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Drive your Office 365 deployment

Focus on the user with the five keys to success

To deliver experiences that enable employees to maximize their productivity and achieve their goals, forward-looking organizations understand the need to enable digital collaboration in their workplace.

Digital collaboration addresses the challenges of the “last mile” of employee, partner, and customer interactions across the workplace and eliminates islands of disconnected systems and tools.

An increasingly globalized workforce, consumerization of IT, and ongoing cost pressures are forcing business leaders to re-imagine how personnel work, communicate, and collaborate. With so many channels and technologies available to communicate and collaborate, users expect and demand secure and convenient access to communications and key productivity applications at the office, from home, or on the road.

As organizations undertake migrating to Microsoft Office 365 Enterprise, due to the complexity involved, many are adopting an “evolutionary” deployment model—one that suggests a hybrid mix of cloud and on-premises tools, and a phased and deliberate deployment pace. That slower migration, however, can often delay and reduce the expected benefits from this vital new collaborative environment.

In this viewpoint paper, DXC Technology examines key issues relating to the planning and deployment of Office 365—including risk and costs, infrastructure requirements, security considerations, implementation approaches, and the central importance of the user experience. As part of this evaluation, C Space, on DXC’s behalf, surveyed 145 IT leaders on their views relating to the implementation of Office 365. We would like to share key results from that survey.

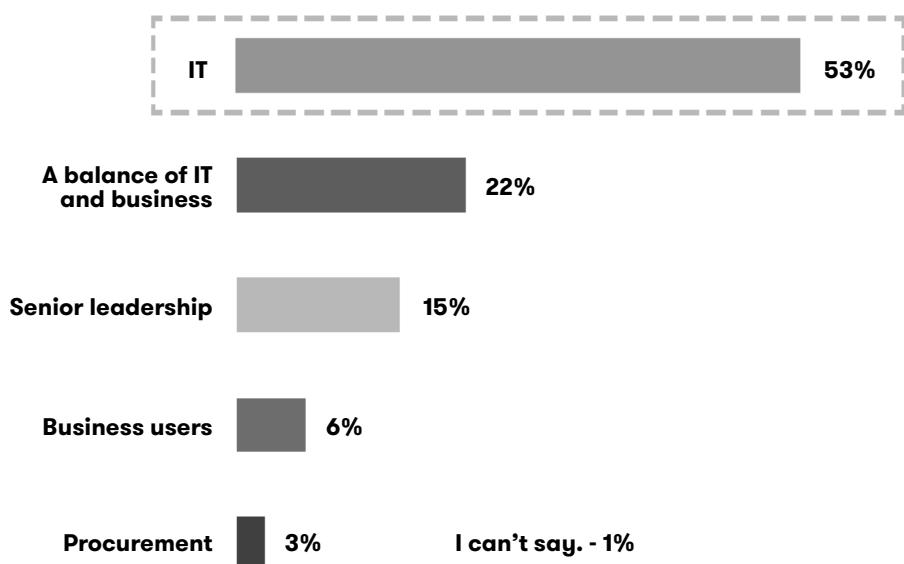


Figure 1. Who drove the decision to purchase and implement Office 365?

The promise and challenge of Office 365

To support true digital collaboration, organizations must drive greater agility, productivity, and security. Most now recognize the measurable value of moving productivity workloads to the cloud. Many are moving toward consumption-based solutions, hybrid architectures, and a single point of contact for service needs. They naturally want systems that meet compliance requirements, and that reduce risk by controlling and protecting sensitive data.

In many enterprises, Office 365 is seen as a logical and workable pathway to cloud-based productivity and collaboration. Organizations of all sizes can use this solution to improve communications and collaboration and to drive greater productivity. A well-planned migration can reduce the need for in-house infrastructure and lower overall costs. A successful Office 365 deployment can improve overall security management while instilling greater consistency between mobile and in-office tools.

“Our objectives were twofold. Reduce the need for in-house infrastructure and costs along with a better way for mobile workers to use Office.”

