



It's true, Intel uses the public cloud

Intel IT has been highlighting its private cloud strategy and best practices for several years now. If you do a web search for “cloud computing strategy,” one of the top results is a paper we produced in January 2009, describing our “inside out” strategy for moving from a private cloud to a federated, interoperable, open standards based hybrid cloud. In a world of such momentous and swift change, it's gratifying to see our insight is still relevant. And we have been actively advancing that same strategy for the past five-plus years.

What we haven't talked about as much is the public cloud, and we are continually asked why we don't take advantage of third-party services.

We utilize the public cloud when and where it makes sense, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to private-versus-public cloud. For most companies, it comes down to circumstance, resources, and needs. For Intel IT, our private cloud gives us ultimate control for hosting applications. We are large enough that we can act as our own cloud provider and service broker. We can also leverage our existing systems and investments, which still have room to grow.

Our general approach is to use the capacity we have before we utilize someone else's.

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*Cathy Spence
Intel IT*

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Right now, we have the capacity. It's why our ratio of utilization is in the range of 95 percent private cloud and five percent public cloud. That said, we also value choice and flexibility. We are constantly debating that balance and are very much committed to a hybrid cloud model.

There are circumstances where public cloud services are truly advantageous. We sometimes use the public cloud for innovation and experimentation, for example. Doing so allows us to quickly create new computing resources, while maintaining the ability to abandon those projects—and associated resources—just as quickly. We can try new things without tying up capital and capacity that may only be needed for a short amount of time.

The public cloud is also helpful in geographies where we don't have a data center. If we have performance, data sovereignty, or compliance requirements in a particular location, public cloud services can help us keep the processing, storage, and security resources closer to the applications and teams using them.

How we decide

We have ongoing discussions about when to use our private cloud and when to use public cloud offerings. The decision is typically made on an application-by-application basis. Several criteria guide these decisions, including cost, security, control, data sensitivity, location, application requirements, cloud capabilities and capacity.

Ultimately, we leave it up to the application owner to decide the best location to host their application among a group of providers where IT has established service agreements. By consolidating workloads with a small set of service providers, including our private cloud, we achieve the best cost advantage at scale.

Our expert team of "IT cloud brokers" is available to assist application owners in selecting the best hosting venue for a specific application and balance the tradeoffs, risks, and advantages for Intel.

Choice and flexibility

What may sound like excessive complexity and an overabundance of alternatives is all about choice and flexibility. We want to have as many options at our disposal as possible, allowing us to choose the best service for each application and circumstance.

We need the ability to ramp up and down quickly. We need the ability to maintain full control of our data for sensitive processes, applications, and intellectual property. We need the ability to move workloads and computing resources among clouds based on changing business needs and cost structures. We need the ability to handle big spikes in demand.

A few years ago, we had an Angry Birds promotion for Intel Netbooks, resulting in massive demand over a short period of time. It's times like that when public cloud services—as part of a hybrid cloud model—are extremely helpful.

We will continue to lean heavily on our private cloud, of course, in large part because we have invested a great deal of time and resources to make sure it meets our needs—but we will also continue to use the public cloud where and when it makes sense. We see it as a valuable option when we have short-term needs, want to tap IT resources in specific geographies, or fill particular gaps.

Our ultimate goal, as we advance our hybrid cloud strategy, is choice and flexibility.

Follow Cathy Spence on Twitter:
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