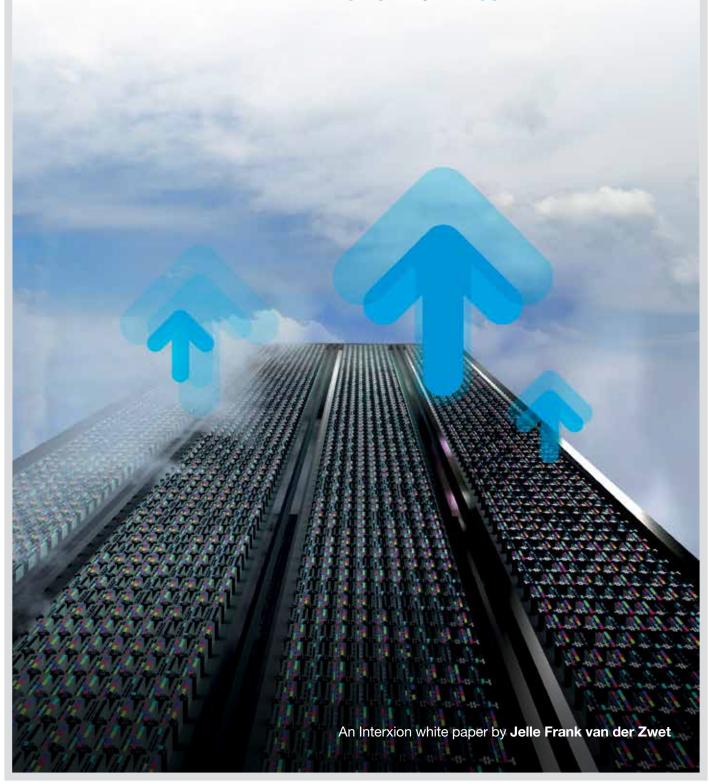
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CLOUD ONBOARDING

How to prepare your application workloads



INTRODUCTION

No IT department wants to launch itself into a cloud migration project without feeling confident that it can ultimately deliver a smooth, trouble-free switchover to the cloud environment. Papers and articles selling the benefits of cloud computing may gloss over the whole issue of onboarding, as if 'forklifting' applications into a cloud environment is as easy as flicking a switch (as long as you use their solution). Clearly it isn't, even for applications regarded as being relatively 'easy' to migrate to a cloud environment.

The complexity of onboarding is a big part of why enterprises are hesitant about cloud projects, despite being sold on the benefits of cloud delivery. Whether you're after business agility, lower capital commitments, more efficient use of IT resources or any other benefit of cloud computing, a lot rides on getting the migration right.



Without preparation, application onboarding to the #cloud is doomed to fail.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'ONBOARDING'?

In the context of migration to a cloud environment, 'onboarding' refers to the deployment of applications, data or both to the chosen cloud infrastructure (public, private or hybrid). As such, it's essentially the final stage of the migration process: the equivalent of the transition from one network to another in a network migration project.

As with a network migration project, this final stage of he process is supposed to happen smoothly and quickly. If everything has been properly prepared beforehand, there's no reason why it shouldn't. Successful onboarding is all about prior planning and preparation.

WHO THIS PAPER IS FOR

Another paper of mine, *How to move to the cloud*, explores Gartner's five key migration paths: (1) rehost on laaS, (2) refactor for PaaS, (3) revise for laaS or PaaS, (4) rebuild on PaaS, or (5) replace with SaaS.

In this paper I'm focusing on paths (1) and (3): migrations that 'forklift' applications (or virtual machines and the applications that run on them) into a virtual private cloud or public cloud environment without the need for major refactoring or rebuilding. I lay out some key considerations for IT decision-makers who want some answers to the 'how' of application onboarding.

Some of what I cover will be relevant to paths (2) and (4), but the process of refactoring or rebuilding an enterprise application for cloud migration is not my focus here. Nor is path (5), where an existing application is being replaced rather than migrated (although in the SaaS scenario some onboarding may still be required – data may need to be migrated, for example).

The first part of the paper explains why application onboarding may seem to be a challenge and introduces the key concepts and considerations. The second part introduces the steps of onboarding and the three critical areas of preparation that are necessary to ensure successful negotiation of those steps. I then cover these three success factors in more detail.

APPLICATION WORKLOADS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ONBOARDING

When talking about cloud migration or onboarding, cloud service providers usually talk about 'application workloads' rather than just 'applications'. This is because applications don't operate in isolation, and the 'workload' concept captures the notion of all the work being done by a system when an application is running.

