
infor
BEST PRACTICE GUIDE
Securing business continuity for the office of the CFO in the cloud
Modernising without disruption

Contents

Business continuity is often conflated with system uptime, but that's only part of the equation. In addition to security and reliability, continuity is about helping businesses act on new opportunities and grow along with their customers in today's fast-moving environment. Cloud enterprise software is the gateway to this brand of continuity, giving businesses a secure and reliable platform that enables quick responses to upcoming opportunities and the ability to address market needs as they arise.

This best practice guide looks at the six most important ways the cloud can help your organisation achieve business continuity with the most significant benefits possible.

1. Improve critical system reliability

Even when you do everything right, the unexpected can still happen. Natural disasters strike, equipment fails, and human errors occur. Even if you took proactive steps to mitigate risk, it's still up to you and your team to race to recover and ensure actions are quickly and correctly taken to get back online. And time is seldom on your side.

If your organisation previously reviewed and dismissed the value of the cloud, it's time to re-evaluate. Decisions that made sense last year, or even the previous quarter, probably look very different through today's lens.

Losses caused by critical system failure can be financially staggering—**a study** by cloud data protection company, Infrascale, reported that the cost of unexpected IT downtime can range anywhere from less than $10,000 (around £8,000) per hour to more than $50,000 (around £40,000) per hour.[1] And downtime can impact more than just revenue and productivity.

Many organisations rely on key resources, such as hardware and applications, to not only help run the business, but also help get back on track after disaster strikes. Unfortunately, as hardware and applications age, they become less adept at meeting business needs and are less reliable resources for disaster recovery. In fact, an aging IT infrastructure can sometimes even be a catalyst for disaster. Some of the dangers of relying on older systems include:

- Hardware failures that require replacement, or hardware ages to the point where the vendor no longer supports it
- Older software (ranging from operating systems to applications) that reaches end-of-life and which needs to be upgraded or replaced
- Application functionality that doesn't keep up with the changes required for the business to continue functioning—requiring continual customisations and point-to-point integrations

It's essential that organisations not only address any immediate challenges to maintaining business continuity, but also endeavor to ensure that these challenges don't occur in the future. A Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model—where financial applications are hosted in the cloud—is a viable antidote to these potential issues. With a SaaS solution, managing and maintaining the hardware and software (including keeping applications upgraded to the most current release) falls to the service provider—whose entire business model is structured around ensuring all hardware and software resources are operational, reliable, and up to date.

2. Leverage the technical skills of your cloud solution provider

Over time, businesses evolve their enterprise ecosystems to address new needs. While this is the natural progression of enterprise business solutions, it can often create a hodge-podge of disparate systems—some of which are relatively new, others woefully outdated—that only a handful of people understand how to manage and maintain successfully.

But even the people who truly understand all the nuances of the enterprise ecosystem eventually leave the organisation. If replacement talent isn't immediately available, the organisation faces a much greater risk of mission-critical systems failures that can result in significant damage to the business and potential loss of revenue.

At the same time, enterprise applications and the systems required to support them are growing increasingly complex. Tight IT budgets and the knowledge and expertise needed to maintain those applications make it increasingly challenging for organisations of all sizes to keep such technology running optimally.

Adopting a cloud application comes with multiple benefits toward addressing skills issues:

- Cloud providers devote significant resources to ensuring their sizeable staff are well-versed in all relevant hardware and software technologies—old and new
- Cloud providers maintain and update comprehensive knowledge bases for their technical staff, ensuring that institutional knowledge is retained

Access to this technical expertise allows organisations to leverage the extensive knowledge and experience of the cloud provider to keep business applications up and running.

3. Simplify mergers and acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions are a common way for organisations to grow, especially in today's highly competitive markets. Unfortunately, due to their complexity, they often bring numerous immediate challenges that affect virtually all departments. IT teams are often charged with providing the underlying infrastructure that will allow organisations to operate successfully under a new configuration. This can be a monumental undertaking, and often occurs with little warning, regardless of how much day-to-day work already exists.

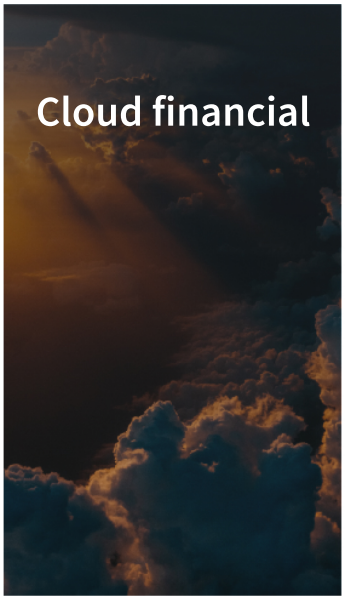
Mergers and acquisitions require major changes in organisational makeup. Financial applications that support the organisation need to be able to scale to handle changing workloads and provide corporate-wide visibility and accessibility in an evolving geographical footprint. Other factors can further complicate the scenario, such as when the organisation that's acquired or merged is located in a different country with unique reporting and regulatory requirements.

