



# ***CLOUD-BASED PLATFORMS IMPROVE SMALL-BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY, SECURITY AND COSTS***

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While it's no secret that cloud-based platforms are shaping the future for businesses of all sizes, it may surprise you—as it did me—that small businesses make up the lion's share of early adopters.

In fact, small businesses (100 employees or less) are the most eager to convert to cloud technology, demonstrating greater confidence in the cloud's ability to deliver meaningful benefits in productivity, security and cost savings, according to the [Dresner Advisory Services' 2019 Cloud Computing and Business Intelligence Market Study](#).<sup>1</sup>

### **Improving Productivity**

Cloud technologies are affording small businesses improvements that include the ability to meet changing market conditions, improved business continuity, and flexible options for demand and device requirements. Formerly only available through expensive enterprise systems, these enhancements are empowering small businesses to compete on an unprecedented scale.

### **Adapting to Changing Market Conditions**

In 2018, more than 60 percent of businesses listed the ability to adapt to changing market conditions as the leading motivator to convert to cloud technology. When competitive forces are at play, speed matters—speed of execution, speed to market, speed of change. Small businesses must be more nimble, not only to meet the changing demands of customers, but to also drive continuous improvement using easily adaptable technologies.<sup>2</sup>

The cloud enables this pace of change by quickly optimizing business solutions and workflows, effectively shortening development cycles while also embedding

security protocols into the workflow. These condensed development processes help small businesses accelerate change while minimizing business risk.

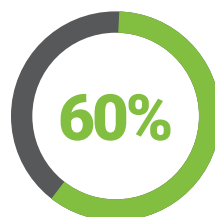
### **Improved Business Continuity**

Business continuity and disaster recovery, once an expensive and labor-intensive practice, pushed many early adopters to cloud platforms as a way of eliminating expensive protocols and redundancies. Today, 65 percent of businesses with fewer than 1,000 employees have adopted cloud-based technology for the expressed purpose of business continuity.<sup>3</sup>

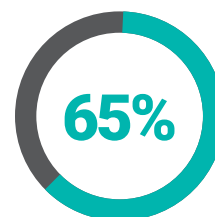
Cloud solutions for this purpose are by far the best opportunities for businesses of any size, providing 24/7 access to data and infrastructure, with consistent and predictable costs that help keep organizations on budget. Moreover, within the best cloud structures, security measures are reliable and up to date.<sup>4</sup>

### **Flexible Options for Demand and Devices**

Cloud technologies provide greater overall efficiency and can instantly meet fluctuating demand, providing necessary bandwidth at a moment's notice. This flexibility, cited as the reason 65 percent of businesses moved to a cloud environment more than 10 years ago, remains true today.<sup>5</sup>



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Eliminating the problem of over-provisioning or IT systems overload, the cloud meets fluctuating service demand by easily increasing and decreasing resources based on internal and external demands. This flexibility is often out of reach for small organizations when using on-site technology.<sup>6</sup>

Playing to another small business strength, cloud solutions meet the demands of today's mobile workforce. By leveraging its flexibility as a device-agnostic platform, cloud-based systems tap the more than 2.7 billion smartphone users predicted for 2019, a device imperative to meet the viral expansion of remote workers, which is anticipated to make up 50 percent of the U.S. workforce by 2027.<sup>7</sup>

### Improved Security

As the most agile approach to IT security, cloud solutions have arrived as the best way to protect critical information for small businesses. Cloud security is scalable, efficient and adaptive, ensuring rapid threat response and protection for confidential information through data segmentation and strict regulatory standards.

In 2018, 49 percent of businesses planned to migrate disaster recovery to the cloud, eliminating the risk of data loss.<sup>8</sup> Cloud security safeguards and protects organizations from disruption and costly downtime, mitigating risks beyond the investment of any single company.

Fast and efficient, cloud resources protect applications by reducing the threat surface while also expediting security risk assessment. In all, cloud security is "more robust and more reliable than on-premise security," according to Marc Clark, head of cloud strategy at Teradata, a leading data intelligence organization. As an example, "when you look at Amazon and look at their security certifications, they have a 600-person

security department. I don't think the biggest company in the world has that many security people for cybersecurity."<sup>9</sup>

### Cost Savings

In 2016, a CompTIA study indicated that 41 percent of small businesses reported cost savings as the leading reason for cloud technology adoption.<sup>10</sup> Today, however, cost is often cited behind factors, such as speed, flexibility, business continuity and improved customer support.<sup>11</sup>



**Of small businesses reported cost savings as the leading reason for cloud technology adoption.<sup>10</sup>**

While no longer the driving force behind migration decisions, cost is still a top-five motivator for business leaders who wish to reduce IT and capital expenses.

Cloud environments add elasticity and scalability to small business models, but they do not eliminate on-premise physical and virtual infrastructures. Understanding the holistic view across the entire IT ecosystem, including investment in multicloud environments, requires visibility and management across this complex landscape.<sup>12</sup>

### Choosing the Right Cloud-Based Platform

Choosing the right cloud provider for your business will be critical for seamless growth and long-term success.<sup>13</sup> When considering a cloud-based service provider, it's important to have a plan that maps organizational needs, carefully considers the cloud environment and prioritizes data security.



### ***Map Criteria Against Organization Needs***

While there are many criteria to consider, it is essential to map them against the needs and circumstances of the organization.<sup>14</sup>

Develop a strategy designed for specific small business needs and determine which applications to migrate. If the IT team has little or no experience with cloud technology, “start with low-hanging fruit. The cloud comes with a learning curve, so save the super-hard, complex stuff for when your team is more comfortable.”<sup>15</sup>

For complex systems, select a partner who understands your specific needs and has experience addressing your business’ unique challenges. “Your organization is unique, and therefore has unique needs on the cloud. To ensure a provider meets your requirements, conduct a review of their infrastructure, compliance policies, data protection policies, development practices and data classification procedures. Only then will you know that the provider is a fit.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Select Cloud-Based Solutions Built upon Amazon Web Services***

Providers that use Amazon Web Services (AWS) as the foundation of their cloud solutions do so for sound business reasons. Ranked first among users, AWS is the leading cloud service provider.

Known for its uncompromising quality, AWS is second to none for security and disaster recovery. It also avails providers the benefits for affordability, which helps them manage costs.<sup>17</sup>

In short, while there are other cloud providers that rank high among users, 60 percent of organizations rank AWS first, and 85 percent rank AWS in the top two.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Check Security, Then Check it Again***

Data loss is an important concern for businesses of all sizes, so review the provider’s risk management policies and use strong business agreements to ensure you and your provider understand your respective responsibilities for data handling.<sup>19</sup>

Review disaster recovery methods and maintenance agreements to ensure the system will be routinely updated to comply with developing security and compliance standards.

Finally, perform risk assessments to determine vulnerabilities and ensure system and security training is available.

While all small business owners will want and ultimately need to migrate to cloud technology, only you can decide where and when to start. The bottom line is that small businesses that have “taken full advantage of the cloud ... are thriving,” while others are struggling to “stay ahead of their peers.”<sup>20</sup>



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## About the Author

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