



PLANNING YOUR MIGRATION TO THE MICROSOFT CLOUD

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Office 365 is a powerful suite of software that can provide business critical infrastructure for organizations of all sizes. Migrating your company's critical IT infrastructure into Office 365 can range from a simple process that can be done over a weekend to a very complex process that takes many months to complete successfully.

No matter the size of your organization or the complexity of your migration into Office 365, insuring you have a good migration plan before you start your migration can ensure that you get the best possible experience from Office 365.

In this paper we will cover some of the important considerations that must be addressed as you are planning your migration into Office 365.



WHY DO ORGANIZATIONS MOVE TO OFFICE 365?

In the broadest sense, the movement to cloud IT services in general and Office 365 specifically is the natural continuation of a basic economic trend that has been going on since the start of the industrial revolution; specialization.

Before the industrial revolution, most people's job was "farmer." This wasn't because everyone wanted to be a farmer, but because it took several people to grow enough food to feed a family. As we progressed technologically, people started to move to jobs farther and farther away from the farm. The information revolution pushed this even farther to where we are today.

Your organization might be an accounting firm, a government agency, a manufacturing company, or a medical office. Whatever it is that your organization is good at, it probably was not created to install and manage complicated software. There is a limited number of things that any one person or organization can be good at, so why should yours spend its time and resources on setting up and maintaining servers when other organizations can do a better job of that for less money?

Cloud services allow a way for companies to specialize in the development and delivery of software without the purchasing organization needing to have the experience and staff to deploy that software. This means that a higher quality

service can be provided for a considerably lower cost.

Additionally, the cloud services model is financially beneficial to both the parties. For Microsoft's part, it's a lot easier for them to run a business with a predictable income source that comes from subscription services. When they know that X number of Office 365 licenses will generate Y number of dollars each month, they can run their business more efficiently.

Office 365 is quickly turning into a huge suite of software that includes email, IM, telephone, file management, analytics / reporting software, video management, scheduling, CRM, business intelligence, project management, and more. Depending on the licenses your organization purchases you may end up having access to many more services than you intend to use. Microsoft wants to bundle services so that your organization ends up relying on multiple different parts of Office 365,

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From the customer perspective, the subscription model of cloud services makes IT budgeting easier and more predictable as well. Furthermore, there can be a significant advantage to moving IT expenses to a regular operational expense from an irregular capital expense that needs to be depreciated over time.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO FOLLOW IN PLANNING YOUR OFFICE 365 MIGRATION?

The steps your organization follows during your migration to Office 365 are going to greatly depend on your organization's specific goal for your migration. What services does your organization intend to use, and how will you get your users access to those services?

and thusly becomes more likely to stay with Office 365.

After you decide what Office 365 services you plan to use, you need to know how your users will authenticate to those services. Will your users' on-premises Active Directory accounts be synchronized into Azure Active Directory, or will you set up separate cloud only accounts for them? Will your organization use separate cloud-only passwords, synchronized passwords, pass-through authentication, or Active Directory Federation Services? Each of these choices represents a very different end-user experience, as well as a significantly different management experience for your organization's administrators.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT OFFICE 365 SERVICES TO LICENSE?

Determining which Office 365 licenses to purchase is a vital part of the migration planning process. Microsoft has built Office 365 into a huge suite of services the cost of which can vary widely.

For a small organization, it may not be such an undertaking to decide on the licenses you need then ensure that they are assigned to the proper people. This is not the case for an organization with thousands of employees. License management within larger organizations can be an incredible challenge.

Manually assigning thousands of licenses to different groups of users, with individual people leaving your organization and new hires replacing them can pose a huge issue for IT departments new to Office 365. Microsoft does not include much in the way of license management features within Office 365, so often IT departments look to custom PowerShell scripts or even third-party license management tools for Office 365.

DETERMINING WHICH OFFICE 365 LICENSES TO PURCHASE IS A VITAL PART OF THE MIGRATION PLANNING PROCESS.

Microsoft always makes it easy for their customers to buy more services or upgrade their licenses to higher levels. The same is not always true in the other direction, however. Some organizations get significant discounts from Microsoft by signing enterprise agreements with three-year terms.

Having a solid plan for what Office 365 services your organization will be using now, and in the future can ensure that you're not paying for licenses you don't need.

DOES MICROSOFT HAVE A BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN FOR OFFICE 365?

Microsoft is a large corporation worth hundreds of billions of dollars, employing tens of thousands of people, with the responsibility to provide a profit for potentially millions of stockholders. Of course, Microsoft has a business continuity plan but that plan is for Microsoft's business, not yours.

