

E-book

# The top six C-level IT challenges

The guide to how SQL Server  
2008 end-of-support can drive  
IT modernization

**rackspace**<sup>®</sup>





# A pivotal moment in technology

There are moments when a challenge and an opportunity intersect to open up a new epoch, and Microsoft's end-of-support for SQL Server 2008 may be one of those moments for you. End-of-support presents serious risks to your organization if you don't deal with it correctly — or worse — if you don't deal with it at all, including the loss of access to critical security updates and Microsoft hotfixes. Also, if you don't take action, your organization will be exposed to potential disruption from hackers and malware. That means valuable customer data could be exposed to attack, risking monetary and reputational damage. And from a regulatory standpoint, you could face challenges related to HIPAA, PCI and GDPR compliance.

On the other hand, if you take well-considered action that aligns with your long-term strategy, end-of-service is also an opportunity for data estate modernization. In this e-book, we'll discuss how migration to Azure prior to SQL Server 2008 end-of-support solves for all these challenges while opening doors for the future of your data-driven business.

# Six C-Level challenges, and how IT modernization solves them

Looking at your business strategically, IT modernization presents a number of solutions to issues that plague the C-suite.

In our experience with hundreds of successful data estate modernization projects, we've identified the six most common challenges that migration can mitigate.

**1. Getting out of the data center business.** Naturally, on-premises data environments come with costs. You have to own or lease the facility where your servers reside, you have capital expenditures for all the hardware you need, and you have costs associated with powering and cooling it all. Then there are the maintenance costs, and the need to hire, train and retain an IT staff to ensure the ongoing maintenance of business-critical infrastructure. And when you scale your operations, you incur additional capital expenses.

Simply put, by migrating to the cloud, you're improving your ROI. There's no physical plant or hardware to maintain. Your internal IT resources spend very little time on maintenance. Scaling is nearly instantaneous, requires no administrative expense, and can be done whenever you require it. Because you don't own the

servers you operate on in the cloud, you're also reducing the capital and operational costs of maintaining on-premises or hosted databases.

**2. Managing IT talent needs.** Your IT staff is shaped by the technology you deploy. If you have a traditional, on-premises operation with a server room or data center, your IT team will evolve to service the needs of running all that hardware. They will be efficient in maintaining the cables, servers and devices that your business relies on. In addition, they'll take on customer service roles, providing support to those who have trouble with the hardware and software running on your network. This sounds fine, but when you consider how greatly the cloud could free these teams to innovate for your business, you find you're missing out on the larger potential of your IT staff.

When your computing capabilities are cloud-based, your IT teams have literally the world to innovate with. They no longer have to spend their time and expertise knowing which server rack is glitchy. They can (and will) develop a much higher skill set. They can be a source of ingenuity to solve business challenges rather than hardware fixes. They will be freed to locate optimal methods of computing rather than optimizing floor space in the server room. They will, in short, become a much different, and more valuable talent pool for your business.

**3. Modernizing apps and development, continually optimizing.** In the cloud, your developers are free to find the most effective solutions because they can build data-driven applications/websites in the programming language of their choice without needing to manage infrastructure.

With a SaaS-forward mindset, they can focus on ensuring apps run most efficiently rather than trying to make their ideas fit in a limited scope of programming languages. All this allows your business to move faster, deliver more value and meet your ever-changing needs more effectively than those companies constrained by rigid, on-premises policies and processes. And because you don't need to re-architect apps when you seamlessly migrate data to the cloud, you save time and resources right at the outset.

## **4. Securing everything and maintaining compliance.**

The risks of staying purely on-premises in the cloud age are real. With siloed systems throughout your organization, compliance can be difficult to track and audits can be difficult and time consuming. The added burden of getting support for diverse systems often results in "shadow IT" activities that pose financial and reputational risks when employees try to secure and manage their own systems. Even with all these risks, security can be costly and time-consuming to maintain. Lax identity and access management can leave you open to threats when employees leave or change status on your systems. These risks all have very costly downsides.

IT and data estate modernization help close all these gaps. With centralized security, IT has tighter and more visible control over access to critical data. Even while in use, sensitive data can be encrypted. And from a threat perspective, IT has the ability to monitor your databases for potential threats and vulnerabilities from a single security vantage point rather than managing a variety of measures across the organization.



**5. Controlling IT spend.** If it's on-premises, then it's on your IT team's to-do list. Providing support to development teams, end users and others takes up a large part of your team's time. Provisioning environments for new products can take days or weeks. Scaling for additional compute needs can be a nightmare of added (or wasted) equipment and space. Every time a new employee joins or someone leaves, or changes roles, IT must alter their information access permissions. Security and compliance policies must be maintained. And all this doesn't even get into the physical maintenance of the equipment. No wonder IT has no time for strategic thinking to move the business forward.

Migration to the cloud gives everyone in IT space to think and perform at a higher level, from your administrators to the CIO. Utilizing a trusted partner to manage and monitor your cloud and address incidents or administer patches and upgrades helps remove tremendous administrative burdens. This can reduce overall IT costs, including the capital and operational costs associated with maintaining on-premises or hosted databases, while freeing your IT staff to more strategic innovations.

**6. Determining the right cloud strategy.** With all these challenges and the cloud as a clear solution, the C-level is left with a new dilemma: How best to move forward to maximize on the opportunities of the cloud while mitigating the perceived risks of change.

