

NAVISITE QUICK TIPS: Choosing the right path and partner for Azure

If you're like many organizations, you've at least kicked the tires on Microsoft Azure. And you likely know that by moving your data, workloads, infrastructure and applications to Azure, you'll be more nimble, innovative and cost-effective.

And you're probably aware that moving to Azure is not exactly simple. Migration comes with a host of challenges, whether you're coming from a VMware virtualized data center or you need to migrate your SQL Server 2008 servers or other environments.

If you're wondering which path — and partner — you should select to help with your Azure migration and management, get a head start on learning how to choose one with these quick tips.

AZURE REALLY IS ALL THAT!

Microsoft Azure has quickly become the go-to choice for organizations seeking to shift key pieces of their IT infrastructure and applications to the cloud — and for good reason. For businesses seeking to drive efficiencies, productivity and profitability, Azure delivers the promise of a compatible platform, offers opportunities for automation and may provide the key to digital transformation. Ideal for hybrid implementations that combine the best of on-premises and the cloud, Azure provides robust security and compliance features, scalability, high availability, low latency, and — perhaps best of all — significant cost savings.

AZURE IS NOT SO SIMPLE

A migration to Azure is a complex undertaking — especially if your organization is struggling with aging infrastructure that can't keep up with big-data demands and emerging technologies. In migrating to Azure, you'll need to make a number of critical strategic, technical and architectural decisions.

You'll want to get some professional assessment advice to determine which workloads are best for a complete migration to the cloud, and which make more sense as a hybrid of on-premises and cloud-based environments. The big question is this: How will you unearth the

resources to manage and support your Azure solution to ensure you're maximizing your cloud deployments for performance, security, availability and cost advantages?

Even if your IT team has the bandwidth and the fortitude, they probably lack the Azure-specific skills and experience to evaluate, architect, implement and manage an Azure environment that meets your requirements. Finding, hiring and onboarding the right people in this job market? Good luck.

FROM WHENCE YOU COME

Azure is a smart destination regardless of your current platform. But your rationale and expectations will vary depending on where you're coming from — such as VMware or SQL Server 2008.

VMWARE TO AZURE

Organizations operating on-premises virtual machines (VMs) have much to gain from migrating to Azure. Running VMs — including the supporting storage networking and hardware — is costly. Azure cloud infrastructure empowers you to cut costs compared to an on-premises infrastructure with its long-term locked-in licenses and hardware resources, updates and replacements.

With Azure, VMware environments can transition their workloads to the cloud without having to make costly changes to their VMs. Azure also offers faster delivery of applications and none of the complexities that come with deploying on Amazon Web Services.

If you have workloads currently running on VMware virtualized servers, you have options for your Azure migration. You may choose to convert your existing VMs byte-for-byte into Azure VMs in the Azure cloud using a lift-and-shift approach (an option that's not available with Amazon Web Services). Or you can supplement your existing VMware environments with Azure services for high availability or disaster recovery.

Bottom line: You'll want to work with a partner to help you navigate these decisions, choose the right Azure migration path for your business and technical requirements, and simplify the migration process.

SQL SERVER 2008 TO AZURE

If your organization is running SQL Server 2008 and SQL 2008 R2 workloads, time is running out. Support for SQL is coming to an end in July 2019, which means so are the security updates and support thereafter. Organizations' teams and database administrators who want to stay protected and compliant should start planning their cloud migration sooner rather than later. Azure SQL offers a pathway to ease the transition.

If the thought of meeting the SQL end-of-support deadline sends you into a panic, take comfort. With Azure, you can migrate applications running on SQL 2008 and 2008 R2 as they are, with extended security updates to protect them. Then upgrade or modernize them in the cloud when you're good and ready.

Additionally, Azure SQL Databases can be configured to scale up or down on the fly — from one server to thousands as demand

fluctuates — with no application downtime. To ensure maximum business continuity, Azure SQL Databases allow you to easily manage and monitor business-critical functions while offering automated backups and replication. [Copywriter's note: I don't have the technical proficiency to address this client edit and am not sure how to adjust the language to fix it.

As your app runs, Azure SQL Databases dynamically learn and adapt to improve performance, reliability and data protection. Azure SQL Databases also play well with others, including the preferred tools and platforms you already use and know. And built-in security features keep you compliant with the most stringent regulations.

Bottom line: Azure provides a great option to ease your end-of-support concerns for SQL 2008, and the right Azure partner like Navisite can help you determine the best path.

