

# Five lessons for taking your enterprise to the cloud

By: Lee Congdon, CIO, Red Hat

Hybrid cloud solutions are the future of IT. The transition is inevitable. Flexibility, agility, economic cost, the growth of mobile platforms, and other factors are driving most enterprises to the cloud. If you continue to manage your own infrastructure without cloud technologies, especially if you're in a cost-restrained environment, you are likely putting your enterprise at a disadvantage.

This transition to cloud can be overwhelming, but it's also really exciting. I've learned a lot from moving Red Hat to an open hybrid cloud as a platform for our IT services. Here are five of the lessons that I believe can help you on your own journey to the cloud.

## LESSONS IN BRIEF

1. Get the strategy right.
2. Engage Your Business.
3. Get your team ready.
4. Optimize for speed and flexibility.
5. Cloud is a journey.



*Lee Congdon, CIO, Red Hat*

"By stepping up to lead your organization's journey to the cloud, you'll be demonstrating the art of the possible. And that's an incredible feeling."

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## *Lesson One: Get the strategy right.*

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This applies to both the IT organization itself and to the IT organization and its alignment with the business. To get it right, you need to:

### **DETERMINE WHAT DRIVES VALUE.**

Ask what's driving value in your organization. Is it cost reduction? Is it a global solution? Is it innovation? Is it agility? Make sure that you've optimized to delivering value.

### **CONSIDER YOUR RISK TOLERANCE.**

Since different enterprises – government, industry, education, healthcare, finance – all have different risk tolerance, you need to think about the risk/reward trade-off in your enterprise. There's no advantage in taking substantial risk if you aren't going to be rewarded for it. You have to find the right balance for your enterprise.

### **EVALUATE YOUR COMPETITION.**

Make sure you're watching what your competition is doing all the time, both your traditional competition and your emerging competition.

### **ASSESS YOUR ASSOCIATES.**

Think about where your associates need to be from a capability/skills/motivation standpoint. Not just now, but three to five years from now, because it takes a while to reshape the direction of an organization.

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## *Lesson Two: Engage Your Business.*

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You can't go it alone in IT. You must make sure you're engaged with your business. Here you need to:

### **UNDERSTAND THEY'RE ALREADY USING THE CLOUD.**

If you look at external surveys, you know that your employees are already using cloud technologies heavily, including Evernote, Google, Dropbox, or just a survey tool. You need to understand what they're doing and why they're doing it with the cloud.

### **LOOK FOR SERENDIPITY TO GET YOU STARTED.**

There's nothing wrong with finding a business opportunity that's about to occur and using it to get you started on your journey to the cloud. But don't expect those opportunities to magically find you. You need to be looking for them.

### **LET THEM TAKE CREDIT.**

As you engage the business, you need to let them take credit. It's tough, but the reality is it's hard for an IT organization to generate the success and get all the credit by itself. It happens, but usually the partnership with the business is a much more satisfactory arrangement all the way around.

### **DETERMINE YOUR NON-NEGOTIABLES.**

IT will have things it's not willing to negotiate. Maybe it's that you need to control the contracts. Certainly, you'll need to make sure your information security is appropriate. You need to understand how defects will be reported and how problem resolution is going to occur. Those may be areas where IT sets the corporate standard.

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## *Lesson Three: Get your team ready.*

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Earlier in this process you should have assessed your associates. Now it's time to determine where you want them to be and prepare them for it. What will they need to know?

### **NEW SKILLS AND NEW PROCESSES.**

Moving to the cloud will involve new skills, many of which you can't hire yet. So you're going to have to conduct your own training and/or allow associates to develop those skills.

You almost certainly need new processes. You're going to have new vendor partners. The tools you use today in your production environments won't apply to your cloud environments. Your billing and charge-back, if you do that, are going to be different. You need to have a plan for that also.

### **CHANGE MANAGEMENT FOR THE ORGANIZATION.**

You must go through a change management process, both for your team and for the entire organization, to get them ready for the change, to make sure they understand why you're doing it, to get the folks that aren't on board an opportunity to exit

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gracefully, and to bring in new people that are going to be supportive of the change.

Making your business aware of what you're doing and why is essential. You don't want to be stuck with an aggressive cloud strategy for a business that wants you to build a new data center, for example.

## **MANAGING NEW VENDOR PARTNERS.**

You're probably already doing this, but increasingly, the cloud business is going to be managing vendor partners, rather than doing it yourself. You'll still be doing many things yourself, but a lot of your future growth is going to be buying compute, buying networking, and buying storage from vendor partners – many of whom aren't necessarily going to be traditional enterprise providers or will have a different business model.

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## *Lesson Four: Optimize for speed and flexibility.*

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It's very early in the cloud migration, but it will occur. So be prepared to be quick and nimble. How?

### **TEST MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS.**

Cloud is a mainstream computing technology or will be very shortly. But it's hard to predict exactly what the core solutions are going to be. At Red Hat we certainly believe it's OpenStack.

### **AVOID VENDOR LOCK-IN.**

Choose open source solutions, including products that are supported by industry groups and consortiums, rather than focusing on a proprietary solution from a particular vendor.

### **CONSIDER ENTERPRISE OPEN SOURCE SOLUTIONS.**

We believe that in the cloud space, an excellent strategy is to focus on open source for Enterprise software, especially given its success in the operating system and in the middleware space.

### **TAKE A SERIOUS LOOK AT DEVOPS.**

As we transition from an industrial economy to an information economy, having the capability to do things faster than your business needs will be crucial. Start thinking about reintegrating your development and operations organizations in a DevOps or CI/CD paradigm to optimize for speed.

## *Lesson Five: Cloud is a journey.*

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You'll get there, but it will take time. How can you accelerate the journey?

### **PAY DOWN YOUR TECHNOLOGY DEBT.**

Reducing the quantity of your legacy platforms is critical. It's very hard to build yet another operational environment with cloud without starting to retire some of your legacy environments.

Remember that all legacy solutions aren't replaced overnight. Have a strategy not only for moving ahead into the cloud, but for sun-setting legacy applications. Not only will you be happier with fewer integration points, you'll save money and that will give you the ability to aggressively invest in cloud, as your business requires it.

### **BUILD ON YOUR EARLY SUCCESS.**

Pick your winners and build on those early successes, while pruning your losers. Make sure you are communicating the successes to your organization and sharing your vision about moving to a cloud environment.

### **FOCUS ON BUSINESS-DRIVEN IT.**

Again, you need to focus on making sure your business partners view this as their success as well. So let the business drive where you're going from a cloud investment standpoint. The business builds the strategy and direction, IT builds the capability, and together you deliver value.

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Lee Congdon is CIO of Red Hat. His role includes enabling Red Hat's business through services, such as knowledge management, technology innovation, technology-enabled collaboration, and process improvement.

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