10 reasons to embrace a hybrid IT solution

How outsourcing your hybrid IT solution to an experienced partner elevates capabilities and performance while controlling costs

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Managing the complex IT landscape

Rapid expansion, change, new regulatory requirements and many other factors increase the complexity of information technology environments, driving companies to seek IT solutions and support from third-party vendors. Businesses also turn to external vendors in response to staffing challenges. As technology continues to evolve and expand, business success depends more and more on IT efficiency; however, high quality IT resources have become increasingly difficult to obtain. In a 2015 survey by TEKsystems of over 500 IT leaders across the United States and Canada, 60% cited that managing their workforce and attracting and retaining talent would be their most challenging objective to meet. [1]

By outsourcing to third parties, organizations gain access to expertise and scalability that would otherwise be extremely difficult to maintain in-house. Selecting the right third-party partner is critical to the success of any hybrid strategy.

What is a hybrid partner?

A hybrid partner will offer nearly all levels of services related to IT. They typically start with a base in colocation data center services, then layer on support for hardware, software, consultation and implementation of nearly all services needed by IT departments. The more services they provide, the more of a hybrid they become. Not all partners are the same; some partners staff all their services in-house, while others use best-of-breed alternatives and provide a single interface that is responsible for managing them.

Tapping external expertise is one of the best ways to guarantee that you meet due dates, scrutinize details, avoid disruptions and implement the best possible technology.

Top 10 benefits offered by outsourcing a hybrid IT solution

01 The expertise to make better decisions

Hybrid partners review, consult, design and provide many different solutions in a variety of environments every day. They experience first-hand the advantages and disadvantages of hundreds of solutions. Not only do they know what works and what doesn't, they continually expand into new technologies. They do so with a staff of skilled professionals who possess a mix of broad and focused expertise. Businesses can pick and choose the right professionals with the expertise they need, when they need it, on a per-use cost basis.

02 Shorten the learning curve

Even the largest corporations tap into the expertise of a hybrid partner when planning new environments or changes. Some may think that a Fortune 500 company already has expertise in every technology; however, any new technology requires training. Companies reach out to external experts in order to avoid the common learning pains, delays, added costs and the burden on staff that often result from a "learn-as-you-go" approach.

Most companies have a three- to five-year hardware refresh cycle, and a five- to seven-year enterprise architectural redesign cycle. During each of these time periods, additional expertise is needed to execute the refresh or redesign projects that will impact the business for several years to come. That expertise is often required of staff members who are already fully utilized by daily and ongoing projects. As a result, redesign or refresh cycles tend to get pushed aside and delayed in place of existing workloads.

This extends the cycle's completion date — sometimes by years — and also nearly guarantees that the most updated technology will not be considered by the time the environment is implemented. Tapping external expertise is one of the best ways to guarantee that you meet due dates, scrutinize details, avoid disruptions and implement the best possible technology.

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03 Get a fresh point of view

It's easy to fall into a company-centric way of thinking of what can and can't be done, creating an invisible barrier to change. Hybrid partners break through that barrier. They aren't already indoctrinated into a company's way of thinking, allowing them to challenge existing points of view with examples of what has worked for others and how new technology can help. In this way, businesses gain fresh, unbiased perspectives when planning changes to their environments.

By consulting external expertise, a company frees its internal staff to focus on core business support, rather than tying them up in research and design. Outside experts also bring fresh perspectives on new paths and technologies. A hybrid partner's design will be adaptable to future reviews, upgrades, expansion and modification. They will also document the environment, so that future modifications are easily updated and tracked in the design plan.

