered by legacy tech

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lack of end user 'buy-in' and cooperation

Any IT engineer will tell you, cooperation and end user buy-in (where the users are actively engaged, involved with, or at least aware of, the migration and its benefits) is a key part to success.

People don't like change – we all know this but without the cooperation and flexibility of the end users, projects and migrations often suffer delays or complications during execution. That's why it's important to try to set the right attitude for members of staff, and in a language that they understand.

" **Remember it's the end-user who will be using the new system on a daily basis**

| Focus not on the disruption, but the benefits they'll see as an individual. E.g. Your system will be faster or more reliable

| Give them a sense of purpose. E.g. The business will be able to scale better and will reduce operating costs. Even just knowing the 'why' can help with acceptance and buy-in.

| Think of the why, what, when, and how for any technical communications. Remember to keep them brief and stick to the points – why are we doing this, what is happening, when is it happening, and how are we doing it.

your choice of technology partner is important

Not every IT service partner will be qualified. Cloud migrations aren't a core competency for a lot of IT service providers. These projects really need recent and relevant experience. When evaluating a partner, ensure they have the capabilities to carry out an end-to-end implementation. Lessons learnt from previous migrations will automatically be applied to your project, along with best practices.

When evaluating a potential partner, look at what industry standards and accreditations they have earned, particularly those from the technology vendors themselves. Discuss their recent projects and ask to see case studies and testimonials. A strong partner will be able to confidently take you through how they navigated projects similar to yours.

Gold
Microsoft
Partner

Microsoft

The value of a knowledgeable and trusted IT partner should not be underestimated

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migrate with confidence

From infrastructure analysis and project scoping, to project closure and handover, and all the stages in between – our cloud team has you covered.

Wherever you are in your cloud journey, OryxAlign can guide you through the process. Contact our specialists today.

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