

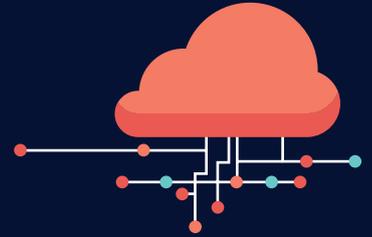


Managing evolving workstyles in a new world

An IT leader's guide to success



This guide identifies the key workplace trends post COVID-19, discusses how to maximise the value of cloud, and looks at why Managed Services Providers are vital in helping SMBs speed adoption of new technologies, reduce costs and improve productivity. We also question why, in this world of cloud-first strategies and Everything as a Service, do relationships with Managed Services Providers matter more than ever?



Then everyone works from home

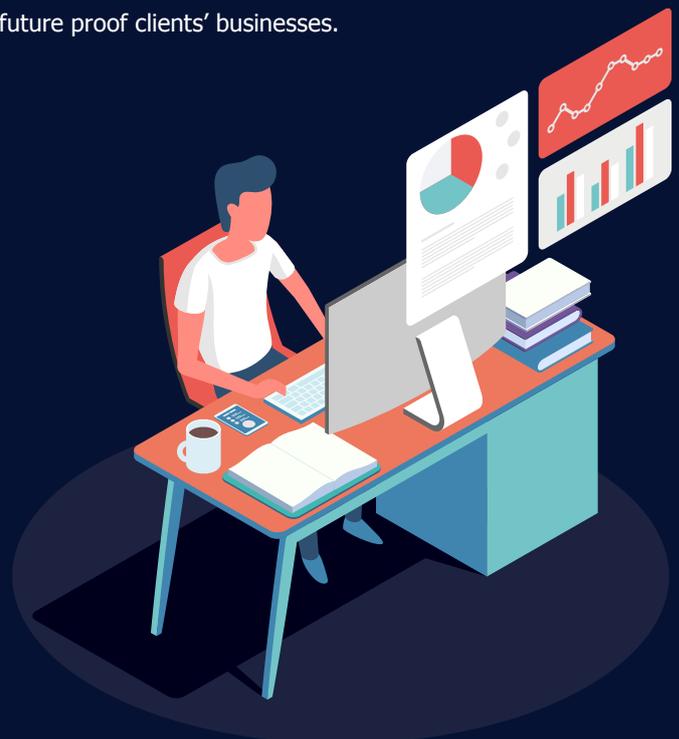
In a May 2020 memo to staff, Twitter said its people could work at home 'forever'. Earlier that month, Google and Facebook extended their home working policies to the end of the year.

The tech giants weren't alone. Barclays Bank Group Chief Executive, Jes Stanley, recently commented that his global business was being run by over 70,000 staff working "from their kitchens". He hinted the daily commute to expensive, city-centre offices could be a thing of the past. Right across industry sectors, it seems COVID-19 is driving a significant shift in workstyles.

But for every business that was successful during lockdown, many more struggled. From creaking corporate networks and dodgy VPN connectivity to the lack of devices for at-home staff, enabling secure remote working on a week's notice wasn't easy. Perhaps more importantly, will these new workstyles be sustainable in the long term?

In the rush to give homeworkers the tools to stay productive, IT leaders had little time to work through and develop the kind of plans that would, in any other scenario, enable them to understand and mitigate risk. Long-term strategies aligned to the business would have been developed and investment cases stress-tested. RFPs would be sent out, partner meetings held, migration and adoption programmes planned and so on. These couldn't happen, which could spell trouble down the line.

As a result AdEPT are introducing a post Covid-19 health check for businesses to identify any problems and help future proof clients' businesses.



Case study

Relocating during COVID-19

It wasn't just the working from home issues that had to be managed during lockdown. A London based trade association was just about to move offices (and all its IT) when lockdown was announced. While the empty office would simplify matters a little, social distancing rules meant multiple contractors couldn't work together onsite. Timescales threatened to slip as third party contractors furloughed staff, and their staff were unable to regularly commute into London to oversee the move.