Hybrid IT

| Colocation | Cloud | Connectivity | Managed solutions | Professional services |
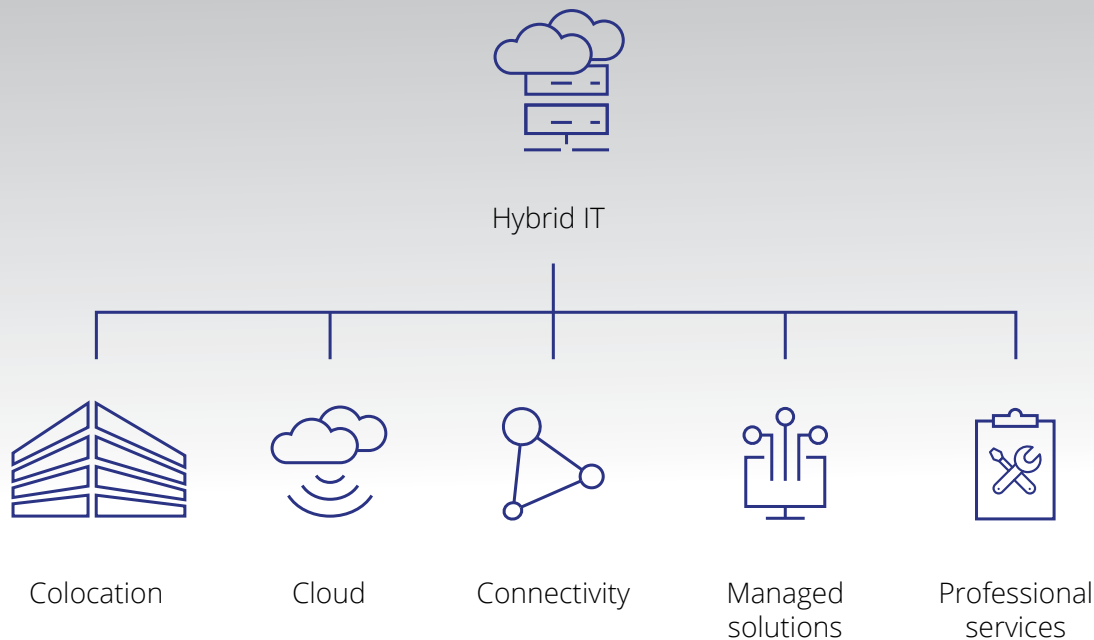
04 Get proper documentation

Internal IT staff members tend to place documentation low on their lists of things to do. Creating documentation is often considered a technicality and is sometimes skipped entirely. Hybrid partners, on the other hand, are often audited against their documentation and processes (look for SSAE 16, SOC 1, 2, 3 auditing), and so must enforce documentation requirements at the risk of losing their clients and owing restitution. Outside experts also bring fresh perspectives on new paths and technologies. Proper documentation makes future and ongoing environment management easier and faster to complete overall.

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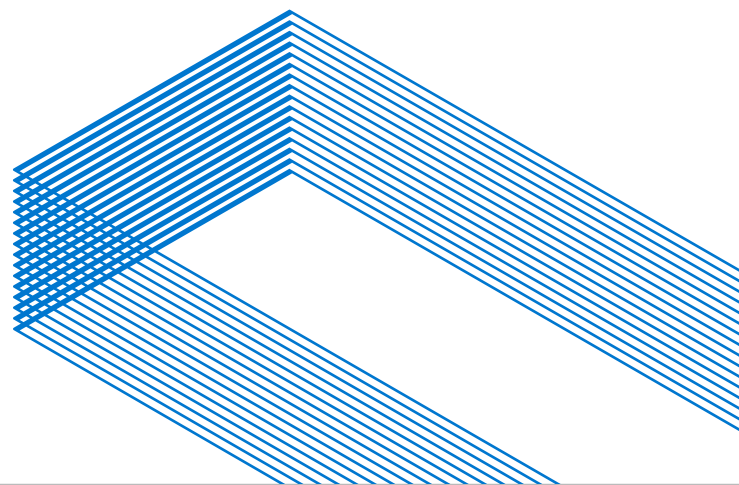
05 Respond to changing needs faster

Like using gasoline for fire control, pushing existing resources too hard to solve a problem can spark even bigger problems. While most companies can't afford the delays and performance issues that result from a lack of sufficient resources, they typically can't afford to add resources at the drop of a hat either. Take, for example, a company that suddenly needs to double its infrastructure in order to successfully deploy a wild-card request for proposal they've just won. If the company's personnel are already fully utilized maintaining the existing environment, how will they find time to research, validate, fund and implement the necessary upgrades?

Hybrid partners make it easier to respond to changing needs by providing both the necessary staff, expertise and infrastructure, for only as long as they are needed. These "on-demand resources" make it possible for companies to keep working at full speed even in the face of rapidly shifting requirements.

06 Scalability

Hybrid partners grant a great deal of scalability in the variety of services they offer. For example, a business can grow from a half-cabinet of colocation services to multiple geographically-diverse locations with several replicated cabinets, or even to a full cloud environment, all with the same support, culture and trust of a single hybrid partner. With this type of configuration, IT departments are enabled to quickly scale up (or scale back) in response to business requirements.

> **Hybrid partners make it easier to respond to changing needs by providing both the necessary staff, expertise and infrastructure, for only as long as they are needed.**

07 Free IT to focus on the core business

Many companies believe they must provide their own IT services and that their business is best supported by only their employees. While this is often true for business-specific intellectual property, a large number of daily IT tasks (such as patching, documentation, change control and performance reporting) can be provided at a higher level of service when outsourced. This is because third-party partners, whose core business is focused on supporting the specific IT tasks required, will provide access to specialized staff, automation and expertise far beyond what could xsbe reasonably expected of a busy IT department.

