Harness the Power of Azure and Make Storage Simple

What would you do with a limitless IT budget? Upgrade to the latest PCs? Update your software? Maybe both?

Or with the advent of Big Data and the 'Internet of Things' just around the corner, would you invest in the one thing that all businesses can't get enough of – storage.

A recent report from research firm Nasuni[1] estimates that there is currently over one exabyte worth of files stored in the cloud. That's 1,073,741,824 GB, or quintillion bytes – in other words, we are using cloud storage more than ever before. So with that in mind, take a moment to consider the possibilities of infinite storage. Imagine never having to wonder when you will need to expand your servers, or whether or not the systems will be able to keep up with your demands – that dream is now a reality.

The same Nasuni cloud report placed Microsoft Azure as a market leader in terms of performance, scalability and stability, and this – coupled with the fact that 57% of Fortune 500 companies are already using Azure[2] – makes it a great time to explore the offering. This whitepaper looks at its features and capabilities and asks – how can your organisation fully embrace a hybrid cloud environment? And is it time to take the leap, pull the parachute cord and harness the colossal power of Microsoft Azure?

Say hello to the hybrid...

Whilst the cloud continues to deliver proven and tangible benefits for the organisations that have already adopted it, finding a one size fits all solution for every business case is nigh-on impossible.

Every business need is unique to its business and every organisation will have different aims and goals that cloud technology can help it achieve. That is where the hybrid cloud comes in, by allowing for easily scalable, pay-as-you-go, storage and computing solutions.

The Hybrid Cloud is all about matching the right solution to the right application and combining public and private servers seamlessly as one platform to enable you to focus on driving your business forward.

Many organisations have already implemented a Hybrid Cloud solution; in fact, very few companies currently have all their IT software estate in one place.[3] Of those that do however, 69% agree that implementing a hybrid cloud strategy will be one of their biggest areas of focus in 2015.[1]

What can it do for me?

Microsoft's Azure platform gives your business the opportunity to take advantage of vast public cloud resources. On top of the near infinite storage possibilities, you can also test and implement new technologies swiftly, with the ability to expand your organisation faster and without upfront investment – that's just one of the reasons why there are currently over 30 trillion objects stored in Azure.

>10,000 New Azure customers a week	1,200,000 SQL databases in Azure	>30Trillion Storage Objects in Azure
350Million Azure Active Directory users	>2Million Developers registered with Visual Studio Online	>60% Customers using higher level services
>18Billion Azure Active Directory Authentications/week	+10% growth MoM	

Azure is also ticking all the boxes with regard to legacy cloud concerns such as security and control. Of course, it is impossible to talk about cloud computing without mentioning security, as rightly or wrongly, it remains a key concern with any cloud implementation.

That's why the Azure platform's security controls were built in from the ground up, based on Microsoft's own Security Development Lifecycle (SDL). Azure follows all security best practices and uses identity and access management, physical and logical isolation, and encryption to provide full data confidentiality.

