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Breaking cloud barriers: How legacy tech might be holding you back

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Introduction

The multiple benefits of digital transformation (DX) and cloud migration are clear to all. But many businesses are being held back from the game-changing results they desire due to legacy technology that, behind the scenes, is still the basis of their operations.

This challenge hasn't been made any easier by two pandemic-affected years that have seen DX and cloud initiatives forced to accelerate, creating a bigger gap between a new generation of emerging digital possibilities and older systems inhibiting real progress.

In this eBook, we explore some of the ways legacy-dependent organisations can move beyond the restraints of their existing technology and benefit from newer types of solutions, breaking through what can seem like immovable barriers toward a digital, cloud-driven future.

There's no doubt that it's a future that enterprises want and are planning for. Independent analyst firm IDC reveals in its [Worldwide Future of Connectedness 2022 Predictions](#) that midsize and large enterprises are seeking to move 50% of their network-focussed IT staff from managing legacy connectivity to more strategic business outcomes and faster tech innovation.

In our 2021 Cloud Research report, 41% of respondents stated that legacy infrastructure was the main barrier to achieving their cloud goals.

Why is legacy technology a barrier and what steps should you consider to move on from it?

For technology to be classed as 'legacy' it doesn't have to be ancient. Don't just think of white-coated men loading spools of magnetic tape onto house-sized machines or programmers coding in a language that went out with the Volkswagen Beetle. It's really any technology that is sufficiently outdated that hampers next-generation developments, something that doesn't allow for easy integration of new features, or which slows down your day-to-day operations due to attributes baked in at the design stage. We could be talking about infrastructure, appliances, applications or even just processes.

Legacy solutions are still widely in use in many different types of organisations:

Older collaborative voice applications like Skype for Business remain in use on-premise, even though many have migrated to more versatile cloud-based alternatives like Unified Communications

COBOL, developed 60 years ago, remains a highly popular language among government CIOs. 200 billion lines of COBOL code are still in use today and 90% of Fortune 500 companies, most notably big finance, insurance companies, airlines and retail point-of-sale systems rely on COBOL

Mainframe computers are still deployed by banks, insurance companies, credit card companies and universities

Wi-Fi devices that are no longer supported continue to operate; based on defunct standards like 802.11b

Legacy ERP systems designed before the rise of the software-as-a-service (SaaS) model

If businesses want the full benefits of digital transformation, these legacy relics should be replaced by smarter, safer cloud-native alternatives. But transitioning an organisation away from a legacy past can be easier said than done for any number of reasons:

- Employee resistance
- Concern about downtime of essential resources during migration
- Other C-levels may question the costs that will come with new technology adoption
- The organisation might be in a sensitive phase of development, or perhaps midway through an M&A process, something that makes disruption of any kind undesirable
- Large changes need project management, both in-house and through partners/suppliers
- Lack of relevant skillsets available
- Wider economic considerations might have priority, like a recession or pandemic
- A binding agreement with a legacy tech supplier could be hard to break

So, what's the answer? While there is no out-of-the-box solution, many organisations wanting to move on from a legacy past have found that shifting essential workloads and applications from on-premise to the cloud is a useful first step on their journey. Moving to the cloud has major benefits over maintaining expensive and outdated hardware and software on-site and can be a useful antidote to some of the transformational barriers above.

Moving day-to-day operations to the cloud, as CIOs will know, can save money and improve productivity. Maintaining physical hardware and networking on-site can significantly raise capital and operational expenditure on IT and network services. Unlike legacy systems,

modernised cloud systems facilitate scalability and agility. In addition, any hardware or software upgrades are handled by the cloud service provider. Moving data and applications to the cloud eases the IT budget and promotes more effective collaboration. It improves disaster risk management and supports continuity of business operations.

But let's not forget that the cloud migration process can be tricky, and potentially expensive if not done correctly or in a way that doesn't adequately support business needs. The network foundation that sits underneath needs to be reliable, secure and, if possible, flexible to suit the changing needs of moving data and applications. A broad and holistic approach is needed, for example, to decide what applications and services to move into the cloud-first.

If a wholesale reboot that sweeps away all legacy tech and starts from a digital year zero seems too drastic, then it may be necessary to run at least some legacy technology alongside the cloud as part of a phased migration.

A worst-case scenario might see an organisation's legacy tech acting as a barrier to the cloud strategy that has been planned to help reduce dependency on it. Retaining even some legacy technology can drain budget and energy away from a focus on new opportunities. Rather than dispense with legacy, it might seem preferable simply to cloudify it where possible. But modernising older functions and processes by putting them in the cloud can leave you with a limiting lack of flexibility and scale. Running older applications in the cloud can also result in security headaches, as well as expose shortcomings in internal skill levels. Outsourcing the problem might seem like the answer, but only if the outsourcing provider has the knowledge and capacity to efficiently support your legacy estate.

