Why (and How) to Sell Cloud Services

A Guide to Conquering the Cloud for Technology Solution Providers

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INTRODUCTION

There's a lot of buzz around the cloud as more and more applications are making the move from on-premise to cloud-based. At the current rate, it won't be long before everything is in the cloud. As a technology solution provider, it's up to you to stay ahead of the curve by proactively offering cloud services as a new practice area for your clients.

This eBook is your guide to understanding the benefits of the cloud for you and your customers, and finding the right ways to sell cloud services.
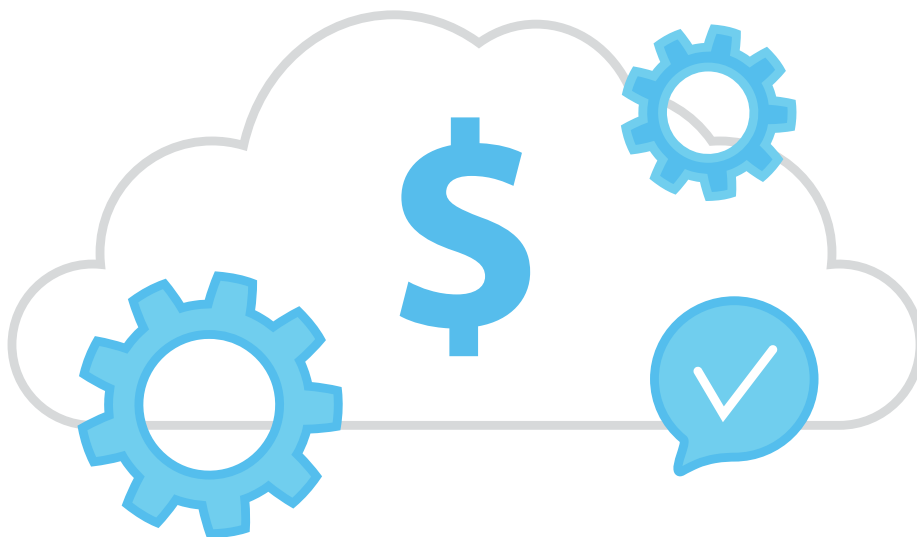
1: WHY CLOUD?

Your customers might be hesitant about the move to the cloud, so helping them understand the benefits is key to being able to successfully sell it. As the trusted advisor, you should be prepared to walk your more apprehensive client through this new environment.

## *So what does the cloud offer to your clients?*

- A competitive advantage thanks to **accelerated application delivery**
- Increased automation and lower costs to **improve IT efficiency**
- **Expanded markets** through smoother global communication and anywhere access
- Optimization that allows customers to **increase investment flexibility**

2: WHO DO YOU SELL TO?

The short answer? Everyone. Anyone with a computer or mobile device could see tremendous gains from making the move to the cloud, so you want to be the one to provide their cloud services before someone else does it for you.

Start your search with a closer look at your current customers. Are any of them due for a hardware upgrade? Is someone looking to expand their operations to another region? Your customers want to be as effective and efficient as possible, so focus first on the ones who might be looking for ways to:
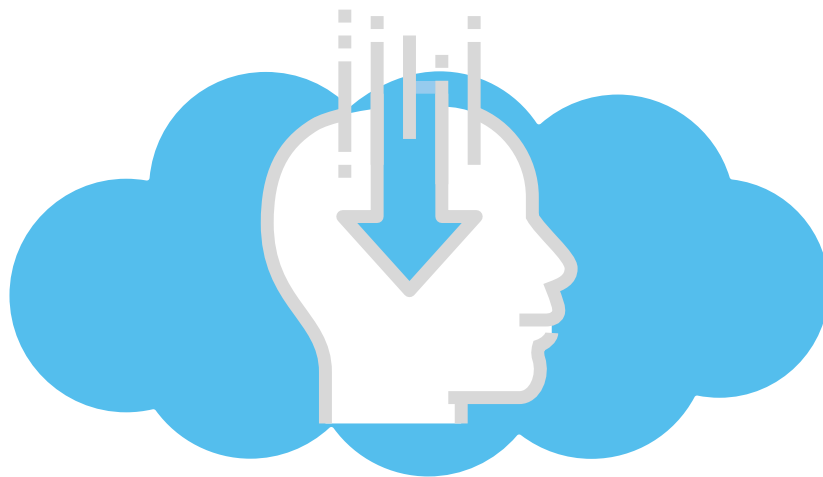
- *Improve performance or processes*
- *Support growth opportunities*
- *Fix old, slow, or broken solutions*
- *Protect against security risks*
- *Adapt to changing customer tech*

3: IDENTIFY THE DECISION MAKERS

Now that you've narrowed your target audience to the group of partners and prospects most likely to be ready for the cloud, you've got to hone in on the specific people who can help champion the cause. For most SMBs, that means talking to the owner…but that's not the only person who can make the choice.