The answer is to do what leaders do. First, inspire others to lead across your organization. Engage them to drive positive change and advocate for the smartest solutions. But how do you tell which are the smart solutions? You find the right cloud services provider — an outside team of experts who do nothing but cloud migration and optimization. Someone you can trust to answer all your questions based on hundreds of migration projects. With the right partner, you can cut months from your migration process and considerably reduce the risk of errors, bad choices and wasted time. Naturally, Rackspace would like to be your partner.

# An outline for accelerated cloud migration

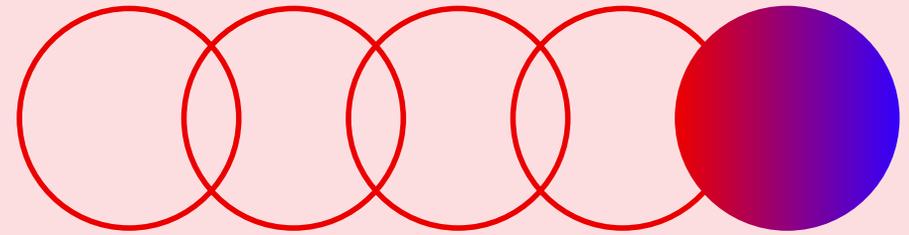
Over the course of hundreds of successful migrations, Rackspace has developed the following six-phase framework for migration to the cloud.

**Plan.** The first step is to review and identify those needs that can be addressed in the cloud. Start by building a strong business case for the migration. When you approach technology needs through a business-forward point of view, you more likely to end up with solutions that meet your needs and generate your desired outcomes.

**Assess.** Once you have a business-oriented picture of where you would like to end up, we recommend you assess your readiness to move to the cloud. What platforms are you running on? Which data will move and in what priority? What are the needs and limits for connectivity in your current state, and how will they change? What are your security standards, and what are the current gaps that you need to fill? And finally, what are your compliance needs for government, industry, and company regulations?

**Design.** Next you need to put shape to your vision. Designing a reliable, scalable, secure and cost-effective cloud architecture can deliver more flexibility, agility and cost savings than ever before. When planning your move to the cloud, it's critical that your cloud environment is architected to take full advantage of the cloud's capabilities and benefits. When you partner with Rackspace, our experts work closely with you to design a cloud environment that delivers optimal performance, security and cost efficiency, while allowing for efficient migration, management and optimization.

**Migrate.** Data and application migrations are complicated, which is why automation becomes such an important part of the process. Using tools, templates and custom processes, you can greatly ease the actual work of migrating applications. Microsoft Azure offers



Azure Resource Template technology, which allows you to define your infrastructure and services in a reusable format that can be deployed and redeployed at will. This type of automation (and many others) provides a consistent, repeatable means of creating environments within the cloud.

**Manage.** Beyond migration and ongoing management and operations, your cloud requires 24x7x365 support. Make sure the partner you choose offers around-the-clock monitoring and alerting capabilities to keep your teams aware of issues. We also advise that your partner creates runbooks for help addressing issues in a timely, efficient manner.

**Optimize.** Once you're operating in the cloud, you'll see ongoing opportunities for enhancement and optimization. Don't let these pass you by. Ensure that you have access to advanced and certified technical resources, including solutions architects, lead engineers, containers/Kubernetes experts and DevOps experts to continually optimize your public cloud operations and architectural infrastructure.



# Before you start, find the right partner

Your first step to data estate modernization is to find the right partner — an expert in the field that can show expertise through a wealth of experience. Look for an Azure expert managed service provider that can:

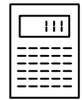
- Accelerate your Azure cloud journey by recommending the right solution based on where you are on your cloud journey, and where you need to go.
- Deliver an exceptional customer experience. Look for experts who are passionately dedicated to your success.
- Design your individual cloud solution to Microsoft standards and address the most stringent compliance, policy and security requirements.

## Gain a sense of what your prospective partner can deliver by asking these questions:

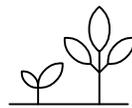
- Are you an Azure Expert Managed Service Provider that passes Microsoft's stringent set of requirements, including excellence in customer delivery, technical expertise, and an independent audit of their managed services, people, processes, and technology standards?
- How do you propose to pivot on business outcomes based on my solution and application needs, and not just on workloads?
- What is your audit process?
- How do you demonstrate deep operational expertise with robust services and support?
- How do you propose to accelerate my Azure cloud journey? Do you take a generic or custom approach? Can you provide knowledgeable recommendations that will lead to the right solution for me on my unique digital journey?
- Can you illustrate that you are focused on customer experience and employ passionate experts dedicated to my success?
- Is your solution designed to Microsoft standards and capable of addressing my compliance, policy and security requirements?

# The numbers behind your move to the cloud

Forrester Consulting examined the total economic impact of deploying an Azure SQL Database Managed Instance. Here's what they found:



**212%**  
ROI



**6-month**  
payback  
post-migration



**40%**  
improvement  
in database  
administrator  
productivity



**20%**  
boost  
in overall IT  
productivity

# Find the right partner for your cloud journey

Rackspace is a team of experts committed to helping you reach and exceed your goals and in the cloud. As a Microsoft Azure Expert Managed Services Partner, we've met a stringent set of requirements, including verified proof of excellence in customer delivery, technical expertise, and the successful completion of an independent audit of our managed services, people, processes and technologies. And we bring it all to your migration project.

Find out more and arrange a no-risk strategy session with Rackspace experts at [www.rackspace.com](http://www.rackspace.com) or call **1-800-961-2888**.

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