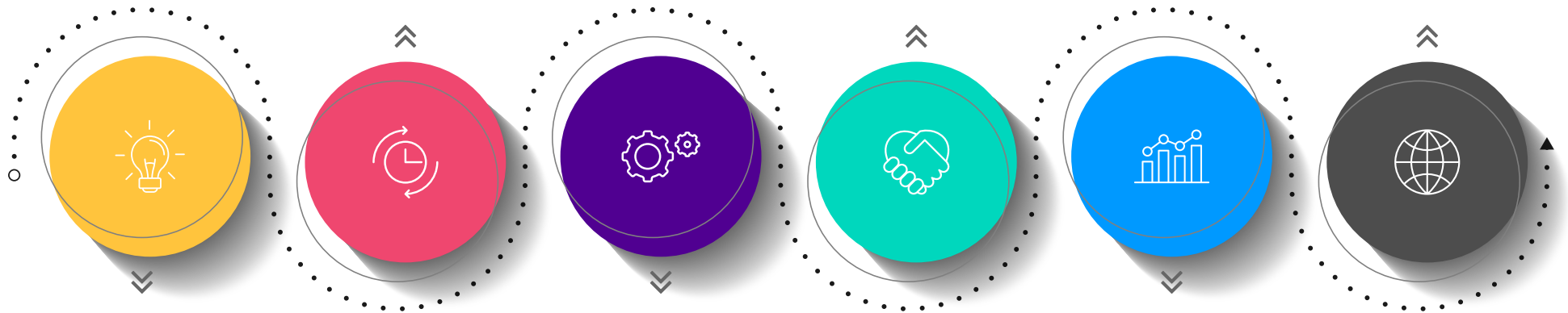
Take those first steps away from legacy dependence

For those wanting a roadmap out of legacy dependence and an outcome that represents real progress toward digital transformation, then appropriate steps are needed. Here's some pointers:

Understand the capabilities of your current infrastructure and think about if they align with your goals or not. For example, is the connectivity foundation you rely on able to handle future needs?

Do you have the correct skill sets in-house to make a migration work? Consider what your relevant teams require to make migration a success

Remember that you do not have to do this alone. Research and connect with the right partner to help achieve your goals



Outline your digital transformation and cloud migration goals

To what extent do your goals depend on having all your IT in the cloud on day one? Is a phased migration a realistic possibility given available resources? Remember that migration plans don't have to mean waving goodbye to all your legacy technology at once. It's more about what makes sense in the context of your technology ecosystem

If a phased approach is best, decide what applications and workloads can be migrated quickly and deliver the right experience for your employees, suppliers and customers

Cloud and networking partnerships to get you where you need to be

When undertaking any DX or cloud migration at scale, whether that encompasses all, or part, of your tech ecosystem, partnerships are key to success. The right partner will make sure you're up-to-date with the latest technology and put your business on track to achieve its cloud goals. A partnership will allow you to push boundaries and make your organisation the best it can be.

Connectivity is the foundation of any migratory effort. Your cloud performance is only as strong as your network. That's why you need a game-changing network - one that will give you reliable high performance, scalability, control and security.

Traditional networks can't keep up with the demands of the cloud as it is deployed today. Not only are older networks ill-suited to the complex needs of enterprises that make use of multiple public clouds,

but they are also often slow to set up when speed is of the essence. Cloud project delays can be costly. When you need to react fast, traditional provisioning times that can take as long as 90 days will let you down. The right approach to connectivity can truly make or break your cloud transformation.

For all these reasons, you will want to make sure your chosen cloud partner is at the cutting edge of today's network services. Colt offers connections to all the major cloud service providers. Our award-winning customer service, as well as our scalable and flexible connectivity to the cloud, means you can scale your cloud requirements according to need and do so cost-effectively. We also deliver enhanced security, improved resilience and full visibility, making us the perfect organisation to have by your side on your transformation journey.

Your challenges are our challenges. Colt strives to make extraordinary connections that matter. We're investing, not just in our network but into the service and support that goes with it, to make sure we're constantly exceeding your expectations.

Conclusion

Here's five tips to help break down the barriers of legacy technology and get you off to a great start on your cloud migration journey.

Contact us to start your journey of migrating away from your legacy tech and unlocking new possibilities.

visit www.colt.net

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