An application workload can therefore be thought of as a logical container that includes all of the components required for the proper performance of an application. It includes the processing power used directly by the application, the storage being read from and written to, the network connectivity being used, and the application's interactions with monitoring and management tools, security services, authentication services such as Active Directory, and other relevant services.

COMPLEXITIES OF ENTERPRISE APPLICATION WORKLOADS

When you're migrating an application to a cloud environment, some of these elements won't be migrated with the application. For example, it's common for enterprises to maintain their Active Directory domain controller in-house while some of the applications it controls reside in a third-party cloud environment. Enterprise applications also usually interact with one another - a logistics system managing deliveries might be integrated with a CRM system, for example. In this regard, most enterprise application workloads are quite unlike the monolithic cloud applications of Facebook, Zynga or Netflix, which are essentially run as 'standalone' dedicated applications, separate from general business functions and running at a much larger scale than enterprise applications.

Cross-platform interactions are a big part of the complexity of enterprise application onboarding, even for workloads perceived as 'cloud-friendly'. It's also one of the reasons that enterprises might start with private cloud deployments. Rightly or wrongly, enterprises may feel that in a private cloud environment they can control the cross-platform interactions of their cloud applications more easily than in a public cloud environment.

TWEET THIS:

Cross-platform interactions create complexity when onboarding to the #cloud.

HOW MANY OF YOUR WORKLOADS ARE CLOUD-FRIENDLY?

It's hardly surprising that most enterprises choose to start their forays into cloud computing with application workloads that minimise the complexity of onboarding.

Examples include:

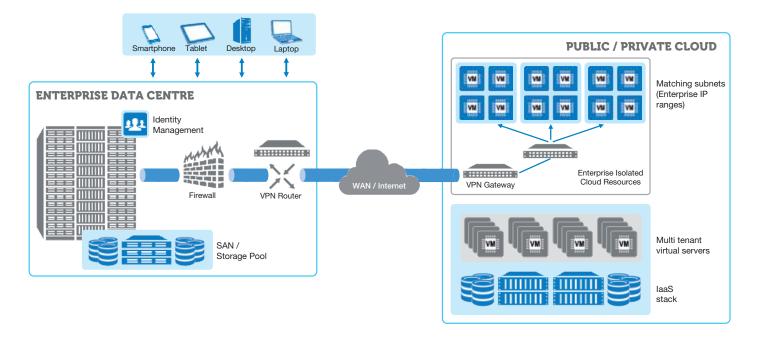
- Test and development: because applications under development are relatively 'standalone' in terms of level of interaction with other applications and services.
- Collaboration and web applications: because their native architecture is already compatible with running on loosely coupled computing and storage nodes.

For most enterprise applications there's more work to do to prepare them for a cloud environment, because they're not natively designed for it. Whether off the shelf or made to order, they're designed to run on a single server or end-user machine, or on a cluster of front-end and application server nodes backed by a database. It's assumed that the application will be running on infrastructure designed for reliability, so hardware failure is taken to be an unlikely exception that requires special backup and disaster recovery procedures. This is quite different from a cloud environment that has built-in multi-site failover capabilities and is designed to 'expect' failure and respond to it by switching resources seamlessly.

Because of the work required to prepare traditional enterprise workloads for highly virtualised and standardised cloud environments, the most likely early candidates tend to be those already running in a virtualised environment.

HYBRID CLOUDS ARE THE NEW IT REALITY

Hybrid cloud environments – the integration of two or more different cloud environments – are emerging as the dominant model for enterprises. The integration of third-party cloud services with enterprise data-centre services is becoming common for several reasons:



- Cloud bursting (on-demand extension of the data centre to a cloud environment based on pre-defined policies and monitoring of loads, quality of service, and so on) is a way for enterprises to explore and trial cloud services when they have concerns about the security, stability or performance of the cloud environment.
- It's also a way to avoid investment in unused capacity to handle demand spikes. It's an attractive solution for enterprises facing periods of system overload and not wanting to over-provision their infrastructure.
- Enterprises occasionally have a need to migrate an executing workload from one environment to another, based on resource use and performance.
- As already discussed, cross-platform interactions are the reality for most enterprise applications, so unless and until enterprises are ready to operate everything in a single cloud environment, a hybrid model is the way forward.