As their IT partner, AdEPT offered expert support in this challenging time to react fast and update plans to ensure the tech move was precisely planned and perfectly executed – all in accordance with the rules set down by government.

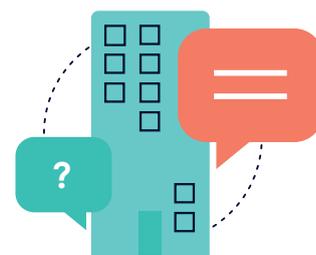
Over a four-day period, and working closely with their logistics partner, AdEPT engineers moved the entire office IT to the association's new home. Following implementation, configuration and testing, all equipment was ready so returning employees could hit the ground running when the country opens up.

"After two years of planning, we had to change all our plans at the last minute. Given this disruption, I had not expected the move to go so smoothly."

Of course, the office won't disappear overnight and not every SME wants to move its entire workforce home. Nor should they. As we'll see later in the guide, flexible working doesn't always have to mean home working, and businesses are adopting as-a-service models for a host of reasons that go above and beyond secure access for at-home colleagues.

Indeed, what the pandemic did show was that today's increasingly cloud-based and software-defined technology approaches have both the power and the potential to enable swift and dramatic enterprise-wide change.

It's not just workstyles that are transforming. In this more virtual environment, the IT director/leader role is changing too. No longer responsible for the speeds and feeds, today's new breed of leader is all about enabling the business, developing tech-led strategies and employing new innovations to drive growth, improve customer experience and more. Increasingly, they are shaping the organisation rather than simply supporting it.



*The **daily commute** to expensive, city-centre offices could be a thing of the past.*



Workstyles: an evolution not a revolution

While the coronavirus crisis shone a spotlight on homeworking, workplaces have been evolving for some time. More than a decade ago major employers were building HQs with deliberately fewer desks than people – reducing their costs and driving workstyle changes. This makes sense when you consider that occupancy studies show employees are away from their desk 50% to 60% of the time.

So there's certainly a cost upside. According to Global Workplace Analytics¹, a typical employer can save around £10,000 a year for every person who works remotely half the week.

This trend has accelerated – not least because it is what people want. Employer surveys repeatedly show that up to 80 per cent want to work from home at least some of the time. So much so, over a third would take a pay cut to do it.



Does flexible working help you become a great employer? There seems to be a link, as 85% of the Fortune Magazine “Best Companies to Work For” allow people to work at home.

¹ <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>

² <https://fortune.com/2020/02/18/100-best-companies-2020-takeaways/>



Enabling the evolution

Technology has been, and remains, the catalyst for business change. The evolution and adoption of cloud-based apps and services has played a huge role in accelerating the move to a more flexible and agile working environment.

The traditional boundaries of the organisation have disappeared. It's not just the productivity applications, like Microsoft 365, G-Suite and others, that are being accessed everywhere. Key systems of record, like ERP and CRM systems, have also moved into the cloud –

as are line of business specific finance and HR applications. All of which, of course, can be securely accessed (provided the right controls are in place) from internet connected devices.





Collaboration **everywhere**

Access to applications alone is not enough. People need to be connected to people too. While we've heard a lot about Zoom, Teams and other collaboration tools this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to true unified communications and collaboration (UCC).

Many UCC solutions feature advanced telephony integration to augment or replace phone systems, and support huddle and in-room conferencing applications. But it's the 'collaboration' part of the jigsaw that can deliver the most value – enabling people to create project teams, share and (remotely) work together on documents and more. All of which is critical if you have disparate offices, people working remotely and from client sites.