IT teams are seldom able to implement new networking facilities to support new locations while also performing other critical IT functions related to merging multiple organisations—on top of their expected and mission-critical responsibilities around supporting existing infrastructures.

Cloud solutions excel at solving these problems because they're specifically designed to scale to handle an organisation's growing and varying workloads, as well as be accessible from virtually anywhere on the globe with an internet connection. Cloud solutions can also be utilised to create a foundation on which a unified view of all financial data can be shared across the extended enterprise to give an organisation the level of corporate-wide data visibility required to make informed decisions.

4. Continuously innovate without disruption

Many organisations today still rely on legacy, on-premises platforms that provide reliable and consistent results. These on-premises platforms, however, are typically very limited in their ability to support some of the more innovative and differentiating technology advancements available. Whether it's robotic process automation (RPA), big data, or machine learning (ML), most artificial intelligence (AI)-based initiatives aren't feasible for on-premises applications.



Unified data
Data lake capabilities work across systems to deliver actionable information

Durable architecture
One application can be upgraded, replaced, or even fail without taking the entire network down

Flexibility
Ability to add and modify systems as the business grows

Collaboration
Embedded collaboration, document management, and business process management

Specialization
Specialized functionality without limiting and costly customizations

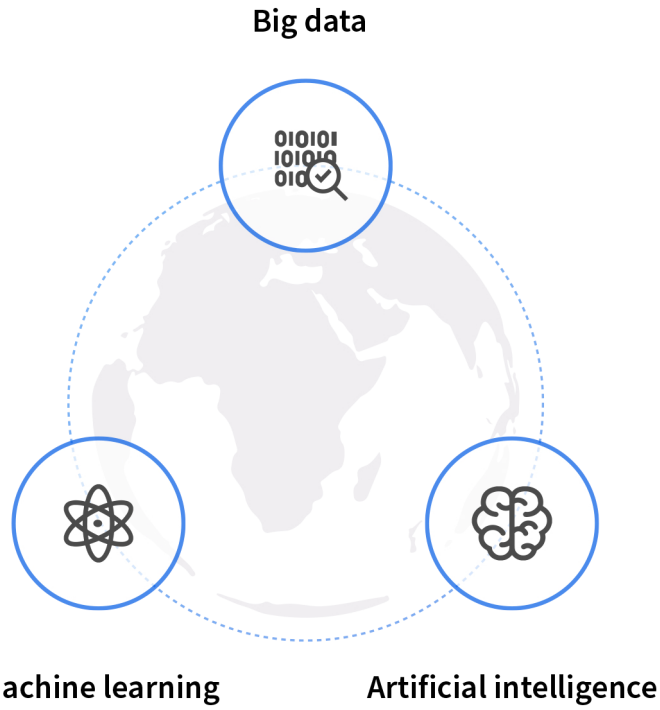
Personalized data
Personalized homepages for specific roles, teams, or areas of interest

Business initiatives such as big data investments (e.g., data lakes, data warehouses, and IoT capabilities), ML, and AI can be extremely difficult to plan, deploy, and even manage in an on-premises environment. The up-front investment can be huge, with a high risk associated with capital investments of new, on-premises technologies where the organisation has little previous experience.

Cloud solutions can provide a platform for introducing innovation—without disruption or large high-risk investments. Cloud infrastructure supports the dynamic scalability that can handle variable usage and peak loads, while not impacting systems that need to be reserved for business-as-usual activity and without incurring permanent costs and overhead from additional system resources and infrastructure.

Cloud infrastructure also provides an excellent foundation for extensibility. Cloud users benefit from continuous product enhancements delivered by software vendors on a regular basis. This helps ensure that the platform is always on the leading edge of industry and market requirements, without the disruptions normally associated with the traditional software maintenance and upgrade cycle.

For most organisations, utilizing these technologies as agile cloud-based services are the only feasible option for efficient deployment and real-world innovation.



5. Defend against security breaches and malicious attacks

Bad actors with malicious intent are continuously evolving their strategies and attempting more creative and sophisticated security breaches. The potential threat of cyberattacks and security breaches can be taxing on IT teams and organisations that need vigilance, resources, talent, and educational resources just to stay ahead.

SaaS financial solutions offer the most secure environment to keep an organisation's digital resources safe. The quick- and ever-changing security landscape makes it very difficult for an organisation's IT team to keep up with every potential new cyberthreat. In a SaaS solution environment, infrastructure and application security are managed by the service provider, who uses dedicated resources to continuously monitor systems for security breaches and threats—enabling a faster response to any potential problem or identified security risk.

Industry-leading cloud service providers invest millions of dollars every year on their internal security measures, including:

- Training and tools to analyse existing services
- Constantly updating multiple levels of protection (including network- and host-based detection and protection)

> **"The system is easy to use, reports are straightforward to create, and we've seen a real boost in both confidence within the finance function, as well as improved communications across the organisation as a whole."**
>
> JOHN BROPHY
> Head of Finance Transformation, ActionAid
> Action Aid is an Infor SunSystems customer

The ability of industry-leading cloud providers to safeguard their customers' valuable data requires investments and available resources that most organisations can neither afford nor justify.