60% of decision makers look for advice before making a big business decision, asking their manufacturers, service providers, and internal leadership teams for input. Hopefully you've already laid the foundation to establish yourself as their trusted advisor, but don't wait for them to ask! Be proactive in offering your support and expertise as they make the move. With the right people on board, you've got to determine the customer's cloud maturity level before you can decide on the right approach.

4: DETERMINE CLOUD MATURITY

Making a sell that works is all about knowing where your customers are coming from, so this step is about understanding where they are on the cloud maturity scale. Are your customers:

Watchers?

Watchers are considering the cloud, but they don't really understand what it could do for them.
What they need from you: Information to help them understand the benefits.

Early adopters?

Early adopters are already taking the first steps toward the cloud, and are working their way through the beginning stages of migration.
What they need from you: Details about how the process should work and what solutions to look for.

Champions?

Champions are already working in the cloud, with multiple cloud-based projects or applications.
What they need from you: Help expanding their use of cloud resources, and information on how to further optimize their operations and reduce costs.

5: PINPOINT PAIN POINTS

With your customers' maturity levels determined, your next step toward a successful sell is reconnecting with their most pressing pains. This might take some careful listening on your part to tease out what they're dealing with, so start with some probing questions like:

- *How much of your budget is dedicated to IT related projects?*

- *How do you currently handle backup related issues?*

- *What are the current collaboration and communications challenges within the organization?*

- *What effect do you feel your IT services can have on your effectiveness day to day?*

You're likely to hear a few recurring themes like downtime, reliability issues, high costs, or lack of integration. It's up to you to help them understand how the cloud can help them speed up, increase efficiency, and save money.

6: IT'S STRATEGY TIME

Alright, you've determined the customers to focus on, figured out who your decision makers are, determined their cloud maturity level, and had the right conversations to pinpoint their pain points. Now it's time to find the right strategy to help them successfully navigate the cloud.

Depending on your understanding of your customers' business, you've got two options for helping them adopt the cloud successfully.

1. Cloud-First

A cloud-first approach involves deploying new applications to the cloud to decrease any costs that may come with new hardware they would otherwise have needed to support the new applications. This is the right approach for an organization looking for aggressive growth. Employ this approach by:

- Identifying clear goals for how many applications to run in the cloud
- Set specific timelines for moving away from traditional data centers
- Create clear assessment criteria to evaluate the right applications to move

2. Targeted

A targeted approach to the cloud allows you to prompt your customers to move specific applications to the cloud one at a time, making a gradual transition to slowly ease them into the cloud. This is the right approach for an organization whose current cloud usage is limited, and who is looking to focus on measured steps and the most cloud-friendly applications. Employ this approach by:

- Considering global, scalable applications
- Focusing on high-agility applications like development, testing, and campaigns
- Choosing applications that are temporary or variable
- Choosing backup and recovery applications that are easily shifted to the cloud

7: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The final roadblock on your road to a successful cloud sale is overcoming the challenges that are going to come up. Here are the top concerns and how to address them.

Security

This is problem the biggest concern you'll hear, but you can ease your customers' concerns by letting them know that cloud providers have continued to improve their security offerings to address these concerns. Establishing an efficient cloud security architecture through a variety of controls is the key to limiting risks in the cloud.
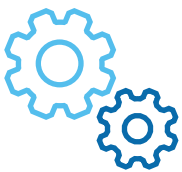
Reliability

Your customers have probably heard all about cloud outages, but the truth is that the right architecture can keep cloud users meeting SLAs well beyond the capabilities of an on-premise infrastructure. Cloud providers operate dedicated, state-of-the-art data centers with multiple levels of redundancy. Most public clouds support multiple regions and zones to keep one failure from impacting the others.
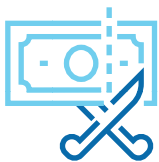
Spend Optimization

Because the pricing model in the cloud is on-demand, it's a shift in thinking from the traditional infrastructure spend. The positive side here is that budgeting is simpler when you're spending as you go instead of trying to make cost decisions up front. Your customers can avoid overprovisioning, and you can support their budget planning with direct conversations on how the leaders expect their business to grow in the short, medium, and long term.

Cloud Culture

It's no surprise that the cloud makes people nervous, so forward-thinking CIOs are helping ease the tension by choosing to create an innovative cloud culture by designating teams that can help jumpstart their cloud initiative. Keep the lines of communication open with your customers so that they know you're there to help them encourage this culture.

CONCLUSION

The key to successful cloud sales is about being solutions-oriented and solving your customers' problems. Don't sell cloud for the sake of cloud. Instead, train and incentivize your sales team to provide a consultative approach to selling the cloud, with an ear open to their problems and how the cloud could solve them, including the need for better uptime and reliability, anywhere/anytime access to business information, better mobility, and more.

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