ONBOARDING IN A HYBRID WORLD

To make the most of hybrid cloud environments, enterprises need a well-understood and secure way to onboard workloads and then maintain two-way connectivity with their internal data centre. The key elements of the hybrid IT architecture are:

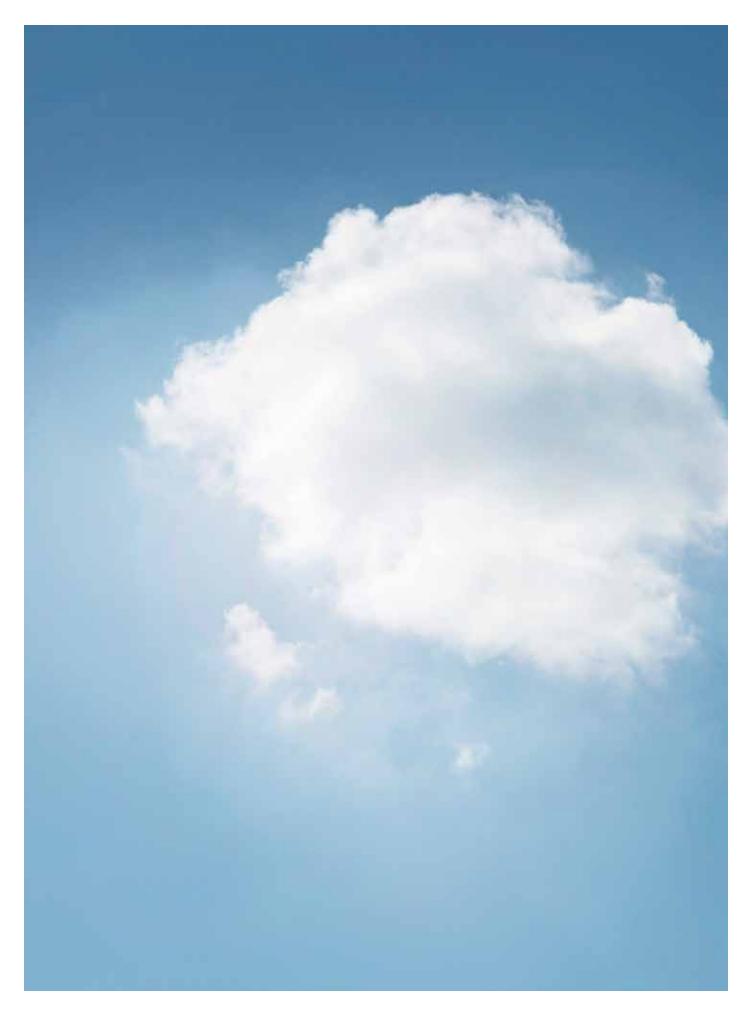
 The enterprise data centre (in house or located at a thirdparty data centre), which is assumed to be at least partly virtualised.

- The remote cloud environment: either a different enterprise data centre (private cloud), or the multi-tenant cloud platform of a cloud service provider (virtual private or public cloud).
 WAN connectivity between the two, usually via a secure internet VPN connection.
- End-user devices that access the applications hosted in the hybrid environment.



Hybrid #clouds are emerging as the dominant model for application onboarding.

Typically the external cloud resources are considered as a logical extension of the enterprise resources, with access only through the existing enterprise firewall. The enterprise's monitoring, management, trust and security policies and controls are applied to the cloud environment. Network isolation keeps enterprise workloads separate from those of other enterprises using the same multi-tenant cloud platform, and WAN traffic is generally encrypted. The latency introduced by both the WAN connectivity and the process of encryption and decryption may not be acceptable to certain workloads, which would then not make good candidates for cloud migration in the hybrid model.



APPLICATION ONBOARDING: SEVEN STEPS, THREE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The actual process of onboarding ('forklifting' workloads) has seven relatively straightforward steps:

- 1 Defining the workload
- 2 Provisioning cloud resources
- 3 Establishing a connectivity bridge
- 4 Deploying the workload
- 5 Ensuring seamless two-way access
- 6 Testing and validating
- 7 Discontinuing the old service



Onboarding to the #cloud: 7 steps, 3 critical success factors

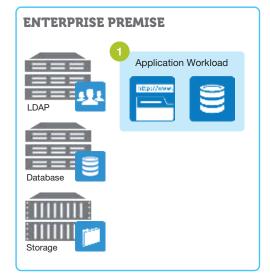
THREE CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

As I've already pointed out, successful application onboarding is all about careful planning and preparation. There are three activities in preparing for onboarding that are critical to the ultimate success of the onboarding process:

- Workload analysis: enables you to identify the most appropriate candidate workloads for cloud migration and understand their requirements for onboarding.
- Getting the application cloud-ready: ensures that the application will perform as required on the target cloud architecture.
- Choosing a cloud provider: determines the target cloud environment and may have implications for onboarding support.