Moving business applications to a cloud-based service allow an organisation to isolate and protect its internal networks and the valuable proprietary data it stores on internal systems. In the current era of end-to-end value chain collaboration, third-party vendors, and suppliers often require integration or connection with an organisation's financial system. If an organisation's system is hosted in a cloud-based service, vendors and suppliers will never need to connect to the organisation's internal network.

Cloud customers enjoy less risk because security and uptime are dramatically better when managed by world-class experts. Constrained IT departments trying to manage key systems simply can't provide the same scalable level of service—and they shouldn't have to.

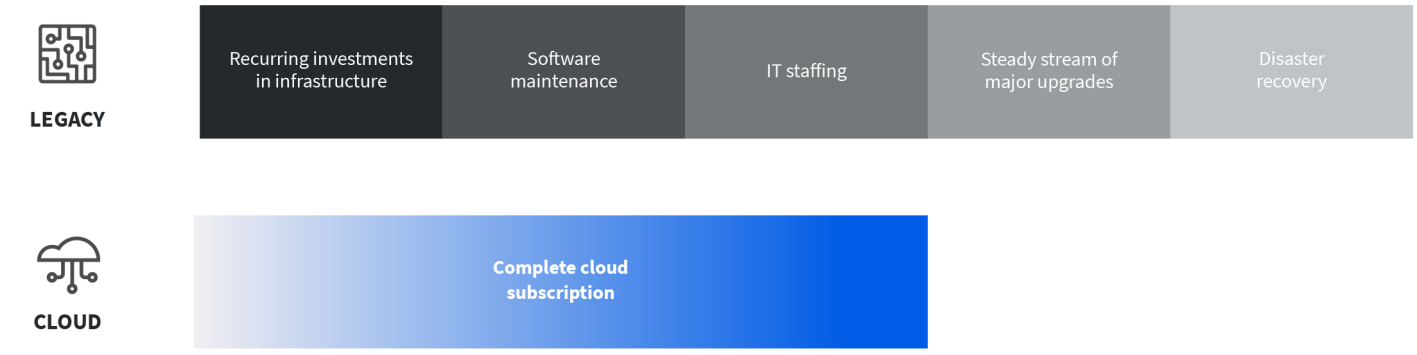
6. Reduce IT costs

For many organisations, on-premises enterprise ecosystems and custom modifications come hand-in-hand. These customisations require a steady stream of resources to maintain, along with a seemingly constant cycle of upgrades and updates that often don't manage to keep up with the latest innovations.

Many upgrade expenditures are not necessarily even focused on adding new capabilities to the business (such as ML or AI) or enhancing existing functionality (such as improved business process management). In fact, technology research company, IDG, **reports that** the top priority for CIOs is cybersecurity (based on spending).[2] But right behind that is spending on business intelligence (BI) and analytics tools—capabilities that can directly improve how an organisation conducts business.

Implementing new systems and capabilities on-premises can represent a huge capital investment. Whereas utilizing cloud solutions can offer a much higher return on investment (ROI) due to the savings and flexibility of the associated operating expenses. organisations that leverage the capabilities of financial cloud applications can further reduce (or even remove) the need for customisations, increasing ROI even further.

Cost for the same application footprint



For on-premises solutions, the cost of infrastructure, maintenance, upgrades, and disaster recovery capabilities typically add up to more than the cost of a cloud subscription for the same application footprint. Economies of scale make deploying and managing software in the cloud more cost-effective for hundreds or thousands of users across organisations.

Why cloud and why now?

By moving to the cloud, organisations can replace most legacy customisations with deep industry functionality, reduce their risk via world-class security and uptime, and benefit from continuous technology enhancements. Constrained IT departments can't provide the same scalable level of service, and neither should they have to.

Even the 2020 global pandemic hasn't stopped organisations from recognizing the value of the cloud. A **survey** from marketing strategy organisation, Spiceworks Ziff Davis, indicates that cloud services will account for 24% of IT spending in 2021—a sizeable jump from 21% in 2019.[3] This increase is at least partially driven by the need for organisations to better support remote work capabilities.

Moving from a customised financial system to a real, SaaS solution can be a big step for an organisation. Nevertheless, when organisations embrace SaaS for core operational systems, the upside is significant. These advantages are powerful—even in a business environment that's still being impacted by the pandemic.

1 Infrascale, "Infrascale Survey Highlights the Heavy Costs of Business Downtime," May 13, 2020, press release.
2 "CIO Tech Poll: Tech Priorities 2020," IDG, February 26, 2020.
3 Spiceworks Ziff Davis, The 2021 State of IT: The Annual Report on IT Budgets and Tech Trends, September 15, 2020.

LEARN MORE

Follow us:

infor Gold Channel Partner

touchstone
THE SUNSYSTEMS® PEOPLE

Infor House, 1 Lakeside Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 6XP, www.infor.co.uk

INF-2823051-en-GB-1122-1

46 Worship Street, London, EC2A 2EA
+44 (0)20 7121 4702
info@touchstonefms.co.uk

www.touchstonefms.co.uk