

Demystify in 5:

How utilities can lay the foundation
for a cloud-based future





TODAY'S UTILITY UNIVERSE IS TINTED BY DATA; TOMORROW'S UTILITY UNIVERSE WILL BE DEFINED BY IT.

The Internet is now officially everywhere, from your meter to your feeder. It brings you data from places on your network that, let's be honest, you're not entirely sure you need data from at this particular point.

But, tomorrow you will. We promise you. And all that information you're collecting will smooth the transition to that new utility universe.

That helpful data is a whirlpool overflowing with details and preferences. It's a tsunami of sign-up information, market financials, billing choices, communication options, PMU or citygate health, capacity and load insights, substation maintenance charts, and peak use times—just to name a few. It's the pure essence of your work world reduced to very, very valuable numbers.

Now, as you gain more insight about your hardware, your software and your customers—their wants, their needs, their anxieties, their choice of solar panel installations—where are you putting all of it?

Our suggestion: in the cloud, of course, but we realize saying you need to be in the cloud isn't the same as helping you get there. So, let's talk practical steps to a cloud solution.



01

Understanding the basic benefits of a cloud shift and crowing about it

First and foremost in any good plan is nailing down a good understanding—of both the problem and potential solutions. Picture an area of your business where you're having data collection, storage or use issues. Think about the meetings you've had and the experts you've brought in. Then think about the benefits a cloud-based solution can bring you: faster access to infrastructure and time-to-market,

greater scalability and higher availability, larger geographic reach and more continuity at the same time, higher performance and greater cost savings (plus greater efficiency). And, of course, there's a growing opportunity to shift those costs from a capex structure to an opex structure. You know that, but have you made sure everyone on your tiny-but-mighty team is also aware?



02

Looking to peers for reference points and, yes, a little reassurance, too

No one wants to be the first person to take the leap on a new area of tech or software, but, luckily, you're not alone here in this move toward more comprehensive cloud coverage. In a recent Oracle Utilities-sponsored survey, the top two areas where utilities said they planned to leverage cloud were meter data management (89%) and customer information systems (69%). As with many open doors, sometimes the way forward can't be completely seen. There's a leap of faith with

digital transformation—faith in yourself, faith in the numbers, faith in technology reliability and faith in your strategy. The percentage of utilities taking that cloud leap is growing. In that same survey, nearly half of North American utility executives said they were already using cloud technology, with even more planning on new uses in the near future. (In Europe, 68% of those surveyed said they were using the cloud or will do so within the year.)





03

Letting go of the old cultural needs to keep things in house (and shifting old arguments to new ones)

Anonymously, one utility executive confided this: This industry is well past the era of in-house builds. It's well known, but it's not well accepted. There's still a MacGyver culture that persists in utilities globally, and it can be hard to convince people who've always controlled infrastructure that having the responsibility shift to a third-party isn't a bad thing at all (and can bring a lot of those benefits in #1,

especially scalability and lower costs). But the same executive told us this: Everyone's distracted by those capex vs. opex issues. So, rather than making the argument for keeping/updating legacy systems and tech in-house, why not shift this argument to how you can help your regulator flip the capex/opex switch and get to that cloud future faster?



04

Dissecting that big leap into baby steps but keeping that final goal in mind

The end goal: everything in the cloud. Period. But it doesn't have to be a single step there. You can step up your game just that way—in steps. Start with on-premises options and then plan out how to move out to a hybrid to managed hosting to a software-as-a-service or platform-as-a-service option. And break it down farther: systems software, data centers,

application middleware, business applications and configurations, they may need to make this journey at varied and different speeds. And that's OK. Need help deciding speed of that transition and the hierarchy of what should go first and what can wait? Give us a call. We'd be happy to help you sort out that puzzle.





05

Avoiding shopping pitfalls and knowing what to buy for

The cloud will soon no longer be an option; it will be a necessity. So, when shopping cloud services, what should you look for and what should you avoid? Stay away from the incomplete picture. Today, hardware and software need to be architected together. Installing software onto a server farm isn't going to get you where you need to go. Look for solutions that are designed as a complete set of hardware, software and professional services. Look for a solution made for the cloud (not forced into it). Know the gap

between cloud options. (Private cloud and software-as-a-service are very different animals, for example.) And shop for an offering that keeps up with IT and utility-specific security standards. (But don't buy into the myth that the cloud is less secure than on-premises solutions.) Finally, find an advisor and a partner with the full capacity to help you navigate the changes that will continue to morph your utility universe.

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