Microsoft is absolutely motivated to protect the data that its customers move into its cloud services, but Microsoft's primary concern is always going to be for Microsoft's business. Moving to a cloud services provider means the responsibility for the infrastructure is taken off your organization's plate, but you still hold responsibility for your data.

DOES MY ORGANIZATION NEED ITS OWN BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN AFTER WE MIGRATE TO OFFICE 365?

Running a business is an incredibly complex balancing act of making risk versus reward decisions. Those decisions often start around your core business with things like how much of your product to pre-produce and store in a warehouse, or how many people to hire. Those decisions will quickly extend into many areas completely unrelated to your core business, but of vital importance none the less. “How safe is my data in X cloud service?” might be a question you need to ask yourself.

informed decision about what to do in each case. There probably isn't much chance that Microsoft will suddenly announce a bankruptcy that will immediately cut off all customers' access to Office 365 data, but how likely is it that one of your organization's users will accidentally delete files or email messages without realizing the mistake for several months?

When moving to a cloud service it's important to remember that your organization is outsourcing responsibility for the infrastructure, but not for your data. Let Microsoft handle the servers and the applications, but never forget that your

AS IT DEPARTMENTS MOVE TO OFFICE 365 IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO TAKE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL THE THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG.

Of course, Microsoft goes to great pains to protect your data, and to the best of my knowledge Microsoft has not lost any data from within Office 365. That being said, it's possible for users to delete their own data by mistake, or for ransomware to encrypt data making it unusable without anything going wrong on Microsoft's systems.

As IT departments move to Office 365 it is important for them to take careful consideration of all the things that can go wrong with that data and make an

data is the life blood of your organization, and you must take responsibility for it.

WHAT COMMON MISTAKES DO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS MAKE WITH THEIR MIGRATION TO OFFICE 365?

In my experience, there are a few common mistakes that organizations will make in their migration to Office 365.

The biggest mistake I see organizations make is failing to understand the service description Microsoft publishes for Office 365.

[The Office 365 service description](#) is a very large publication on TechNet that gives a complete description of what you get with your Office 365 subscription. It is absolutely imperative that organizations planning a migration into Office 365 take the time to review this information and ensure that Office 365 meets their requirements and expectations.

A MISTAKE ORGANIZATIONS MAKE ON THEIR TRIP INTO OFFICE 365 HAPPENS AROUND THE MIGRATION TIMELINE.

The second mistake organizations make on their trip into Office 365 happens around the migration timeline. The timeline of a migration takes a lot of experience to get right, and often trying to fit a migration into the wrong timeline is the cause of migration issues. There is no “right” timeline for a specific migration into Office 365, except that the migration cannot be rushed and should not be allowed to drag.

WILL MICROSOFT CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ON-PREMISES VERSIONS OF THEIR SOFTWARE?

While Office 365 and the Microsoft cloud are great services, there is a persistent concern in many IT departments that Microsoft will stop selling and supporting

on-premises software altogether. The question of what a future without the option to build, customize, and run your own servers for Exchange, Skype for Business, or SharePoint would look like can be a source of stress for organizations that do not feel the limitations of Office 365 are workable with their business requirements.

It is obvious to any observer that Microsoft prefers the cloud services business model to that of selling on-premises software. Microsoft is not alone in thinking that a subscription model is a better way to run a business. A reliable income stream is a much better basis for running a business.

Microsoft’s biggest problem with on-premises software is support. Right now Microsoft has to support Exchange 2010, 2013, and 2016 on-premises deployments. This means that they need to maintain experts in each of these applications, programmers to update each of these versions, and documentation for these versions as well. This is a lot of expensive work for Microsoft to put into software like Exchange 2010 that is eight years old. Microsoft would much rather support one version of Exchange (Exchange Online) without the issues of having to figure out what customizations have been made.

All that aside, Microsoft will go where their customers are. Right now there is still enough demand for on-premises versions of Exchange, Skype for

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Business, and SharePoint that Microsoft is currently working on the “2019” versions of each of these applications. There is not a lot of publicly available information about the changes we’ll see with these versions but we can expect to hear more as we get closer to their release dates.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Some of this paper may sound like doom and gloom predicting that Office 365 failures are inevitable, and catastrophe is just around the corner. That is not what you should be taking away from this.

Office 365 is a very good service that will likely provide a much better end-user experience than many other alternatives at a much lower cost. As long as IT departments take the time to properly plan, execute, and document their migration into the cloud there is very

little chance of a catastrophic data loss occurring.

With some simple planning, and a good understanding of what services are available with each Office 365 license, organizations will have an excellent experience with this service.

Find out more

<http://www.backupify.com>

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