MULTI-CLOUD, MULTI-CHALLENGE: ARE YOU UP TO THE TASK?

CIOs are under the gun to deliver on digital transformation initiatives that will carry the business into the future. For most that means investing in cloud solutions that support a more agile, innovative enterprise. But how can IT organizations pull off this magic trick when so much of their time, effort, and skill base is invested in maintaining legacy systems? A loaded question if ever there was one.

"The idea of adopting a [multi-cloud] strategy to be more resilient and avoid vendor lock-in is a concept nearly as old as cloud itself, but it's still rare to see a business take this approach," writes SearchCloudComputing contributor Alan R. Earls. "Using multiple clouds as part of a risk mitigation strategy is still more theory than practice because of the stubborn challenges involved with moving and managing workloads across different platforms."

It's increasingly clear that many IT organizations face constraints that are limiting their ability to tap into the potential of multi-cloud. "Security, long the primary reason why IT departments were skeptical of the public cloud, has taken a backseat to the growing cloud skills gap," declares InfoQ in assessing RightScale's 2016 State of the Cloud survey. Tellingly, a graphic accompanying the report illustrates that lack of resources and expertise is the top challenge for all organizations from the least mature to the most.

UNMET DEMAND FOR SKILLS

That gap can only grow larger as enterprises struggle to hire skilled pros equipped to deal with everything from public cloud to containers to DevOps.

"I expect the rise in demand for cloud related jobs to continue as a growing number of businesses adopt a multi-cloud strategy, using platforms such as Microsoft Azure, OpenStack, and AWS," Darren Norfolk, Rackspace UK managing director, tells CloudTech. "The highly competitive recruitment market for skills in these areas means that managing the platforms in-house could become more costly than it has been in the past."

SHADOW IT REGAINING STRENGTH?

Just as IT organizations think they're gaining ground over the shadow IT movement, they may well be facing another mounting wave of unfulfilled expectations that will frustrate individual departments and business units.

As Carl Lehmann of 451Research points out, "The cloud was born, not from IT necessity, but from the needs of business. Various lines of business (LOBs) needed specific types of support that IT couldn't give them, primarily because the IT budget was entirely locked up in running day-to-day operations."

The good news is that IT chiefs recognize the need to invest in innovative technologies; the bad news is that actual budgets don't map to those needs. Network World's analysis of the Society for Information Management's (SIM) 37th Anniversary IT Trends Study points out that "when asked about what technologies organizations should be investing in, innovative/disruptive ones came in at #4, whereas they're way down at #17 on the list of largest actual IT investments..."

BALANCING PRIORITIES

In that same SIM survey, maintaining, updating, and consolidating legacy applications is 10th on the list of largest IT investments, while re-platforming and replacing legacy applications ranks 12th. To compete, businesses need to figure out how to move investment in innovation ahead of what they're spending on legacy applications.