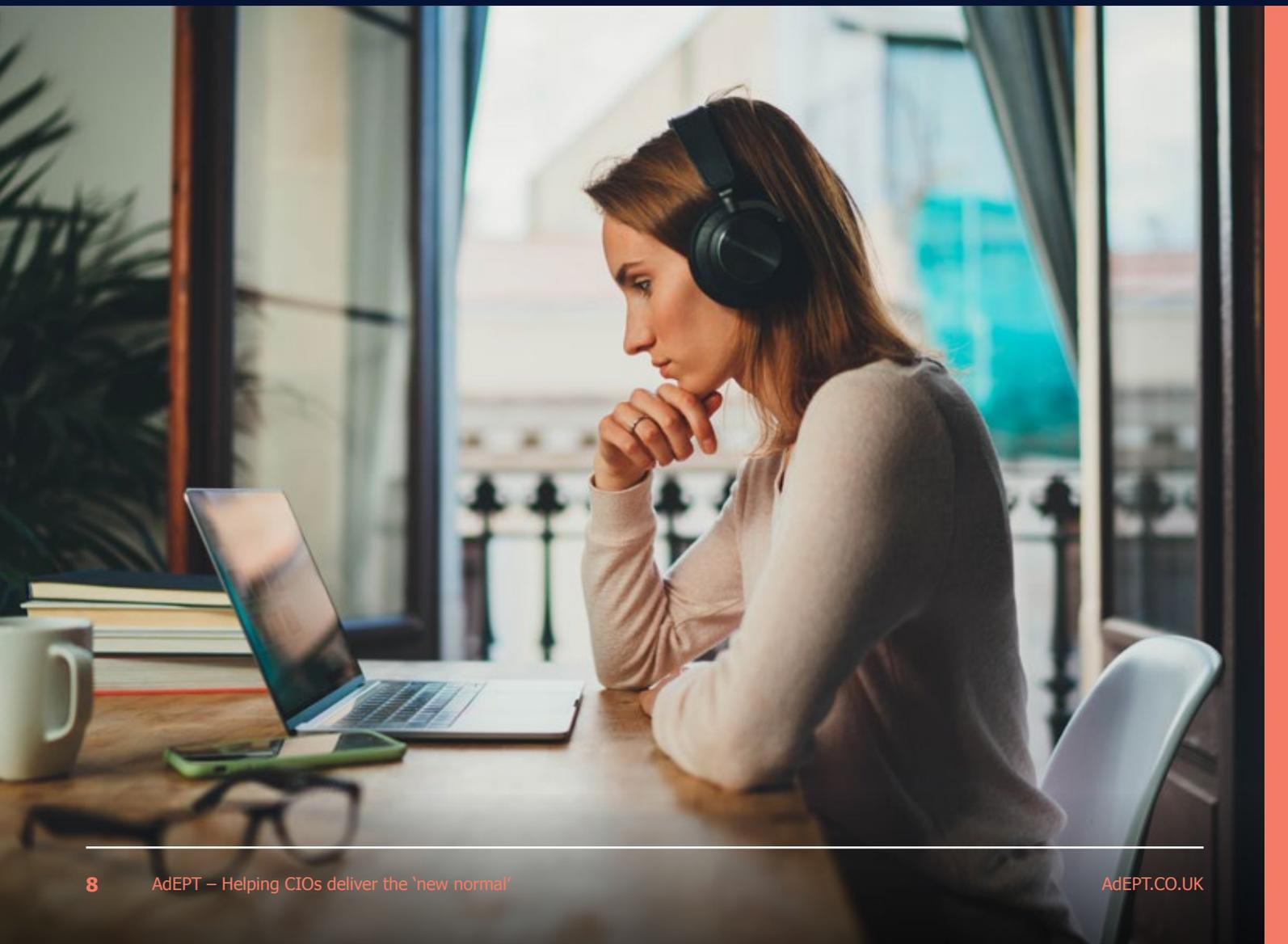
And, of course, the humble telephone is a long way from being redundant. Few SMEs operate without a switchboard. While this may be an obvious point, it's easy to overlook the importance of an effective telephony systems when it comes to supporting a remote workforce. Certainly, companies like law firm, Gowen Stevens, would have struggled considerably during lockdown without the ability to 'mobilise' its telephony capability.

Moving to an OPEX world

Whether it's a cloud-based CRM, UCC app or telephony solution, the ability to buy and consume Everything as a Service (XaaS) – software, platforms, infrastructure, etc. – has had a revolutionary 'enabling' impact across the business. If people can run a global bank from their kitchens then IT is doing something right.

