

Plugging the multi-cloud skills gap

By  Simon McCullough

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The skills to understand, manage, and secure multi-cloud deployments are more vital than ever as enterprises struggle to keep pace with technological innovation.

Across EMEA, there is an urgent requirement for transformative dialogue between the executive boardroom and IT decision-makers if businesses are to stay relevant in an increasingly automated world.

A new F5 sponsored report from the Foresight Factory, the Future of Multi-Cloud (FOMC), throws the challenge into sharp relief, concluding that today's enterprises are hampered by a "critical knowledge gap". The consensus from the first study of its kind in EMEA is loud and clear: we need more specialist cloud experts and we need them now.

Managing the problem

Plugging the skills gap in an ever more cloud-centric world is no easy task. Each cloud is different, and engineers tend to specialise on one platform rather than being a jack of all trades. The job market can also influence learning paths. For example, AWS engineers are often more sought after, making it harder to find Azure, Google or IBM experts.



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Simon McCullough 11 Oct 2018



Unfortunately, a worrying proportion of today's potential multi-cloud champions still lack the multifaceted wherewithal to adequately transition from existing, more static architectures. Businesses are also cowed by security and orchestration concerns. Inter-departmental collaboration is another major issue.



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According to Cloudify and IOD's 2017 State of Enterprise MultiCloud report, non-siloed organisations are in the driving seat when it comes to adopting new technologies. The study found that 74% of non-siloed organisations took six months or less to adopt new technology, and a full 30% took just a few weeks. On the other hand, 58% of siloed organisations took over six

months to get up to speed.

Fostering strong collaborative practice and capability is even more important when the sheer scale and rapidity of new cloud services come into play.

“If Amazon has 500-1000 services that you're interested in, Google has 200 and Azure has 500, then you have to manage the use of those services amongst the systems in your portfolio,” says FOMC contributing expert David Linthicum, Chief Cloud Strategy Officer, Deloitte Consulting. “You have to have some sort of a management, security, and governance infrastructure to deal with the number of cloud-native services that you have under your control.”

With such complex technological shifts, it is critical to have the right staff armed with the right tools. To wit, a WinMagic survey of global IT decision makers recently reported that 63% of businesses believe a lack of multiple management tools is blocking their multi-cloud strategies.



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“I need at least three or four windows into my operational world,” says FOMC contributor Eric Marks, VP of Cloud Consulting at CloudSpectator. “I need API and container management tools, all paired up and placed on the appropriate host. Furthermore, we need cloud management tools to manage the cloud services layer and a monitoring infrastructure for all the rest. Multiple panes of glass are required to manage this environment.”



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While simple management dashboards are already available, the onus is on businesses to track new enhancements and developments. Within the next five years, the FOMC report claims that it will be standard to have an abstraction that can reach throughout the whole IT stack, integrating cloud services, containers, and serverless functions.

Shaping future careers

Fundamentally, nurturing the necessary skillsets to cope with multi-cloud disruption calls for decisive leadership, particularly when it comes to engaging future employees.

As the FOMC report suggests, businesses need to view the challenge through the lens of opportunity rather than fear.

Canny businesses should already be intelligently tapping into the kaleidoscopic potential of youth and promoting industry diversity. IT vendors should be doing the same, and also deftly raise awareness for how smart, context-driven, and automated solutions can spark attractive new career opportunities, as well as free up existing workforces for more strategic and rewarding work.



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Multi-cloud virtuosos may not be widespread yet but, with the right level of investment, they are certainly on the way. There is also significant potential to more actively encourage women to get into what is becoming an increasingly cloud-centric IT industry. For example, the Global Information Security Workforce Study shows that only 7% of women currently pursue cybersecurity as a career.

Clearly, some businesses are more at risk than others when it comes to the multi-cloud skills deficit. Nevertheless, few industries in the future will remain untouched by cloud-influenced digital transformation. The clock is ticking fast for those that have not mapped out the risks and opportunities ahead. Now is the time to scale your skills and invest in the next generation of cloud experts.

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