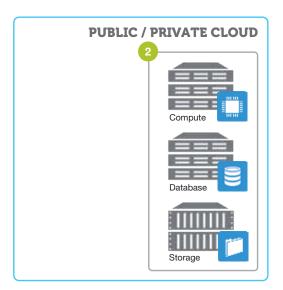
The remainder of this paper looks at each of these in turn, though they can be considered as a set of activities running in parallel. Done with due care and thoroughness, they will put you in good stead to take the steps of application onboarding in your stride.

STEP 1 & 2





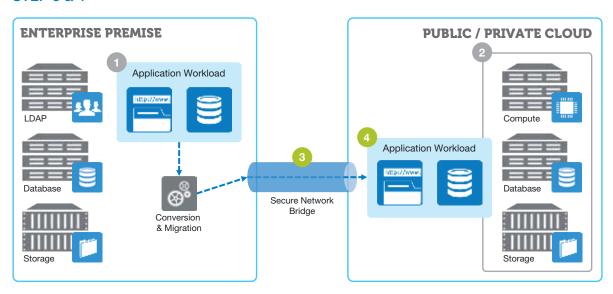
Define the workload. The number and type of virtual machines required for migration will depend on the nature and scale of the workload, and the way it interacts with software and services not being migrated.





Provision cloud resources. Service providers will have a self-service interface for the creation of accounts and purchase of the services that you need (eg, servers, storage, network).

STEP 3 & 4



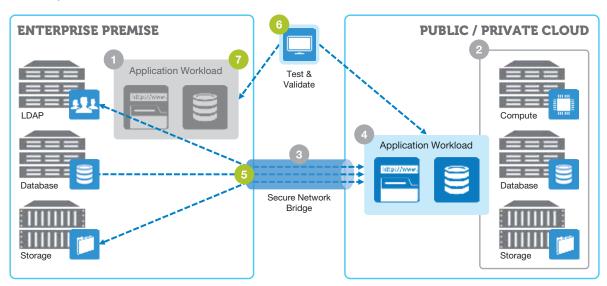
STEP 3

Establish a connectivity bridge. Secure and transparent bi-directional connectivity, usually through an internet VPN, is required between your data centre and the cloud, both for the migration itself and for cross-platform application interactions after migration.

STEP 4

Deploy the workload. With connectivity in place, virtual machines can be configured and connected to services remaining behind (such as Active Directory), followed by the transfer of the application and any associated databases, software and services being migrated.

STEP 5, 6 & 7



STEP 5

Ensure seamless two-way access.

Smooth integration is required between the cloud workload and services not migrated, and you need to be able to monitor and manage the application as well as the cloud infrastructure.

STEP 6

Test and validate. However well you've prepared and tested prior to deployment, there may be surprises. Has everything been transferred correctly? Do network, storage, compute and database configurations remain intact? Can you see and manage the cloud environment properly? Does your cloud backup process work?



Discontinue the old service. When you're certain that everything is working well, you can give access to users and decommission the enterprise service.

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

Because workloads differ in terms of their importance and cost to your organisation, a thorough workload analysis is critical to a successful onboarding process. A highly optimised application may be relatively easy to migrate to the cloud, but the move may offer little or no additional benefit for the effort. Choosing a workload that is both critical and complex to migrate is a big risk, but the potential cost savings or other benefits may outweigh the risk. Workload analysis helps you identify and prioritise the best candidate workloads for migration, and should therefore combine business and technical factors.

Workload analysis can also be used to inform decisions about the most appropriate cloud migration path (rehost on laaS, refactor for PaaS, revise for laaS or PaaS, rebuild on PaaS. or replace with SaaS) and the most appropriate cloud environment for applications (public, private, hybrid).

As well as helping you identify and prioritise candidate workloads for cloud migration, this kind of assessment will help you detail the requirements for onboarding of those applications that you do migrate. It will help you specify all the elements that make up the application workload, and the number and types of virtual machines (VMs) that need to be migrated.



Preparing for application migration to the #cloud starts with workload analysis.

