

WHITEPAPER

Cloud may be the first cure and vaccine to businesses impacted by COVID-19



The COVID situation has made businesses rethink their strategies and take a hard look at their systems, architectures, models and practices. Having mechanisms to deal with disasters has always been part of IT strategy. However, the question people are asking post COVID has changed to "what all should we consider as disasters?". Additionally, I'm sure even the most risk averse companies would not have ever considered disaster scenarios of this level of complexity and scale, let alone making plans to deal with it.

However, somewhere in this world, there are some visionary CIOs and CTOs who would be at significant ease in dealing with this crisis arising out of their decisions to go 'cloud first, mobile first' across their whole enterprise.

Let me share how decision-making processes have changed over the last month as an outcome of the crisis. This scenario is related to selection of Virtual Desktops or Desktop-as-a-service model which so far had always been pushed back as a non-priority item for most enterprises.

A typical enterprise in a pre-COVID situation would run an evaluation process to decide whether to adopt cloud based virtual desktops or not. Significant time is spent on solution definition, vendor presentations, consultation across different teams, changing user behaviour to use new tools, ROI calculations, user experience scores, security risks issues, etc and we have seen many enterprises postponing or cancelling adoption of solution. The crisis during the last 4 weeks has pushed many enterprises to take decisions quickly to ensure business continuity and one of the solutions that would have never gone through the approval process earlier, you guessed it right, Virtual desktop solution is being adopted across the board. **Many enterprises have started having 60% - 100 % of their workforce on cloud-based desktop within a span of 2 weeks.**

What is the learning?

First, the enterprise teams were not asking the right question when they were contemplating the VDI solution during normal scenarios. The pre-COVID evaluation process did not consider possibility of disasters which were outliers and their evaluation focused on immediate most probable scenarios in the short term. Most of the current generation CIOs / CTOs are born after the world wars and this period has been one of the most peaceful periods across the world in recent human history. During normal times, the outliers look so distant that it is difficult to build a good business case. Most decisions were based on looking at optimistic scenarios and not necessarily taking a holistic view. The planning did not consider disaster scenarios which are increasingly becoming probable arising out of Human-Nature conflict.

Second, Business unit leaders would use the easy path out and not take on projects that would present change management challenges within the organization specifically changing user behavior. They were driving and building an operating model and culture that would work flawlessly only during good times. They did not really think about changing their operating models and culture to maximize the benefit from the latest and greatest in technology, instead they looked at the technology in silo and expected the technology by itself to solve all the issues which led to this situation. The leaders are now pushing their teams to adopt changes in a very short period. If there is a will there is a way to make things happen. So, it needed a crisis to make people drive change.

Finally, this crisis has also demonstrated how business, IT, finance and the risk functions could work together to develop acceptable risk and solution framework that would work. Security, Risk and Compliance folks relooked at the risk framework, finance relooked at the business case approach and they collaborated with IT & Cloud teams to find out ways and means to get the implementation done.

A significant number of enterprises overnight had to move millions of users to work from home and those that managed this transition with relative ease were organisations that had already some kind of cloud strategy even though it was not fully developed and executed. Luckily for some enterprises which already had partially adopted the cloud strategy found the transition easier since they already had some kind of experience working with a hyperscale provider. They had to just design and implement the virtual desktops on the cloud and not go through a complete evaluation process from scratch. But other enterprises are still struggling through the process.

The crisis demonstrated that sometimes it needs a crisis to change behaviour even if there is a great technology available. Though VDI or DaaS technology has been around for a while, the push for the decision was triggered by a crisis which brought in a different evaluation lens.

Lastly, let us look at each of the characteristics below of the Cloud which helped deal with the current COVID situation:

- Quickly setup systems and scale them virtually and at scale
- Primary access to applications is via internet not via corporate network
- Disaster recovery at a global level and automation capability to execute it
- Access to the best of technologies to secure data and transactions
- Do all the above without upfront investments but with a pay as you go model

So, if there are any winners during these hard times, then it is the cloud technology model and these daring, leaders who pushed the movement to Cloud. I see cloud as the first cure and even a vaccine to businesses who are impacted by COVID or any other adversities to come. Cloud is more than just technology when it comes to moving to cloud, and this new IT model calls for a change in your business model, operating model, risk models, measurement models, financial models and more.

It needs a vision, strong will and a holistic approach to cloud strategy, adoption, migration and management and we at Microland understand how to plan and execute a holistic cloud strategy.

About the Author



Benil George, Associate Vice President – Cloud & Data center
BenilGPJ@microland.com

Benil is a certified Microsoft Azure Architect, AWS architect and an ITIL Masters. He brings in 24 years of Technology, Operations and Service Management consulting expertise. At Microland, Benil leads the technology exploration function (Microlabs) responsible to identify and incubate emerging technologies that could accelerate our customer's digital transformation journeys. He has been instrumental in architecting and building many Intellectual Properties for Microland around cloud adoption acceleration and cloud management platforms.

About Microland

Microland's delivery of digital and "Making Digital Happen" allows technology to do more and intrude less. We make it easier for enterprises to adopt nextGen Digital infrastructure. We enable this using our expertise in Cloud and Data Centers, Networks, Digital Workplace, Cybersecurity and Industrial IoT, ensuring the embrace of brilliance is predictable, reliable, and stable.

Incorporated in 1989 and headquartered in Bengaluru, India, Microland has more than 4,500 digital specialists across offices and delivery centers in Asia, Australia, Europe, Middle East and North America.