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Find Agility in the Cloud

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If there is one word at the top of every company's priority list today, it's "agility." More organizations are realizing that while size and speed are important, agility — the ability to scale up and scale down to meet the latest needs — is one of the most valuable capabilities in an unpredictable business environment. Companies want to be able to capitalize on growth opportunities as they come up, without having to invest in significant IT resources that take months to implement.

Cloud computing provides an unprecedented level of agility when deploying technology and introducing new business processes. The cloud brings the flexibility, scalability, and targeted functionality organizations are seeking to make the most of their opportunities and solve complex business challenges. The opportunities brought about by SAP's cloud platform are vast. And customers have access to a broad array of cloud-based solutions via the SAP ecosystem.

The Case for Cloud

The cloud provides agility by allowing companies to quickly and cost-effectively deploy the solutions they require in the areas of their business that need them. Imagine that your company is expanding into a new market in Asia. It typically takes months to get the right functionality in place and integrated into the central system. With cloud solutions, that process is cut down to weeks, allowing you to get up and running quickly and capitalize on the market opportunity.

For small and midsize enterprises (SMEs), the cloud is the great democratizer. Until now, many SMEs felt enterprise technology was out of reach and instead deployed point solutions with custom integration. That slower IT adoption curve limited business growth, further inhibiting IT investment.

But no longer can larger companies hide behind their scale, because smaller companies are growing quickly and leveraging big-company resources via the cloud. Today, SMEs can deploy the robust functionality needed to govern their unique processes and support rapid growth, all via the cloud. Cloud solutions provide the agility to scale up IT resources without the long implementation cycles that may accompany on-premise investments.

The Ecosystem's Role in the Cloud

For SAP customers, the agility brought about by cloud technology is extended by the resources available to them in the SAP ecosystem, including infrastructure providers that leverage virtualization and next-generation architectures to deliver a low-cost private and hosted infrastructure optimized for SAP solutions; independent software vendors (ISVs) that develop and build applications running on SAP's platform-as-a-service; and services partners that help migrate customers to the cloud and connect cloud solutions with on-premise systems. And SAP worked closely with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to deliver the first and only certified public cloud solution to our customers, offering a flexible, low-cost alternative that maintains the security and performance levels customers expect.

Clouds Forming Behind the Scenes

Part of the power of the SAP ecosystem is its breadth. SAP customers gain access to partners of all sizes, ranging from small ISVs to large, industry-leading cloud players. And while virtualization might not be as visible as front-end applications, it is an area in which more customers are seeking guidance — specifically, how to best leverage private clouds. While many organizations

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are aware of the benefits cloud and virtualization bring, they may not be ready to commit to a fully cloud-based environment. For those companies, SAP has expanded its private cloud offerings with the help of partners like VMware and EMC.

SAP is working with VMware and EMC to deliver cloud and virtualization services to customers. Companies that run SAP and want to create private clouds gain both the benefit of deploying their SAP landscapes virtually and the confidence that comes from working with market leaders like VMware, EMC, and SAP. The risk is minimized and the benefits are maximized, letting customers gain more experience and confidence in the cloud.

SAP customers can run their SAP on-premise solutions or provision new SAP on-premise solutions in a partner's cloud environment. This results in lower TCO, faster time to value, and more flexibility. SAP partners such as IBM, AWS, and others offer cloud expertise and the benefit of choice, allowing customers to select the cloud platform that best suits their needs.

SAP customers leveraging cloud offerings through our partners also gain the benefit of out-of-the-box integration. Integrating various point solutions from multiple providers can be costly and time-consuming in the cloud. SAP's cloud-based solutions and those our partners develop on our platform are designed to be integrated with SAP's core applications and line-of-business solutions, providing deeper connectivity.

In addition to integration, the biggest challenge for many companies is mobilizing their enterprise quickly and cost-effectively. To expedite that process, most of SAP's cloud-based offerings, as well as those of our partners, are designed to be accessed on mobile devices and have user interfaces that function well on a mobile device. SAP and its partners understand that mobile devices will be the entry point for many cloud-based applications going forward; we are engineering that capability into all of our cloud-based products while encouraging our partners to do the same.

Collaborate in the Cloud

Why does SAP give its partners the platform to develop these solutions? In many cases, partners are trusted advisors to customers, working on the front lines with customers in specific areas of their business. Partners understand those niches very well and can develop the innovative

cloud-based solutions with the out-of-the-box integration that SAP customers require.

For example, with only 35 employees, bathroom outfitter and online dealer b-cube is always looking for ways in which new solutions can make its business even more productive and more efficient. With the help of implementation services partner All for One Steeb, b-cube recently implemented SAP Business ByDesign, SAP's ERP software solution offered in the cloud, to manage the more than 15,000 products it offers and streamline its supply chain and product management processes.

As an online retailer, b-cube's online store is a key component of the company's overall go-to-market strategy and its primary method of interaction with its customers. The front end of its system had to accurately reflect its business and cater to its customer base. So b-cube engaged with SAP software partner Hybris to develop its online store. Hybris' technology came pre-integrated with SAP Business ByDesign, allowing b-cube to take the 15,000 products that it manages in SAP Business ByDesign and present them in the online store for easy customer access and navigation.

By combining SAP Business ByDesign with a carefully selected partner solution, b-cube now has a closely integrated, cloud-based system that provides the back-end functionality that a small business needs, but the front-end usability that its customers expect.

Reach for the Clouds

Cloud is an area that truly demonstrates the benefits of a strong ecosystem. As the ecosystem grows, so does the selection of cloud-based partner solutions and implementation options. To bring it all together, SAP Landscape Virtualization Manager helps customers with complex environments manage multiple cloud and infrastructure providers, whether on premise, in the cloud, or as a hybrid. Looking beyond today's solutions, SAP actively participates in TOSCA,¹ a standards body to help ensure seamless integration and migration among providers of cloud applications, middleware components, and infrastructure components. This all means that SAP provides a true cloud platform for the ecosystem — and customers — to thrive. ■

¹ OASIS Topology & Orchestration Specification for Cloud Applications.