Kimberly D.,
IT Systems Network Specialist,
technical services industry

Scaling roll-out plans About a third of survey respondents use a limited pilot approach; a third use a phased roll-out, and another third do a full-scale Big-Bang launch. The roll-out method used tended to vary by organization size. The majority of firms with less than 1,000 employees used a Big-Bang approach. Over 50 percent of firms with 1,000 to 5,000 employees used a limited pilot approach followed by full-scale launch, whereas companies with 10,000+ employees primarily used a phased roll-out by business group or region, for example.²

As we will discuss in depth in this DXC paper, however, the success of an Office 365 implementation can vary widely depending on a range of deployment variables. Those variables can include the rigor of initial planning, whether the migration is done in phases or as a major launch, and—most notably—how well the organization focuses on and supports the user experience.

A poorly planned or executed Office 365 implementation can yield serious and negative results. Those downsides can include difficulty migrating files, issues with network capacity and Active Directory, and in some cases, complete loss of service. Users may be confused and may even resist the roll-out of what should be a popular and effective service upgrade.

DXC recommends a close examination of three key variables in any Office 365 implementation:

- Deployment model
- Security implications
- User experience

It may help to examine each in some detail.

Deployment approaches

Office 365 deployments can be a long and challenging process for firms. In the C Space survey, fully 52 percent of respondents say it took from 6 to 9 months to complete, with another 22 percent reporting it took from 9 months to more than a year. Even small firms (fewer than 1,000 employees) took considerable time to deploy Office 365, with over 80 percent of small firms taking 6-plus months to complete.¹

There are a variety of productivity workload deployment options available, and no single approach is optimal for all firms. We believe that each deployment is unique, and many factors need to be considered for determining the best approach for your firm. Among the considerations are the cloud provisioning model, number of countries involved, data residency requirements, and business group needs.

With many different meanings behind cloud terminology, first some definitions:

- **Public cloud**—A service provider makes resources, such as applications and storage, available to the general public over the Internet.
- **Private cloud**—A proprietary cloud platform is dedicated to a single organization.
- **Hybrid**—An environment that uses a mix of on-premises, private cloud, and public cloud services with orchestration between the platforms.

Our recommendation to most enterprises is to not employ a “Big Bang” or hard cutover migration approach. Instead, for most enterprises, we recommend deploying a hybrid environment initially with expedited phases until transitioned to a full cloud model. This provides firms the ability to maintain integration with on-premises applications and to retain some users on premises to address security or regulatory concerns. The hybrid approach also gives companies increased flexibility and risk mitigation to take a phased approach, moving groups of users (for example, classified by region, country, business unit, work styles) and tailoring the experience to that group’s unique requirements.

^{1,2} Issues and deployment of Office 365 in organizations survey, C Space, June 2016.

“We had to put a lot of thought into how to migrate and maintain a hybrid environment of cloud and on-site ...”

Carlyn D., VP of IT

Infrastructure and Security, communications industry

Forty-four percent of survey respondents identified data security as their top concern relating to Office 365 implementations.⁴

Office 365 was designed to function in a hybrid environment for extended periods, so it is a fairly natural fit for companies that want to manage their transition to cloud-driven productivity systems. In another Office 365 survey, 62 percent of Office 365 organizations chose a hybrid deployment strategy, with the remainder taking a 100 percent cloud approach.³

Hybrid environments typically are required when there are legacy applications, third-party integrations, or custom code that cannot be moved to Office 365. Often these legacy applications perform business-critical processes and need to be remediated in a careful, planned manner so as not to disrupt the business.

Security and regulatory concerns may differ between Office 365 workloads such as Exchange and Skype for Business. This forces firms into hybrid approaches for some workloads while a full transition may be possible in another workload.

In our experience, however, we find too many enterprises have taken the hybrid approach too far—adopting a go-slow approach to their phased methodology, which actually reduces value and increases cost for the firm. The one critical element often missing in extended deployments is senior management’s unequivocal buy-in and support of the implementation. This tends to extend the implementation. Rather than driving for resolving issues, the deployment gets stalled, and groups are allowed to continue in their legacy environment.