What should you consider i	n your analysis? This workload assessment checklist will help:					
Business impact	 How business-critical is the workload? Consider the answer against where you are on your clou journey. Where does the workload fit in the application lifecycle? What does that mean for its cloud environment requirements? 					
Business requirements	 Given the workload's business use, what are the implications for required service levels, transaction rates, response times, number of simultaneous users to be supported, or other relevant availability and performance-related measures? What supporting service requirements does the workload have (eg, in terms of backup, disaster recovery, monitoring) and what are the implications for cloud deployment? Are there any specific security and compliance requirements (eg encryption, isolation, data sovereignty) and what does that mean for cloud deployment? 					
Application architecture	 Is the application architecture cloud-friendly in any way (eg, is it horizontally scalable in the way that native cloud applications are, or only vertically scalable as traditional enterprise applications tend to be)? If not, what's involved in refactoring the application for a cloud environment? Are the time and cost acceptable when weighed against the benefits? 					
Computing resource and dependencies	 What OS, databases and application servers are being used and how hard are they to migrate to the cloud? What are the CPU, memory, network and storage requirements and what will it cost to provide these in a cloud environment? What other software supports the workload? What are the dependencies or integration touch points with other workloads? 					
Operational and support requirements	 How many hours/people are required to support the workload and what do they cost? What are the costs of licensing? What are the operational costs for space, power and cooling? For these and other operational and support costs: will anything be saved by migration to a cloud environment? 					

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: GETTING THE APPLICATION READY FOR THE CLOUD

The next stage is getting the application and associated services ready for onboarding. This needs to be done in parallel with choosing a cloud service provider, because the environment you're moving to will be a big determiner of the work you need to do.

Preparing an application workload for 'forklifting' into a cloud environment will require virtualisation if the application is not already running in a virtualised environment. Associated databases may also need to be rationalised to work within, or with, the cloud environment. Complexities may arise at any level: from network and application components to the way provisioning, controls, or monitoring and management are going to work. As you tackle all of these, there are three fundamental characteristics to pay attention to:

- Scalability
- Resilience
- Security

THE IMPLICATIONS OF SCALABILITY

The business case for cloud usually includes cost savings as a result of only paying for what you use. This is possible because cloud services can be scaled up on demand when you need to use more, and scaled down when you need to use less. But is the application workload that you're migrating suited to this model? Consider:

- The dangers of upward scalability. If an application is performing inefficiently in any way, it will use more resources than it should; and this can be costly in an environment where it's all too easy to provision more resources. To avoid scalability adding cost rather than saving you money, you need to identify and fix performance inefficiencies, for example by rooting out memory leaks or inefficient database queries. Where possible, isolate compute-intensive components in such a way that they can be scaled independently.
- The requirements of downward scalability. How effectively you can turn cloud resources off will depend on how easily you can isolate different application functions. To maximise the cost savings you can make through downward scalability, break your workload into as many independently scalable components as possible.

RESILIENCE

Resilience considerations are different in the cloud. Ideally you want workload components to be loosely coupled so that if one component fails, the others can continue to function. Depending on the criticality of your application, you may also need to ensure a greater degree of self-healing capability to ensure recovery from different types of failure at different levels: hardware, network and application. Safeguards could include process threads that resume on reboot, message queues that can reload the state of the system, and the use of a database rather than memory to write data to.

Testing, both before and at the end of the onboarding process. should include different types of failure scenarios to ensure appropriate resilience.



3 key factors to get applications #cloud ready: scalability, resilience, security.

SECURITY

Managing security in a cloud environment requires different approaches to respond to different vulnerabilities. In a multitenant environment you'll typically want to take steps that you wouldn't otherwise, such as implementing encryption where you haven't before, or focusing on building security into applications rather than relying on traditional perimeter-based security controls. Both static and dynamic application security testing should be part of your application preparation.

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: CHOOSING THE RIGHT CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER

When migrating applications to a cloud environment, the specific environment you choose and the services offered by your cloud service provider will determine the work you need to do and the help you can get in doing it. Ideally, therefore, you should choose your provider in parallel with analysing and preparing workloads for migration.



Compare like with like when considering the cost of #cloud services.

