

DATA CENTER MIGRATIONS AND CONSOLIDATIONS

**GLOBAL
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INFRASTRUCTURE
TRANSFORMATION



RISK IS IN LARGE PART A RESULT OF THE UNKNOWN. IT'S DIFFICULT TO ISOLATE THE UNKNOWN.

“FOR EVERY COMPLEX PROBLEM THERE IS AN ANSWER THAT IS CLEAR, SIMPLE, AND WRONG.”

H. L. MENCKEN

THE SITUATION: RISK

IT's job is to protect the business. Every move bets someone's job. A great deal has been negotiated; an airtight business case approved; a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility identified; a brilliant architecture designed. Now we just need to move in. That's the easy part, right? Not necessarily.

Executives determine a Data Center Strategy-the future end state of the configuration of facilities that will run the compute workload that support the business.

When executives do so, they assume that the migration will happen without incident. **Any incident at all is considered an IT failure.**

The facts are very different. Data Center migrations are in fact inherently risky. So for the leader or practitioner whose career depends on the success of this move, risk mitigation and risk avoidance is paramount.

Risk is in large part a result of the unknown. It's difficult to isolate the unknown when you haven't seen the pattern of events before. For many, a significant migration is both a once in a generation event, and an added burden on an already taxed staff, already challenged with their day jobs.

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AN INHERENTLY COMPLEX DATA CENTER MOVE IS INHERENTLY RISKY.

Industry analyst firm Gartner tells us that the best-in-class Enterprise Defined Data Center is characterized by a focus on services-workload-rather than the physical data center. Infrastructure & Operations are to govern and provide, not necessarily produce.

First, data center moves have always been complex. Most operations have been neither architected with a move in mind nor documented to make it easy. Ask anyone who has ever tried to get to “the single source of trusted data” how much confidence they’ve got in their foundation. Application discovery, dependency and affinity analysis remains a vital yet, all too imprecise science.

In addition, options today are far more abundant than even three years ago. In particular, ever expanding cloud and co-location alternatives can provide a broad range of choice to Infrastructure & Operations. These alternatives also make business case calculations more complex and add variables to move planning.

- An individual firm may self-manage its core applications on-premise. It may run other applications in a co-location facility, perhaps driven by capacity concerns.
- It may have one or more development platforms in the cloud, with one or more providers, for new applications.
- It may choose to run its operations entirely in co-location facilities, wanting to rely on another’s expertise in facilities management.
- There may have a second or even a third disaster recovery facility, which may also host, for example, development environments.

For the foreseeable future, most data center organizations will have workload in some mix of on-premise, co-located, and public cloud facilities.

The right mix of “what runs where” will constantly evolve based on a continually changing market, which makes more and more services available on a continuous basis. These changing dynamics will make workload shifts a more frequent fact of life for many organizations. They also make execution more complex than ever before. The days of a straightforward mainframe migration or of a simple lift and shift are largely behind us.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES ARE FREQUENTLY THE LARGEST TO OVERCOME.

IT STARTS WITH THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

THE SOLUTION: APPLIED EXPERIENCE AND DISCIPLINED, TRAINED EXPERTS

The experienced migration specialist will ask:

1. What are the objectives of the consolidation or migration? Is it the result of a merger or acquisition? Is it cost driven? Is it driven by regulatory concerns, e.g., a need for improved resiliency? Is it a need to update an aging facility? Is a lease expiring? Is it pressure to “move to the cloud”?
2. What level of engagement do you have with your line-of-business clients? Is the business driving the move? What are the seasons of the year where change is not permitted or which are critical for revenue and particularly unforgiving for unplanned outage? What level of support do you have and what is the support for an adequate outage window?
3. What “move method” does your business case dictate? Will you lift and shift? Migrate a virtualized environment over an extended period of time? Build out a test and disaster recovery facility first? Technology refresh on the fly? Does it tie to a refresh cycle (if you have such a defined cycle)? Have you a need for bubble gear?
4. What confidence do you have in the data you’ve based your business case upon? Do you have a single trusted source of data, understand application dependencies, and understand performance and latency considerations? Do you fully understand your software licenses and service provider costs and the contracts that govern them?
5. Is now the time or do you have cleanup to do first? Can you move what you have safely, or do you have remediation to do in order to enable it in the new environment? Do you have a reference architecture and if so, where does it apply? Better a difficult conversation now than a tragedy on move night.
6. What’s your tolerance for risk? What are your plans in the event of a disaster during the move? Are they “conceptual” or concretely documented? What if that disaster only impacts a single or sub-set of applications but doesn’t warrant a DR event?
7. Are you attempting to combine the move with additional projects or upgrades? Experience “shouts” this is a bad idea. Data Center moves are complex enough.
8. Have you considered decommissioning? This is a complex process with environmental, security, asset management and other concerns.

CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATIONS ARE VITAL

COMMITMENT: THE RIGHT PEOPLE

GTSG has both the structure and the people, and can hit the ground running: if you tell us where you are today, we know what needs to happen tomorrow. We are frequently asked to remediate a troubled migration. Many of those projects became troubled because the client believed they understood their environment, had things under control. After all, they knew the “first 85% of our stuff very well.”

What sets GTSG apart- and what even our assets can't bring- is the experience to ferret out the other 15%: the unknown, undocumented items that don't show up until move day.

One of the key things we do is to determine how each customer's environment is unique and apply that understanding to the team building required to successfully migrate a data center. The broader team, including vendors, must be included in the softer “change management” process to assure selfless focus on the end goal. Indeed, many vendors already in-house will present that they can move the DC, yet they are as entrenched in “business as usual” as the employees.

Silo mentality, ownership and investment issues, open vs. protective communication, efforts to take advantage of, or force, changes... we see these things at the largest and smallest of clients.

GTSG are data center migration specialists. Part of what makes us specialists is our commitment to the end goal of the business. We bring a “fiduciary” approach to the project: the responsibility to act on behalf of the client. As professionals in dealing with organizational change, we recognize that this means we must understand both stated and unwritten goals, risks, and constraints from the perspective of ALL the stakeholders, not just the IT infrastructure team.

In the end, it IS your project; the planning, the approval, the governance and the execution. For a once-in-a-generation event, you want a specialist. And you want a specialist who'll be with you from, through planning, design, execution and through support if you need it.

When it goes right, you'll get the same high praise we got after a major cross country move: “Thanks for telling us you moved- no one noticed.”

Due diligence, ownership, doggedness, open communication, accountability, the ability to focus both management and resources to the critical tasks. We can help. You can reach us at 877.467.9885.