Government Transformation is Up in the Air

Three Steps for European Governments to Adopt Cloud Computing Solutions

High performance. Delivered.

Thirty percent. That's what the UK government announced it could save in costs with off-the-shelf cloud solutions over custom ones.[1] This is just one story of how cloud computing can enable government transformation across Europe, delivering public service for the future. And cost saving is not the only benefit.

Improve savings, agility and service

Despite differences, European countries share a consuming challenge. They must reconcile citizens' increasing demands for efficient and effective public services—including digital government—despite shrinking budgets. These competing forces are at the heart of government transformation, which must solve for higher-quality, lower-cost public service tuned to the digital age. Not surprisingly, public service technology has a fundamental role to play here.

Cloud computing solutions are ideally suited to address this challenge. Cloud lowers capital and operating costs. It also brings new agility with a scalable infrastructure, which promotes service reuse and positions public service agencies to provide more responsive citizen services. These positive government-to-citizen interactions naturally improve citizen satisfaction. It's about engaging citizens to build trust between public bodies and people—while lowering costs and being ready for what's next.

Seize the cloud opportunity

The business case is clear, but the way forward for many European governments lacks clarity, with so many choices to consider, barriers to address and decisions to make. How can public service organisations make the most of cloud computing solutions for government transformation? Three key steps can cut through the fog:

1. Develop private, think hybrid.

An important advantage of cloud is that it allows government agencies to share services and information—lowering costs. As European governments pursue individual cloud strategies, they should keep this bigger picture in mind for the future. This is what will truly transform public service delivery and provide a foundation for digital government that goes beyond digitising existing processes to actually influencing people's behaviors.

As such, governments should develop private cloud services that a number of agencies can use, and make sure they can integrate with existing IT systems as well as with building block services—portals, identity services, registers and digital security services—built for the digital era. Over time, private clouds will become community clouds as government bodies share cloud components and work together.

France is pursuing this strategy today. The Directorate of Legal and Administrative Information, one of the main branches of the prime minister's central administration, built a private cloud. In a "by government

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1. UK Cabinet Office press release, Government adopts 'Cloud First' policy for public sector IT, May 5, 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-adopts-cloud-first-policy-for-public-sector-it

for government" provision model, other government ministries will be able to use this cloud. France is also sponsoring the creation of two private sector clouds, and exploring relying on public cloud offerings for commodity services over the long term. This approach brings both public and private cloud options to agencies so they can choose the best option for them.

2. Create a platform to consume government–wide services.

Imagine there was one entry point for citizens and businesses to access all government services, any time, and through any channel. This is a key part of effective digital government, and cloud can make it happen. What's more, citizens increasingly expect it. In fact, most people responding to an Accenture survey say they would use digital services if offered by government. And over half want to conduct all their business digitally in the future.[2]

To support these expectations, European governments need a consistent and well-managed cloud platform where services can be accessed across government agencies. The Italian Digital Agency is pursuing this vision, with a focus on developing digital identity and payment services and connecting central, regional and local government services for more integrated citizen experiences.

3. Address data privacy and security at a national and EU level.

Differing national interpretations of EU rules, uncertainty over applicable laws, and concerns over data security and third party data access in the cloud are hampering the adoption of public cloud services among European governments.

Yet cloud computing is not inherently insecure. In fact, it can be more secure than existing IT systems.

This is why greater clarity around this pressing issue is essential to facilitate decision making. Proposals to update EU data protection rules may help to clarify things, providing a European-wide set of rules under which European citizens' data can be stored in the cloud. Governments can add even more security by providing data encryption not just for stored data but for data in transit too.

Delivering Public Service for the Future

European governments must overcome a number of barriers in moving to the cloud. Some are structural issues at the national level, such as the fragmented approach to procuring, contracting and budgeting for IT services. Others are more global, such as concerns over data privacy and varying regulations across the world.

Even so, cloud computing solutions are poised to be a powerful driver of delivering public service for the future—supporting a flourishing society, safe and secure nation and economic vitality for citizens. Moving to digital, governments need to articulate how citizens will consume digital services and how digital services will be delivered—and cloud is a key component of digital service delivery. Without it, governments will not be able to fully enable the digital enterprise—from mobility and social to big data and analytics.

By enabling digital government, cloud will drive a shift from standardised to personalized services, helping governments engage with citizens in wholly new

ways. It will also be an important force as governments move from piecemeal efficiency to mission productivity, breaking down silos, sharing information and eliminating duplicate efforts.

Government transformation demands that public service organisations start providing services in a new and different way, digitally powered. Cloud can usher in a whole new era of opportunity to do this in a cost-effective, agile and secure manner.

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2. Accenture Digital Citizen Pulse Survey of more than 1,400 people in Australia, France, Germany, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, 2011.