Security implications

Microsoft has made significant investments in improving security in Office 365, adding options for encryption, data loss prevention, and data access controls. These updates will address many chief information security officers’ concerns, but some enterprises in industries such as healthcare and finance may have additional requirements that include using other third-party security tools or retaining more users and data on-premises.

Many organizations have some concerns about putting mission-critical telecom and communications services in a multi-tenant public cloud environment. IT leaders wonder where their data would be located, who has access to it, and how it is protected from threats. They are also concerned whether their firm’s communications are protected from foreign governments via subpoena or lawful intercept.

Security concerns are valid, and in response, DXC recommends a hybrid Office 365 deployment, enabling enterprises to control which users and what data is moved to the public cloud. In addition, capabilities such as Security Incident and Event Management—as well as enhanced encryption options from DXC’s security portfolio—can enhance the security Office 365 provides. For these hybrid deployments, a comprehensive, end-to-end support model is required to ensure a consistent user support experience and security model.

³ Google Apps vs. Office 365: Comparing the Usage, Adoption, and Effectiveness of Cloud IT’s Power Players, Better Cloud Monitor, July 2015.

⁴ Issues and deployment of Office 365 in organizations survey, C Space, June 2016.

When asked which issues came up most often during deployment, 46 percent cited user confusion, 33 percent called out user resistance, 33 percent said problems with migrating files and data, and 27 percent mentioned Active Directory issues (the question asked for their top two items).

When Skype for Business is part of a deployment, we often suggest that firms set up a hybrid approach that provides support for less-critical use cases from the public cloud—while forcing more critical issues to a traditional single-tenant on-premises approach. This enables the organization to ensure certain data sovereignty and residency rules are followed while delivering a seamless features experience to their users.

DXC also recommends subscribing to Microsoft's Customer Lockbox option, which notifies enterprises when access to their data is requested and allows them to approve those requests. It also provides auditing capabilities should there be a need to investigate a particular access event.

User experience impacts

While organizations of all sizes are moving to Office 365, the pace and effectiveness of those migrations vary significantly. The Microsoft deployment model suggests a hybrid mix of cloud and on-premises tools, enabling a phased and deliberate approach to implementation. As DXC has learned by working directly with organizations, the user experience is often the single most important factor in the success or failure of an Office 365 migration.

Even when users support the change, they are often the main challenge in an Office 365 deployment. Most organizations provide various forms of postimplementation support—such as online training, specialized help desks, and classroom training—yet more than half of IT decision-makers in the survey say user problems were the top impediment to a faster deployment.⁵

It may be helpful to examine these user-driven factors more closely.

Many firms take the opportunity to “clean up” their workplace productivity environment prior to an Office 365 migration. Those clean-up activities might include backing up and storing data, replacing PCs, upgrading operating systems, implementing data governance or data retention policies, and streamlining and cleaning up fields in the Active Directory.

Other organizations simply deploy Office 365 then address clean-up needs as they arise. That approach, however, can require considerable bandwidth (in time, resources, and personnel). And because they affect tools that users touch every day, those clean-up activities can greatly impact the user experience and overall migration success.

Five keys to creating a successful user experience:

1. Senior management support for the project and their willingness to take time to ensure users are fully supported during deployment
2. A robust support program that includes multiple communications before, during, and after the migration
3. Employee availability to application-specific training material with easy-to-understand documentation
4. Introduction in a controlled, phased manner of the features that can be prone to creating quality concerns, such as widespread use of Skype for Business mobile
5. A specialized help desk staffed and supported to expeditiously resolve user issues

⁵ Issues and deployment of Office 365 in organizations survey, C Space, June 2016.

“Some users are finding the new system hard to adapt to, but this is part of a wider culture change being driven by senior leaders.”

Ben H.,
Implementation Manager,
financial services industry

Not surprisingly, a Skype for Business deployment as part of a larger Office 365 implementation can greatly affect how users perceive digital collaboration in the enterprise environment. Voice quality and dropped calls can be issues with Skype for Business, particularly when the last mile includes local or public Wi-Fi. To mitigate these issues, it is important to perform network assessments before embarking on Skype for Business voice deployments. The success of a rollout can sometimes be its own undoing, as successful adoption can outstrip the network’s ability to support the load requirements.