When considering cloud se	rvice providers, ask yourself:					
Migration	 Do they offer migration services that can help you avoid a steep learning curve and meet your budget and time constraints for onboarding? The large public cloud platforms tend not to, so you may need to engage with a systems integrator or other service provider that can provide the help you need. 					
Application architecture	 Are their cloud architecture, standards and services suited to your workloads and management preferences? 					
Network architecture	 Is the provider's method of isolating your workloads from those of other customers appropriate to your needs and to your policies on network isolation? 					
Ease of use	How good are the provider's orchestration services?What about the ease of self-service provisioning, management, and scalability?					
Commercials and billing	Do the commercial terms, cost model and billing options offer the flexibility that you need?					
Performance guarantees	 Are the SLAs what you need and do you have clear visibility of performance, usage, costs and billing? 					
Security	Is security built in and of the right standard?Does the system allow different application workloads to talk to one another while maintaining security accreditations?					
Business continuity	 Does the provider offer the resilience, business continuity and disaster recovery support that you need? 					
Governance	Is there clear and appropriate service governance?Does the provider support your compliance requirements?					
Support	What kind of support is offered and how is that charged?					
Future	 Can the service provider help you with all of your likely future cloud requirements, not just your current ones? And what about avoiding vendor lock-in: is the provider using open standards and APIs and do they have an offboarding process that is clearly covered in the contract? What will be the cost of leaving? 					

COMMERCIAL MODELS

When considering the cost of a cloud service, be careful to compare like with like. One of the benefits of the cloud model is cost transparency: it's very clear what you're paying when you consume IT resources. But when you're comparing the cost of a cloud service with the cost to provide the same service internally, the cloud service may look expensive if you haven't considered all of your internal costs. When you add up the bandwidth, connectivity, database, storage and compute costs of the cloud service, don't forget that the service provider's prices include all of the operational and support activities that you will no longer have to carry out. This is one reason why it's important for your workload analysis to be very thorough in attempting to capture all of the costs of running a workload in-house.

When discussing the implications of scalability earlier, I pointed out that if you can scale different workload elements independently, you can use cloud resources more efficiently. You may find that your ability to finetune scalability is affected by the way your cloud service provider packages its services, and you'll want to find a provider that matches your requirements in this regard. For example, consider the difference between these three typical models:

Pre-packaged tiers. Specified tiers come with a set amount of CPU core, RAM and disk space, with no room for custom configurations. It's simple, but you may pay for resources you don't need if demand for only one element requires you to go up a tier.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5	Tier 6
Core	1	1	2	4	6	8
RAM	512 MB	1 GB	2 GB	4 GB	6 GB	8 GB
Storage	20 GB	30 GB	40 GB	60 GB	90 GB	120 GB

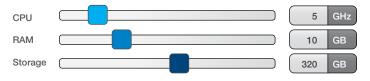
Source: Solar VPS (http://www.solarvps.com/linux-vps)

Per node/VM. This is a similar model to the tier approach, but the pre-defined packages (nodes) are more granular – allowing for more finetuning – and nodes often include a specified transfer amount (bandwidth), backup space and IP addresses in addition to CPU, RAM and storage. Customers buy the number of nodes they need for the period they need them.