08 Drive revenue

In complex environments, keeping track of multiple vendors and managing relationships between them will become time consuming and distracting. By outsourcing vendor management to a hybrid partner, a business can refocus its attention to activities that will more directly affect the bottom line. Revenue-generating, business-critical accelerators and differentiators are the primary aspects of an organization that should be managed internally. As more IT tasks are managed by a hybrid partner, more internal energy and resources will be available to support the core business.

Consider two factories that produce widgets. All other things being equal, the factory that dedicates a larger percentage of its resources to building a better widget will gain the competitive advantage. If, for example, the factory hires a trucking company to haul their widgets rather than managing their own delivery fleet, the factory managers can dedicate more resources to improving their core product. To be successful, it is important that the factory find the right shipping partner: one that focuses on delivery as its core business. In this way, the factory and the shipper are working together to provide the best overall product to the factory's customers. The other factory, in trying to develop two core products (the widget and shipping services), will inevitably fall behind by trying to juggle too many priorities.

[1] TEKsystems. (2015, December). 2016 Annual IT Forecast [Industry report].

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09   Save money

Operating a data center requires capital expenditures. With a capital investment, like a server, a company is committed to paying for it no matter what. On the other hand, when outsourcing to a hybrid partner, one pays for the server only as long as it's needed. Plus, the costs associated with owning that server, including infrastructure, operational and management costs, will be evenly distributed based on actual use.

10   Support regulatory and audit requirements

Security is a major issue for all companies. Some compliance requirements are clearly stated with regulatory certifications (HIPAA, PCI, SSAE 16, etc.). Others are imposed by the need to avoid events, such as security breaches, service interruptions or data loss that will damage the company's name or product name in the market. Audits often result in a list of items needing correction. Brand impacts, on the other hand, are very hard to correct after the fact and often open the door for competitors to move in. Businesses aim to prevent negative brand impact at all costs.

Hybrid partners with compliance departments in place will have well developed policies, procedures and standards to address many regulatory issues. They will have optional services to enable security audits, like PCI, and they will work to increase their security for customers on the edge of the newest security measures. Anytime the hybrid partner updates its systems for another client's needs, all of their clients benefit. This serves as a silent upgrade to one's environment, enhancing brand protection without any added work or investment.

Outside experts also bring fresh perspectives on new paths and technologies. Proper documentation makes future and ongoing environment management easier and faster to complete overall.

The hybrid partner: One vendor, many options

Businesses face a plethora of choices when it comes to addressing their IT needs. Sorting through the alternatives to choose the best solution is daunting, and implementing those solutions applies even more pressure on IT departments already overburdened by day-to-day data management tasks. For this reason, we live in a world of outsourcing, insourcing and everything in between.

Hybrid partners present the opportunity for companies to outsource some or all of the routine IT tasks that distract their staffs from activities that more directly impact the core business.

When it comes to high priority, revenue-generating IT projects, seeking external expertise is often one of the first steps in the planning process. By consulting with a hybrid partner, companies gain insight based upon hundreds, and even thousands, of multi-vendor implementation experiences.

Not all hybrid partners offer the same services. A company should choose a partner that not only demonstrates a long track record of stability and customer satisfaction, but that will offer the most opportunities to expand, change and improve business operations now and in the years to come.
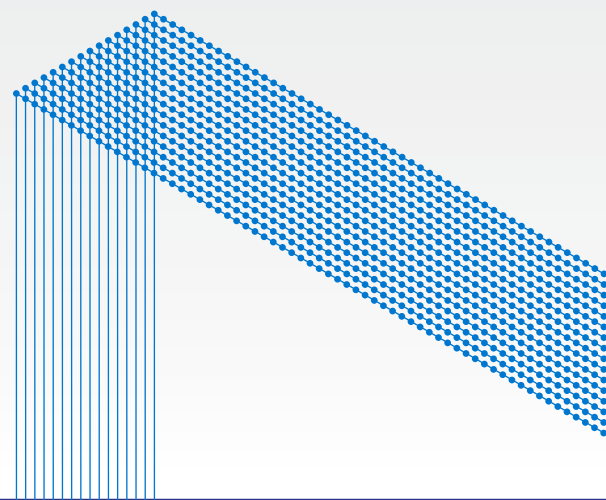
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