



Your path out of virtualization lock-in: A practical guide for IT leaders

How mixed-hypervisor strategies and unified management can optimize costs and future-proof your infrastructure



IT decision makers are under unprecedented pressure to do more with less. The long-held promise of virtualization—offering flexibility, efficiency, and cost savings—appears increasingly out of sync with the reality of rising licensing fees and restrictive vendor policies. As technology budgets shrink, organizations are seeking practical solutions to break free from virtualization lock-in, regain control of their infrastructure, and create a path toward sustainable, future-ready operations.

According to a 2026 HPE survey of nearly 400 global enterprises, virtualization remains a core part of enterprise IT.¹ However, more than two-thirds of organizations plan significant changes to their virtualization strategies as concerns about costs, operational complexity, and flexibility increase.² The recent changes in licensing models and support structures by major vendors have only heightened these concerns, prompting IT leaders to reassess whether their current strategies support their long-term business goals.

The virtualization lock-in challenge

Vendor lock-in occurs when an organization relies on a single virtualization platform, making it difficult and expensive to switch as needs evolve or better solutions become available. Moving workloads, retraining staff, and rewriting automation scripts can seem intimidating—especially when business continuity is at risk. This often causes a “status quo bias,” where organizations accept higher costs and less flexibility to avoid disruptions.

However, the stakes are too high to ignore. Organizations that fail to update their virtualization strategies could face significantly higher infrastructure costs in the coming years—especially now, as AI workloads surge and place more demands on existing environments. The good news: IT leaders can take proven, actionable steps to cut expenses, boost agility, and regain control—without risking a disruptive “big bang” migration.

4 steps to escape virtualization lock-in

This article offers a road map for IT leaders aiming to break free from virtualization lock-in and reduce costs through mixed-hypervisor modernization. You'll learn four practical steps—each supported by examples from HPE's portfolio—that can help you move to a more open, flexible, and cost-effective virtualization environment.

1. Assess your current virtualization landscape

Start by performing a thorough inventory of your virtual environment. Map out which workloads run on each hypervisor, list licensing costs, and identify key dependencies. This visibility is crucial for uncovering “quick win” opportunities.

HPE CloudPhysics is a free assessment service that offers IT teams detailed insights into their virtualization environments. By gathering and analyzing granular data from VMware® deployments, organizations can evaluate infrastructure utilization, discover cost-saving opportunities, and find the best workloads for migration. This enables teams to prioritize migration efforts and develop a strategic optimization plan aligned with business goals.

¹ “[New research finds only 5% of enterprises are fully ready for the Great Virtualization Reset](#)”, HPE, February 10, 2026

² Ibid

2. Embrace a mixed-hypervisor strategy

Instead of pursuing a disruptive, all-at-once migration, consider using a mixed-hypervisor approach. By adding a modern KVM-based hypervisor alongside your existing VMware estate, you can reduce immediate costs while running VMware and KVM side by side. Using a single control plane to manage both environments reduces tool sprawl and enables standardized provisioning, automation, and policy enforcement. This approach allows organizations to transition workloads at their own pace smoothly, leveraging each platform's strengths and reducing operational risk.

For example, HPE's support for both VMware ESXi™ and KVM within its software platforms provides seamless operation of mission-critical applications while shifting development, testing, or less-sensitive workloads to more cost-effective software environments. This flexibility helps organizations avoid vendor lock-in with a single provider and gives IT leaders more leverage in negotiations.

3. Implement unified management and automation

One of the main challenges in adopting mixed-hypervisors is operational complexity. Managing multiple platforms can lead to inconsistencies, security issues, and increased overhead—unless you have the proper management layer in place.

Solutions like HPE Private Cloud Business Edition offer a unified management experience across both traditional and modern hypervisors. With a single console for provisioning, policy enforcement, and

lifecycle management, IT teams can streamline workflows, enforce compliance, and automate routine tasks—regardless of the platform. This unified approach not only lowers operational costs but also helps your team's skills and processes stay relevant as your environment changes.

4. Create a practical migration framework

Effective modernization requires a clear, step-by-step migration plan. Start by testing with less critical workloads to validate your tools and processes, then gradually move to more complex applications as your confidence increases. Set clear guidelines for when and how workloads should shift and invest in staff training for a smoother transition.

HPE's migration services and best-practice frameworks can accelerate this process by offering automated tools for workload assessment, compatibility checks, and seamless data transfer. Breaking the migration into manageable phases helps reduce risks, maintain business continuity, and achieve cost savings and operational efficiency at each step.

Achieve cost optimization and future-readiness

By following these steps, organizations can gain significant benefits: reduce virtualization costs and lower operational overhead. Perhaps most importantly, you regain strategic flexibility—you're able to adapt to changing business needs and adopt emerging technologies.



This strategy also prepares the way for wider cloud adoption, as consistent management and automation practices easily extend to hybrid and multi-cloud environments. With HPE's open ecosystem and dedication to interoperability, organizations can future-proof their infrastructure investments and avoid the risks of virtualization lock-in.

Moving forward with mixed-hypervisor modernization

The era of "one-size-fits-all" virtualization has ended. As cost pressures grow and business needs change, IT decision-makers must adopt more adaptable, resilient strategies to remain competitive. By evaluating your environment, adopting mixed-hypervisor architectures, implementing unified management, and employing a phased migration plan, you can reduce costs and lay a foundation for long-term success.

HPE is prepared to support your journey with proven solutions, expert guidance, and a dedication to open, customer-focused innovation. Break free from virtualization lock-in and reach your modernization goals.

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