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Given the complexities, challenges and pressures associated with Azure migration, it's no wonder many organizations seek help rather than going it alone. Ideally, the partner you work with should have the experience and expertise to accelerate your move to Azure as efficiently as possible, fill your IT skill gaps, help you develop (and stick to) budgets as well as schedules, and tailor a solution that fits your unique business needs.

When it comes to partners, you essentially have three choices.

SYSTEM INTEGRATORS MIGRATE THEN LEAVE

If all you need is someone to migrate your workload and infrastructure to Azure, then sure, a Systems Integrator (SI) might do the trick. But once the migration is done, they're out. SIs don't provide the ongoing management and support to make sure your Azure cloud solution is working the way it should to save you money, keep your data secure, and align with your technology and business goals. If you have questions, need an issue resolved or want to know how your Azure solution is performing, you're on your own.

MASS MARKET OUR WAY OR NO WAY

Mass market services providers like Rackspace may have the resources to handle your Azure migration. But their sheer size makes them inflexible and unresponsive. A large provider will expect you to conform to their systems, processes and solutions, regardless of what's best for your business. This leaves you with an Azure solution that's ill-fitted to your unique needs and requirements. You'll end up doing a lot of the heavy lifting yourself, or at the very least, making the migration harder than it needs to be.

MANAGED CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDERS FULL-CIRCLE AZURE

The best Azure partner is one who brings a full range of Azure services — from evaluation to design to implementation to management to support. It's also important to find a flexible partner who will customize an Azure cloud solution that adapts to your unique business requirements and needs. Managed cloud service providers (MCSPs) like Navisite fit this mold.

Why Navisite

IN SHORT: WE KNOW AZURE

A Microsoft Gold Partner for 18 years, Navisite brings extensive experience in migrating and managing cloud and hybrid cloud solutions — including VMware and SQL 2008 Server — to Azure migrations. With more than 1,550 total IT certifications, our team of specialists includes over 460 Microsoft-certified engineers and more than 117 Azure experts. Those specialists have helped migrate tens of thousands of workloads to the cloud.

TAILORED SOLUTIONS

Unlike mass market providers, we won't simply copy your infrastructure's current configuration in the cloud. Instead, we work with you to customize an Azure cloud solution that matches your specific application, security and business requirements. We'll also make sure your solution scales with you as your needs and demands evolve.

MINIMIZED DISRUPTION = MAXIMIZED SAVINGS

During implementation, our priority is to minimize disruption to your business operations and productivity. We also look for ways to reduce your costs and maximize your savings. For example, we'll leverage tools like Azure Reserved VM Instances and Azure Hybrid Benefit (for Windows Server Workloads) to save organizations as much as 67% over other comparable implementations.* For SQL Server 2008 users, we offer an Azure Hybrid option that can help you save up to 55% on your on-premises licenses.

SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE

Most security issues are caused by misconfiguration and migration errors. Our certified Azure specialists avoid mistakes and maximize and bolster Azure's built-in security features to protect your organization from threats. We can also help you comply with stringent privacy requirements put forth by HIPAA, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other regulations.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Once you've migrated your infrastructure to Azure cloud, you'll want to make sure it stays up and running. We'll help you put a robust disaster recovery plan in place that goes well beyond simple backups to include replication, testing and validation of your environment. We use Microsoft's wide network of 20-plus Azure data centers, which ensures the highest level of availability and security. We also provide 24/7 proactive monitoring that identifies and resolves issues before they impact you. And we back our claims with a 99.999% financially backed SLA uptime guarantee.



MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Managing your Azure cloud infrastructure consumes precious time and resources you don't have to spare. Navisite has over 20 years' experience providing managed services under our belt. We fully manage or partner with you to maximize your Azure environment, making sure it's updated, optimized and secure.

WIDE VISIBILITY

Just because it's in the cloud doesn't mean you can't see it. We provide complete visibility of your Azure cloud infrastructure, including status, asset performance, change requests, incidents, resource usage and expenditures. This allows you to better manage and leverage your resources, control costs and plan for the future.

RIGHT-SIZED SOLUTION

We provide usage analytics that you can use to anticipate your Azure infrastructure needs, and then scale up or down to meet them. This ensures your Azure cloud infrastructure is just right for your needs.

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Long after the migration is complete, we remain on your side with round-the-clock managed services, support and industry-leading response times. We're ready to answer questions, resolve issues and free your IT department to work on other critical tasks.

AZURE MIGRATION, MANAGEMENT AND MORE

Discover why Navisite is ideally suited to help you move to and manage Azure for maximum ROI. **For more information, please visit navisite.com.**

*Microsoft: Migrating VMware to Microsoft Azure Total Cost of Ownership Guidance, Nov. 2017

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