At the operational level too, a cloud-first approach offers fundamental advantages. CapEx spending is reduced down and pay-per-use licencing offers considerable time saving opportunities in terms of reducing the need for systems monitoring, O/S updates and break/fix maintenance.

All these should be managed (seamlessly and invisibly) on an OpEx model. There is considerably less on-premise kit to go wrong, and this offers opportunities for IT personnel to go beyond keeping the lights on to focus attention and skills on higher value activities that add value to the business. Although you do need to monitor the cloud services to avoid 'keeping the lights on' when there's no need.



Law firm responds **swiftly to lockdown**

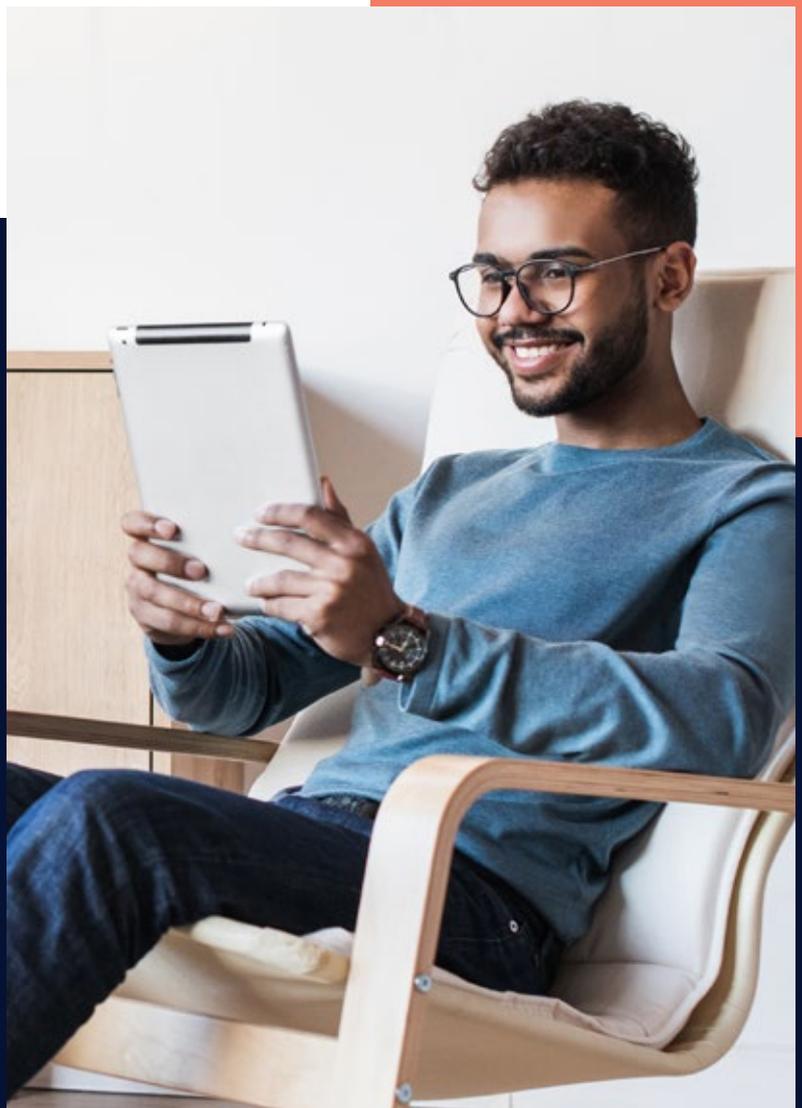
A law firm with multiple locations in the South East of England, Gowen Stevens is very much an office-based business. That didn't stop it from investing in cloud-based technology during a recent technology upgrade with AdEPT to streamline IT and business operations.

But when COVID-19 forced partners, solicitors and support staff to work from home, its cloud-first refresh came into its own. While desktops dominated, their micro-format meant staff could easily take them home, plug them into their domestic routers and securely connect to their CRM and specialist apps just as if they were in the office.