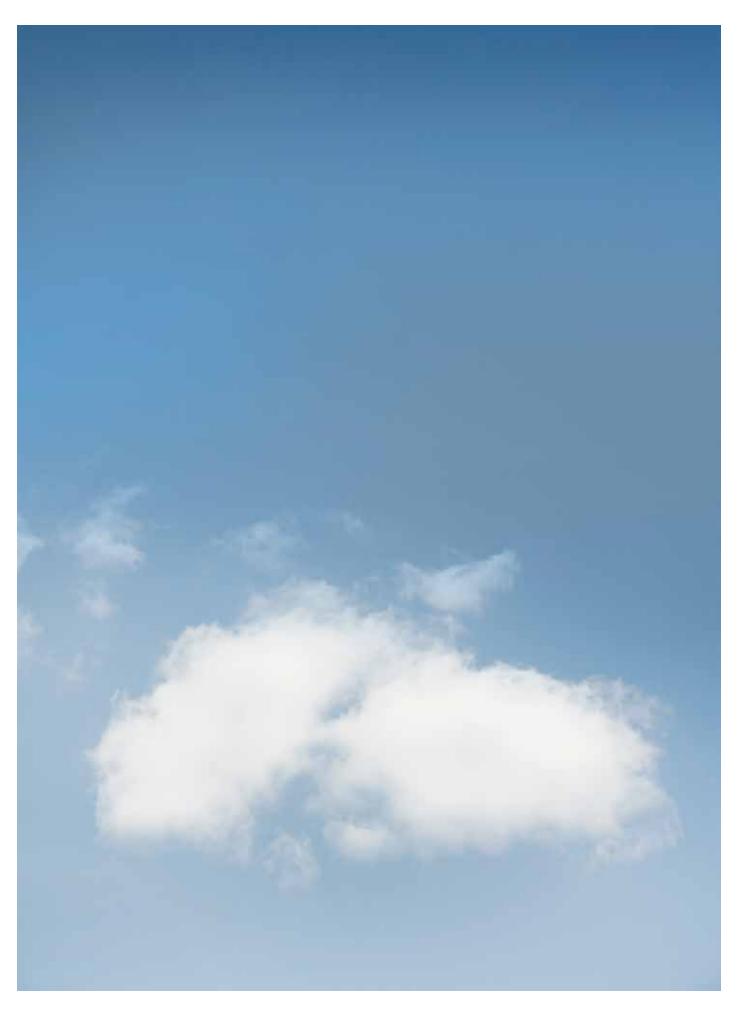
	1 Node	2 Nodes	3 Nodes	4 Nodes	5 Nodes	6 Nodes
CPU	2.4 GHz	4.8 GHz	7.2 GHz	9.6 GHz	12.0 GHz	14.4
RAM	512 MB	1024 MB	1536MB	2048 MB	2560 MB	3072 MB
Storage	10 GB	20 GB	30 GB	40 GB	50 GB	60 GB
Transfer	3 TB	6 TB	9 TB	12 TB	15 TB	18 TB

Source: VPS.net (http://vps.net/cloud-servers)

Independently customisable. In this model, CPU, RAM and storage are decoupled and not forced to scale together. It's not as simple as the others to manage, but allows for very granular application of the pay-per-use model.



Source: CloudSigma (https://zrh.cloudsigma.com/ui/)



NEUTRAL DATA CENTRES ARE IDEAL FOR HYBRID CLOUDS AND APPLICATION ONBOARDING

Across Europe, businesses rely on Interxion to host their mission-critical systems and data, drawn by the reliability, security and level of connectivity that our data centres provide. Interxion has been driving data centre innovation for more than ten years, and is focused exclusively on delivering data centre services. Businesses can benefit from an extensive choice of service providers colocated within our facilities. This provides businesses with the flexibility to directly connect with the suppliers and business partners with the best fit to their requirements whilst avoiding vendor lock-in.

Why does this matter when it comes to cloud migration and application onboarding? Because successful application onboarding requires much consideration, planning and preparation; which can be daunting without the appropriate expertise, best practices and tools. You can find all this in the cloud community colocated at Interxion's data centres, which is developing, delivering and using cloud services to create the new hybrid IT reality.

There are many reasons that businesses choose Interxion to colocate their cloud platforms and hybrid environments:

QUALITY OF SERVICE

Cloud services demand a high level of performance, reliability, security and scalability. Interxion has always set the standards in data centre design, build, operation and management. Our award-winning data centres, designed for high-density cloud computing, meet the highest standards and provide peace of mind over the availability of space and power as you grow.

NEUTRALITY

Apart from our operational and customer service standards, one of the key qualities attracting connectivity and cloud service providers to Interxion data centres is our neutrality: we don't compete in the provision of IT or connectivity services.

This means that when you're looking to migrate applications to a cloud environment (public, private or hybrid), you have a wide choice of suppliers and business partners to work with:

- More than 400 providers of cloud-related services, including both local and large, international cloud providers, and many systems integrators developing hybrid enterprise environments
- More than 500 connectivity providers: from Tier 1 carriers to mobile network providers, from ISPs to CDNs, and 19 Internet exchanges

EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF

Our neutral data centres are an ideal environment for your own enterprise data centre, whether traditional or built as a private cloud. In one place you have everything you need to build your hybrid IT environment.

REACH

Whether your cloud-based workloads are serving customers, employees, business partners or others, performance is critical. With more than 35 data centres serving 13 European cities in 11 countries, Interxion is situated in Europe's leading business and residential centres, allowing you to reach more than 77% of Europe's GDP in less than 50 milliseconds.



Test labs make it easier to get applications ready for onboarding to the #cloud.

FREE TEST LABS

Many organisations still do migration testing in-house, despite the value of the cloud for setting up a low-cost test environment, and the fact that in-house testing may not yield very realistic results (because many factors that determine the success of a cloud migration aren't part of the in-house test environment). Interxion data centres offer free Test Labs in partnership with leading hardware, connectivity and software providers. This is giving you the best of both worlds: the control of an in-house solution and a reference architecture hosted in a data centre.