But that's not all, Azure is already providing businesses across the world with numerous benefits, including:
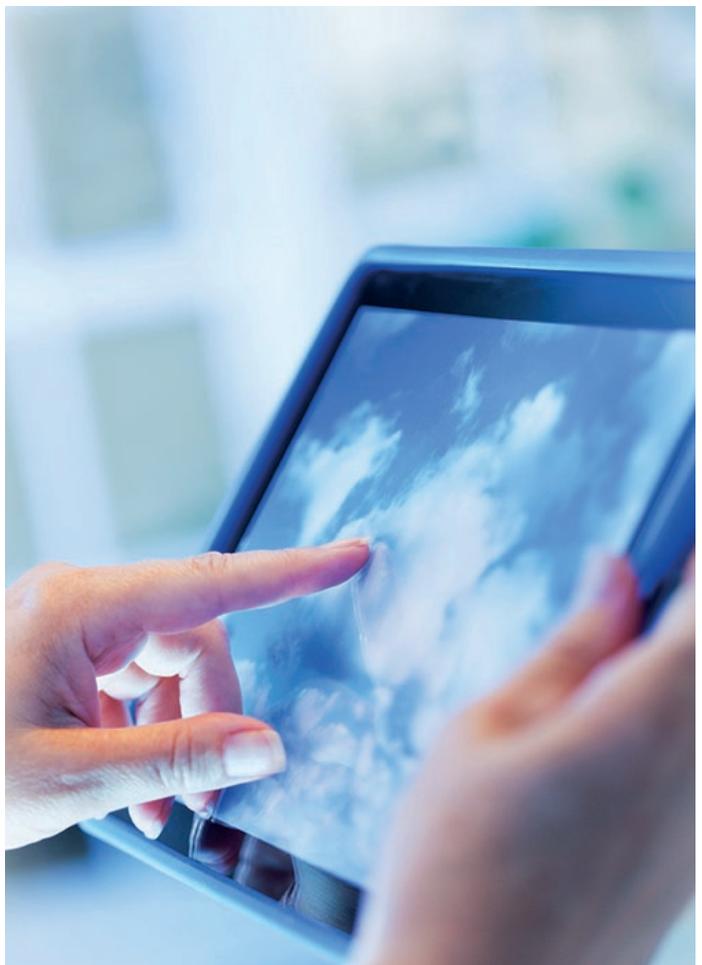
- **Faster time to market:** As worrying about the underlying infrastructure of your business application becomes a thing of the past, the focus on developing the functionality of your business application comes to the forefront of the business' collective mind. This allows more dedicated resource to complete your app, greatly reducing your time to market.

- **Reduced costs:** Cloud has always been a huge draw for start-ups and SMBs, in part because there is no high infrastructure cost. Neither segment want to invest heavily in infrastructure, and historically they have been early adopters of cloud (40% of Azure's revenue come from these two groups alone).

- **Increased scalability:** As your customer base grows and the usage of your application increases, Azure allows you to easily adjust applications to scale from 10 to 10 thousand or even 10 million users, without any additional development or coding. Giving you scalable, secure, performance-efficient storage services in the cloud, without ever have to worry about running out of server capacity. That's the joy of infinite storage.

- **More flexibility and creativity:** Applications can be quickly deployed to the Microsoft Azure platform, so changes can be applied without any downtime. This makes Azure the ideal platform for your developers, allowing their creative minds to run wild and giving them added functionality that you would otherwise not have dared to implement. What's more, as it is based on Windows, applications can be written in the same programming languages you've previously used for Windows apps. This helps your current developers transition to Azure seamlessly and makes it far easier to find new developers who already have the skills to create applications for the Azure platform.

What can I do with it?

Whilst Microsoft's famed statistic - 57% of Fortune 500 companies are currently using Azure – is certainly impressive, it doesn't tell us what exactly businesses are currently using Azure and the Hybrid Cloud for.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, email still leads the way, with some 66% of enterprises relying on a cloud solution for their email applications. Behind that, file storage accounts for 53% of usage, with 39% and 34% of organisations utilising the cloud to host their database and office software applications respectively.

And it is not just historically 'simple' applications that are being placed in the cloud, more and more businesses are using it to access increasingly advanced applications for their accountancy (31%) and CRM (21%) requirements. Many also take advantage of high performance cloud platforms for bespoke applications, with 17% using its vast computing power to run their own business software.[4]