With AdEPT's help, they were also able to do exactly the same with their IP telephones through a Power over Ethernet adaptor. Not only could staff use their standard office phones and extensions (and softphones), the law firm's receptionist could work seamlessly from home to ensure client calls were answered and routed with ease.

"Because our IT environment had transitioned to the cloud before the crisis, we were able to get up and running in a couple of days when lockdown was announced. AdEPT advised at every stage and provided amazing first line support. While we won't be replacing offices for homeworking, the fact we are able to do so with ease certainly gives us opportunities to look at occasional homeworking during school holidays, for example."

Gowen Stevens



The challenges in change

This cloud-first transformation doesn't always come without cost – as many have found. And these can be considerable.

IT leaders face a raft of well-established internal pressures. Senior execs and line of business heads are looking to IT to leverage new technologies and drive wider divisional or organisation-wide transformation. Users want the same kind of intuitive experiences at work they get on their home devices, and while some will enthusiastically embrace new technologies and approaches, others are more wary of change and need considerable training and support.

Then there are the ever-present issues of being expected to keep the lights on while at the same time driving new innovations across the business. The latter being particularly challenging for smaller IT departments who often lack the resources or the expertise to effectively test, evaluate and understand how the latest cloud offerings will (or won't) add value to the business.

This creates a tension in the speed at which technology can be provided to meet the rising expectations touched on above.

On a more technical level, in a world where employees can 'buy' a cloud service with a corporate credit card, IT leaders can begin to lose control. Shadow-IT, cloud-sprawl and licence under-utilisation proliferate across many businesses – creating a raft of hidden costs.



Case study

Emergency services client hits some user turbulence

Even with the right tools in place, it isn't always easy to ensure they're used, or used correctly. In a meeting with ADEPT, the IT head of an emergency services client discussed his concerns around adoption levels and misuse of its Teams collaboration platform. The number of groups was growing out of control and chat functions used for non-work related activities.

Having analysed adoption and utilisation patterns, it became clear that users were unfamiliar with the application, and unclear how to use it correctly. So, in tandem with engaging with users and delivering a comprehensive user training programme, ADEPT also worked with IT to ensure permissions and control options were fully understood and turned on. In short order, and with everyone onboard, Teams became a valuable business tool for staff.

Cloud can be complex

Contrary to a lot of vendor hype, adopting enterprise-wide cloud applications or service (and getting it right) can be a complex task. Back in 2016, a survey from Gartner found that 80 percent of organisations overshot their cloud infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) budgets. Three years on, in 2019, 80 percent of respondents to a 451 Group study agreed “that poor financial management related to cloud cost has a negative impact on the business”.

Most analysts agree that businesses shouldn't go to cloud to save money – although that message continues to be difficult to get out to market. The key reasons to move are more aligned to business strategy – to increase agility and drive productivity. And, hugely important in the wake of covid-19, to deliver a resilient and flexible environment that ensures business continuity and minimises disruption in the event of unexpected 'black swan' incidents.

Then there are issues of data residency and compliance. As the number of apps and devices that store and access sensitive business or customer information grow, so do the business risks and liabilities. When combined with the legal obligations that were both reinforced and enhanced in GDPR, the need for building a risk management and governance framework is critical.

That is not to say that the move to a more virtual (and potentially cloud hybrid) environment should be discouraged. Far from it. As we have seen, businesses would not have been able to continue to function effectively through the recent period of disruption if it wasn't for their cloud-based apps and services. Adoption is growing for a reason, and the benefits are significant. The key is in the careful planning, and increasingly that means partnering with a specialist Managed Services Provider to guide you through the journey.



