Switching to the Cloud Is Top Priority for State CIOs

According to the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) Top Ten Priorities survey, “Cloud Services” will take precedence for State CIOs in 2017. Adopting a cloud strategy and providing applications as a service (not on-premise software) ranked third, ahead of data management and analytics (7), enterprise IT governance (6), and even budget, cost control, and fiscal management (4)\(^1\).

The survey results aren’t surprising. Reaping the benefits of cloud-based technology is—and has been—a big deal for state governments for years. In fact, state CIOs have been in the vanguard of the switch to the cloud, often far ahead of federal agencies. In 2015, Kentucky’s CIO aimed to have 80% of the state’s infrastructure in the cloud within five to ten years. During the same year, Alabama adopted a “cloud-first” policy.\(^2\) And by moving key IT services to the cloud, California has already cut costs by 35% across 29 agencies and boosted service levels by 70%.\(^3\)
The Benefits of Using Cloud-Based Technology

Most state CIOs recognize the need to transition to the cloud. Yet initiating a comprehensive migration to cloud-based technology is still hampered by very real concerns regarding security, redundancy, and cost. To that end, a closer look at key benefits of the cloud can streamline both the decision-making process and implementation of cloud-based tools across all entities of state government. Migrating to the cloud helps states

- **Increase security.** Legacy systems, even upgraded ones, weren’t created to respond quickly and effectively to modern cybercrime. Because they’re located within the state’s divisions—even if off-premise—they’re also highly vulnerable to employee-driven data breaches. Security patches also take more time to deploy, leaving agencies vulnerable to rapidly changing threats.

Because cloud-based solutions are offsite and secured by the vendor, disgruntled on-site employees have little opportunity to hack or compromise information. In the face of external hackers, cloud providers are also much better equipped at providing truly systemic security. Cloud providers ensure multiple, redundant security protocols are in place, and unlike a legacy system, clouds are monitored 24/7 for breaches, downtime, and even simple changes in pattern that may indicate a coming hack. Plus, cloud services are audited.
yearly—unlike most legacy systems—to identify gaps and ensure strong security protocols are still in place.

• **Eliminate unnecessary redundancy.** Redundancy is useful when it comes to backing up data or having a second in command. But it’s a terrible waste of resources when a single division is using multiple versions of the same software and managing duplicate databases. These multiplicities also result in inconsistency and make it difficult to effectively standardize key processes.

With cloud-based tools, every employee, contractor, and subject matter expert is using the same software, every time. Because the software is managed and upgraded by the vendor, there can’t be the simultaneously use of different versions across users. Because key processes are performed using the same version of the same tools, agencies gain the benefit of improved consistency of process and data across all teams and departments.

• **Reduce costs.** On-premise infrastructure is far costlier to maintain than cloud-based tools. With cloud-based tools, the vendor—not the state—is responsible for maintenance, improvements, uptime, and keeping data secure. Agencies no longer have to maintain resource-intensive datacenters or plan for lost productivity due to downtime during upgrades. And as cloud-based software is highly scalable, states can maintain efficiency with the same tools regardless of growth.

• **Improve budgeting accuracy.** On-premise software typically requires a huge financial outlay for installation, to be followed by ongoing, unpredictable costs for upgrades. In contrast, cloud-based technologies are pay-as-you-go solutions. There are no surprise fees to upgrade, as state divisions are always (and automatically) provided with the latest version of the software. Instead of trying to estimate when to afford an upgrade, the fixed cost of cloud-based technology enables agencies to leverage costs over time and more accurately budget for operational costs.

Three States Reaping the Benefit of Cloud-Based Technology

For state governments, moving from legacy systems to cloud-native applications is improving services to citizens, increasing efficiency, and reducing costs while simultaneously boosting security:
For the State of Colorado, the migration to the cloud is part of the state’s commitment to better serving citizens. By moving the benefits management system to the cloud, Colorado has reduced the time it takes for citizens to determine eligibility for benefits from 45 days to 45 minutes. According to William Chumley, chief customer officer for the State of Colorado, “We, as a government, are trying to be more efficient and offer more elegant solutions for agencies to achieve those five cloud outcomes [on-demand self-service, broad network access, resource pooling, rapid elasticity, measure service]. Ultimately, that saves the citizen money and delivers a better service to the citizen.”

When the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) needed to improve tracking, managing, and reporting on employee training, leadership migrated the department to a cloud-based learning management system. The department had previously relied on tracking training via spreadsheets, a manual process that both consumed too much staff time and discouraged employee accountability. For Kathleen Sisson, chief of staff development and training at RIDOT, the cloud technology has resulted in “tremendous time savings” and increased reporting capabilities. “We now have access to data and reporting that helps us track results. I have metrics. I can show ROI. That part of it is really exciting, because it’s helping me produce new goals.”

North Carolina’s Division of Archives and Records relies on the cloud to store data, with an estimated 50% of the division’s records already housed in the cloud. For Sarah Koonts, the division’s director, the cloud has both reduced costs and enhanced the safety of key historical documents. “The cloud offers a less expensive way to permanently store large data sets, compared to installing servers and paying people to maintain them. The information is housed offsite, so it’s protected if a disaster strikes our area.”

To learn more about the benefits of switching to the cloud please visit: csod.com/state-local
Sources


