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FINDING A TRUSTED PARTNER DURING YOUR CLOUD JOURNEY

Despite industry promises that workloads will be easily portable between clouds, few IT decision makers know how that will work, or what skills they'll need to pull it off. So finding trusted partners in the journey to the cloud becomes as crucial as the journey itself.

Few, if any, still dispute the notion that cloud provides flexibility and scalability to businesses. Yet, there is some fear in placing your digital assets and workloads in the hands of others. "Both the public and private cloud are growing in share of the IT budgets," notes [InformationWeek's Charles Babcock](#). "At the same time, however, there appears to be an increasing fear among IT managers of cloud vendor technology lock-in."

ADDING UP LOYALTY COSTS

Vendor lock-in concerns pre-date cloud technologies by a couple of decades. From the early days of mainframes, minicomputers, and then PCs, IT has struggled with fears that vendor loyalty comes with the price of higher license fees and costly add-on services.

"Putting all of your eggs in one basket is the problematic part of migrating to the cloud, so one of the smartest things businesses can do is implement a hybrid strategy," writes [Caroline Preece of ITPro](#).

"It's likely you'll be told again and again that you need to dive in at the deep end right from the start, but this simply isn't true," Preece adds. "Companies are often better off dealing with a mixture of public cloud, private cloud and local infrastructure, to ensure they don't find themselves tied to one way of doing things even after it no longer suits the organization."

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Due diligence is required when selecting vendors—no matter what assets or workloads you commit to the cloud. Rackspace offers valuable tips on maximizing benefits and avoiding pitfalls in its white paper, cautioning that the relatively low costs of entry for cloud providers "introduces the potential for underfunded and low-quality providers to enter the market."

Part of the required due diligence involves not only price, performance, and stability, but also the motivation of cloud vendors. Are they looking to take on the hyperscalers—Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, Google—or, are the providers focused on offering unique, long-lasting services for the business needs of their customers?

HEDGING YOUR BETS

Rather than going all-in with cloud vendors, businesses can opt to utilize hosted managed service providers, or cloud brokers, who provide an intermediary layer. These companies are successful when they function as a trusted partner, ensuring you get the most out of cloud vendor relationships. They can often provide agnostic, vendor-neutral advice about how best to leverage technology for your requirements.

IDC recently analyzed the competitive cloud market and noted Rackspace's focus on offering managed services for companies using AWS and Microsoft Azure. "With hundreds of certified engineers, it provides customers with options," the report says. "A Rackspace customer can choose whether they want to use AWS,

Azure, or dedicated hosting, as well as other cloud services available directly from Rackspace."

Whichever path you take, it's important to keep some options open. As ITPro advises, "Most importantly, make sure the business is as flexible as possible should priorities or requirements change—adaptability is key, and can't be faked at the last minute."

For more information, check out this [CIO IT Transformation Survival Guide: avoiding pitfalls and wrong turns](#).