*As the number of **apps and devices that store and access sensitive business** or customer information grow, so do the business risks and liabilities.*



Managing data security in the cloud

1



Ensure that there is an awareness of where data is held, and how it is managed and protected

2



Ensure that devices and/or locations to process and store information are subject to rigorous procedural technology and technical controls

3



Ensure ongoing continuity of access to information while, at the same time, ensuring people only access the information that they need (and have permissions for)



How MSPs can help IT leaders lead

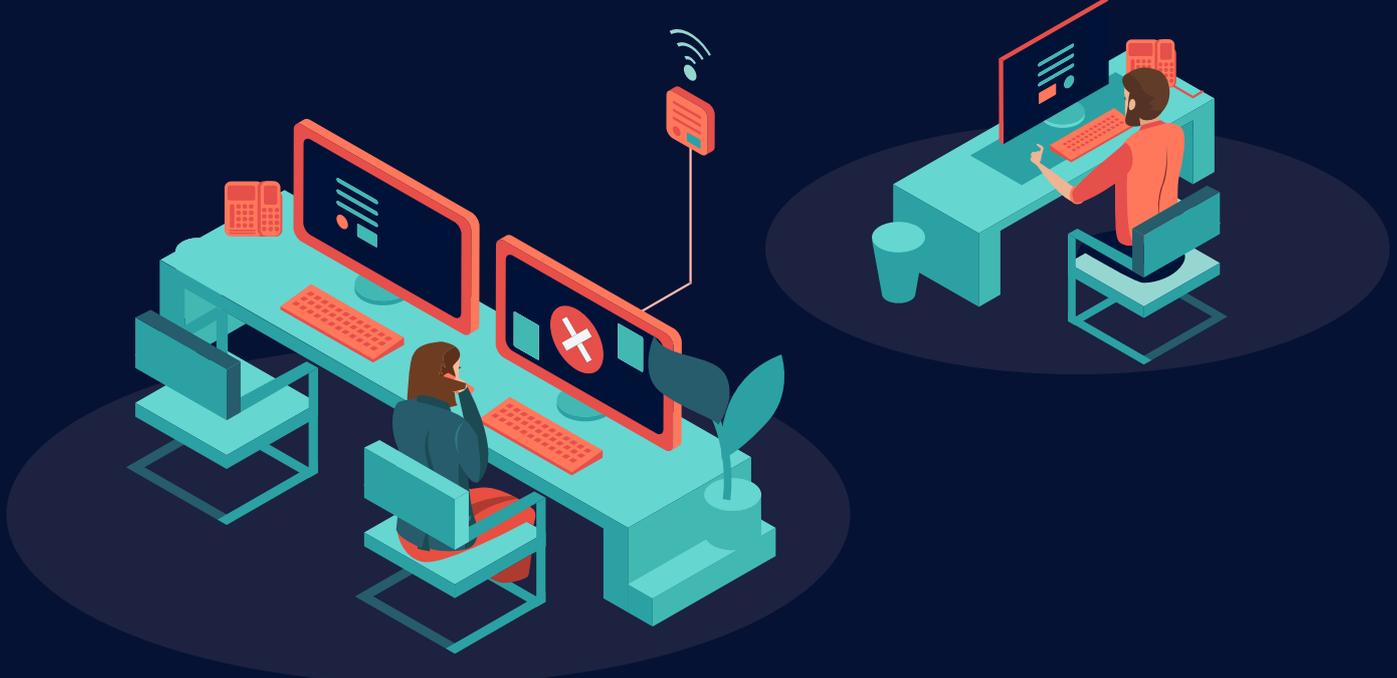
With IT heads increasingly looking at how to address the fast evolving needs of their organisations, the need for a trusted partner to help define and deliver the direction you set is more important than ever.

Not only does the sheer number of vendors, technologies and approaches create a volume challenge, there's a value discussion to be had too. It is almost impossible for IT to stay informed of the best approaches, the latest solutions and upcoming innovations when there's so much else to do.

If, for example, you need to enable a more flexible workforce, or boost disaster recovery and business continuity strategies, looking to cloud is often the best approach. But there are many clouds.

There are the cloud-hosted applications like file sharing from Box, productivity and email from Office 365, enterprise resource management from Salesforce and thousands of other horizontal and vertical applications.