Like the previous-generation introduction of mobile phones, most users accept some quality issues when balanced against the collaborative power of software-based systems. By setting appropriate expectations for Skype for Business, and by appropriately supporting the larger Office 365 environment, firms can ensure better uptake and usage, and greater overall deployment success.

When users have questions or problems, support should be convenient and helpful. This is easy to say but often difficult to deliver—particularly because some organizations see Office 365 as an opportunity to control costs. Some firms are scaling back on service desk availability and are moving to a user-directed self-service approach that relies on web searches, cloud-oriented knowledge bases, and community support through the use of discussion groups to get answers to their questions.

Productivity applications are, by definition, crucial to many job functions, so users can be especially sensitive to change in these systems. As new Office 365 tools and features are introduced, training and support should also evolve. Change management should be incorporated into every phase of the migration effort.

When users are poorly supported, they will often reject even the most helpful new system. By thinking of users and giving them the support they need when they need it, organizations can reduce deployment time and costs and ensure the success of their digital collaboration environment.

DXC: Our own Office 365 migration

DXC has extensive experience in supporting the move to Office 365—including our own internal deployment.

To improve digital collaboration and workforce productivity, DXC migrated its own global, premises-based Microsoft email and collaboration deployment to Office 365 Enterprise. The internal DXC effort encompassed:

- A large internal pilot that examined the advantages of cloud-based collaboration, cost savings, and architectural factors
- Adoption of a hybrid implementation with most Microsoft infrastructure deployed in the cloud but with domain name management, mobility access, Skype for Business, authentication, and other business-critical functions managed on-premises

Checkpoints for success

- Choose the sourcing option that meets your needs—Cloud, on-premises, and hybrid alternatives, strategic financing, and purchase or per service/user/month consumption models
- Meet data residency requirements, including regulatory compliance standards for financial, medical, and public sector environments
- Improve effectiveness and decrease costs: Realize measurable workplace productivity gains and decreased operational costs with Office 365
- Optimize infrastructure for greater digital collaboration: Features include a robust Policy Management Platform, optimized wireless and campus networking, Office 365 traffic management, and predesigned reference architectures

- Directory integration to ensure smooth, secure access for mobile and on-premises workers
- Analyzing network readiness to accommodate increased traffic volume and complexity
- Detailed review of the readiness of PCs, mobile devices, and other client platforms
- A robust internal structure for troubleshooting, escalation, and support

DXC's successful Office 365 implementation improved collaboration and productivity. It accelerated the introduction of new features and functions, and avoided patching and upgrades for legacy software. The effort reduced DXC's internal cost per mailbox by 17 percent, with steps in place to reduce by up to 28 percent.

The core competencies gained during this internal DXC migration now translate into knowledge and expertise made available to our global customer base.

Conclusion

To enable world-class digital collaboration, organizations must deliver the right productivity from the right delivery model at the right cost. DXC can be a trusted partner in that effort.

DXC Services for Office 365 combines the best features from Microsoft with optimized infrastructure from DXC. We offer global delivery, data center hosting options, and unmatched expertise in cloud, productivity, and support for hybrid environments. DXC provides services to help you no matter where you are in the journey to Office 365. We have worked with Microsoft for more than 30 years, forging a deep-rooted relationship that ensures DXC customers get direct access and faster solutions to their Office 365 issues.

Our approach—proved across client deployments and DXC's own implementation—balances the risk, cost, and benefits of Office 365 Enterprise, enabling you to innovate, adapt, and unleash new business value.

About DXC

DXC Technology (NYSE: DXC) is the world's leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, helping clients harness the power of innovation to thrive on change. Created by the merger of CSC and the Enterprise Services business of Hewlett Packard Enterprise, DXC Technology serves nearly 6,000 private and public sector clients across 70 countries. The company's technology independence, global talent and extensive partner alliance combine to deliver powerful next-generation IT services and solutions. DXC Technology is recognized among the best corporate citizens globally. For more information, visit www.dxc.technology