NEXT STEPS

Please contact Interxion if you're looking for advice or assistance with a cloud migration project or if you have plans to build a hybrid cloud environment. As a neutral data centre provider we can discuss your needs impartially and introduce you to the right suppliers and business partners across Europe.

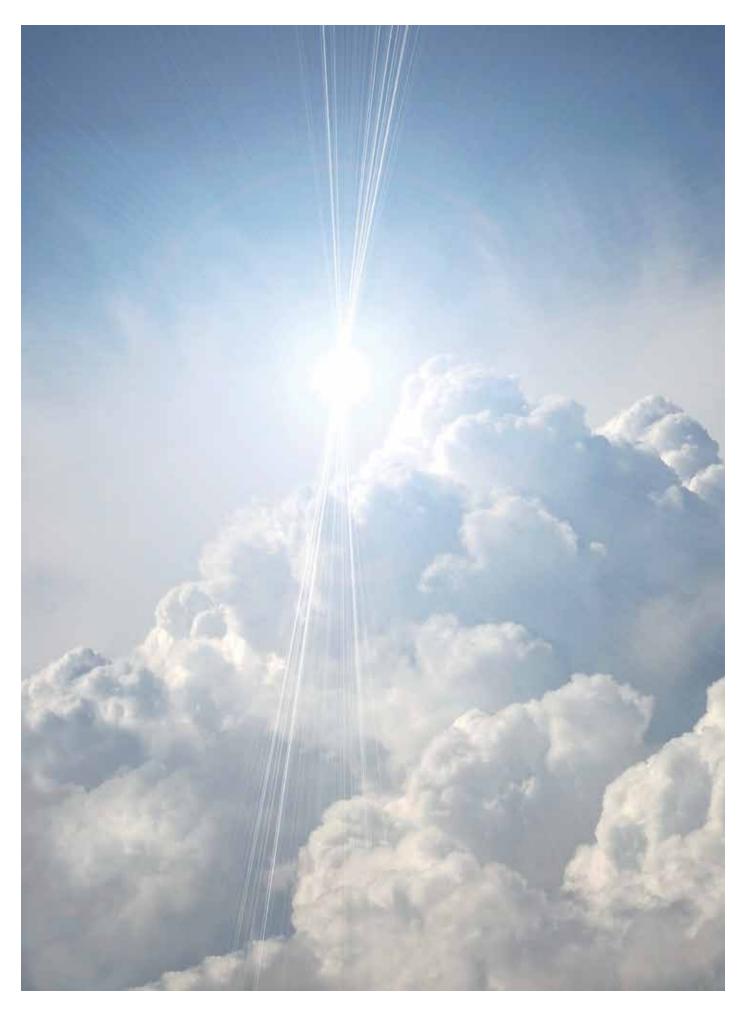
ABOUT INTERXION

Interxion (NYSE: INXN) is a leading provider of carrier and cloud-neutral colocation data centre services in Europe, serving a wide range of customers through over 35 data centres in 11 European countries. Interxion's uniformly designed, energy efficient data centres offer customers extensive security and uptime for their mission-critical applications. With over 500 connectivity providers, 20 European Internet exchanges, and most leading cloud and digital media platforms across its footprint, Interxion has created connectivity, cloud, content and finance hubs that foster growing customer communities of interest

For more information, please visit www.interxion.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jelle Frank (JF) van der Zwet has more than 14 years of experience as a B2B marketer, working on ICT product and business development. As Global Marketing Manager for Interxion he is primarily responsible for the company's continually growing cloud community, and is a frequent speaker at technology events on cloud computing. He has published articles on TechCrunch and Wired and written white papers on latency, hybrid clouds and application migration. Prior to joining Interxion he held senior marketing and product management roles with Imtech, UPC, KPN and Schiphol Airport.



INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

Cofounder: Uptime Institute EMEA chapter

Founding member: European Data Centre Association

Patron: European Internet Exchange Association

Member: The Green Grid, with role on Advisory Council and Technical Committee

Contributor: EC Joint Research Centre on Sustainability

Member: EuroCloud

ACCREDITATIONS

ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management



BCMS 560099

ISO/IEC 27001 Information Security Management



ITILv3-certified Service Centre Members and Facilities Managers



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