*As workstyles evolve to this 'new normal' of increased flexible working, **the need for scalable and resilient infrastructure to monitor, patch and secure the increased diversity of endpoints becomes critical.***



Key considerations

You can buy licences easily enough. But, will these be the right solutions for your people? Will they be deployed securely and without causing business interruption? How can you ensure adoption and optimum licence utilisation? How can they integrate into your existing ecosystem?

What about the public options as a place for your legacy applications and workloads? Should you migrate these to Azure or AWS, or is it better to migrate the data to newer SaaS

options as they appear on the market? Maybe the best option could be a private cloud deployment if you've a large distributed environment but are not yet ready to go to public cloud.

And how about your telephony infrastructure, device portfolio, network and endpoint security, and disaster recovery environments? These are all critical elements of your IT jigsaw when it comes to enabling new workstyles, addressing current operational issues or looking to contain or strip out costs.





Reducing the risks of **change**

When you're delivering a modern, optimised IT environment experience really does count – to eliminate overspend, maximise performance and utilisation, and ensure ongoing preventative maintenance. Plus, as workstyles evolve and the need for greater flexibility grows, the need for scalable and resilient infrastructure to monitor, patch and secure the increased diversity of endpoints becomes critical.

While there's no doubt that a cloud-first strategy boosts flexibility and enables new levels of business continuity, it's not always an easy journey and it can be fraught with unforeseen costs and complications.

Partnering with an experienced MSP, one that has done the hard yards, deployed and managed the applications, and can offer an experience perspective and impartial guidance, can dramatically reduce the journey time, steer you around the potholes and save you money.

What's more, a capable Managed Services Provider can own your risk, managing every element of your multi-cloud infrastructure to ensure high performance service assurance – so you have time to focus on the big picture without worrying about who's keeping the lights on.

All of which explains why even in an as-a-service world, businesses of all sizes are increasingly reliant on MSPs to bring everything together.

*Three years on, in 2019, **80 percent of respondents** to a 451 Group study agreed "that poor financial management related to cloud cost has a negative impact on the business".*

Fast tracking the future AdEPT

As an expert and experienced Managed Services Provider, AdEPT is helping thousands of small and medium businesses across the UK embrace today's new workstyles.

We advise on strategy, consider which technologies and solutions are best deployed to meet your short, medium or long term objectives, and we will complement what is already being delivered within IT.

From cloud and data networking, through cyber security and telephony, to backup and business continuity, we unify the complex technologies and deliver a complete, fully managed IT service to address your changing world.

Working together with IT leaders, we can help you deliver for the business, drive growth, and support your changing role – shaping the organisation rather than simply supporting it.

AdEPT Advantage

We provide solutions for over
12,000 organisations

We filter over
1 billion
web requests every day

We scan over
2 million emails
every day

We manage over
**1 million Microsoft
Office 365 users**



Uniting technology, inspiring people

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- Public Cloud Access
- Hybrid Cloud
- Private Cloud
- Public Cloud Applications
- Cloud Discovery & Cloud Migration Consulting

Data Networking

- Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) Networks
- Direct Internet
- Session Internet Protocol (SIP) / Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
- Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) Solutions
- Local Area Network (LAN) Solutions
- Managed WiFi

Managed IT

- 'Virtual IT Director' Services
- End User & Infrastructure Patching
- Hosted Services
- Hosted Email
- Managed Support
- Office 365
- Platform as a Service (PaaS)



Cyber Security

- Managed Firewall
- Internet Filtering
- Email Filtering
- Edge Security
- Antivirus
- Intrusion Detection / Intrusion Prevention Systems (IDS / IPS)
- Dual Factor Identification Solutions
- Threat Intelligence
- Post Breach Forensics

Voice Services

- Unified Communications
- Cloud Telephony
- Microsoft Teams
- Avaya
- Ericsson LG
- 3CX

Business Continuity

- Backup
- Disaster Recovery
- Mail Backup & Archiving
- Recovery Time / Recovery Point Planning (RTO / RPO)

Professional Services

- Consultancy
- Cloud Readiness Assessment
- Design & Configuration
- Project Delivery & Management
- Vulnerability Assessment
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