So, looking behind those statistics, how exactly could your organisation benefit from Azure and the Hybrid Cloud?
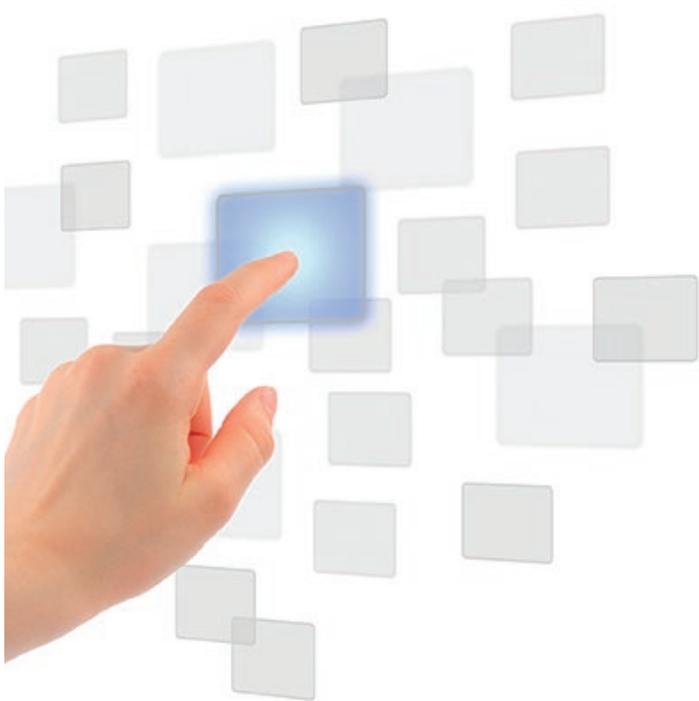
Building infrastructure - With Azure, you gain the ability to provision Windows and Linux Virtual Machines and applications in minutes, using the same virtual machines and management tools in Azure that you use on-premise. Plus, because the Azure environment is much like the standard Windows environment, it's easier to create a cloud version of one of your existing Windows applications.

Developing modern applications – Azure lets you build and deploy a wide variety of modern applications for Android, iOS, and Windows platforms that take full advantage of the cloud - including web, mobile, media and line-of-business solutions. All of these applications can then easily be scaled up and down to meet any demand.

Gaining insights from data - Azure provides managed SQL and NoSQL data services, plus built-in support for gaining insights from your data. This allows you to leverage the full power of SQL Servers in the cloud and use HDInsight to build Hadoop clusters to analyse data.

Managing identity and access - Use Azure to manage user accounts, synchronize with existing on-premise directories, and get single sign on across Azure, Office 365 and hundreds of popular Software-as-a-Service applications - including Salesforce, DocuSign, Google Apps, Box, Dropbox, and more.

Hybrid Storage - Azure's integration with the StorSimple solution allows you to unify your on-premise and cloud storage resources to seamlessly act as a single container of storage. StorSimple is an on premise device that resides within your data-centre. However, the software provided with the StorSimple solution allows it to seamlessly connect with the Microsoft Azure cloud, creating another tier of storage as an extension of your on-premise solution.

Why choose Azure?

So we know why businesses are in a rush to take advantage of the Hybrid Cloud, but what makes the Azure offering unique? At Microsoft's 2014 Cloud event in San Francisco, Satya Nadella announced that there are 10,000 new Azure customers every

week[5] – here are just some of the reasons why:

It's hybrid ready: Some cloud providers make you choose between your datacentre and the public cloud. Not Azure. Its enterprise-proven hybrid cloud solutions give you the best of both worlds, expanding your IT options, without added complexity. With Azure, data storage, backup and recovery become more efficient and economical, and that's not all, it's also easier to build applications that span both on-premise and the cloud.

It's open and flexible: Azure supports any operating system, language, tool, and framework - from Windows to Linux, SQL Server to Oracle, C# to Java. It puts the best of Windows and Linux ecosystems at your fingertips, letting you build great applications and services that work with every device.

It's always up, always on: You'll share the same enterprise-tested platform that powers Skype, Office 365, Bing, and Xbox. Azure offers a 99.95% availability SLA, 24x7 tech support, and round-the-clock service health monitoring.

It's economical and scalable: Azure can quickly scale up or down to match demand, so you only pay for what you use. Per-minute billing and a commitment to match competitor prices for infrastructure services like compute, storage and bandwidth means you'll always get unbeatable price for performance.

It's everywhere: Azure runs on a growing global network of Microsoft-managed datacentres across 13 regions, giving you a wide range of options for running applications and ensuring your customers always get great performance. Azure is the first multi-national cloud provider in mainland China and is continuing to expand to new regions around the globe.

Get your head in the Hybrid Cloud with Crayon and Azure...

So with most organisations now all but convinced of the benefits of a hybrid cloud set-up - from shifting and reducing costs to driving innovation, increasing flexibility or speeding the deployment of new applications - it is still important to remember that implementing any new IT solution is not without its challenges.

That is why it is vital you seek advice from a partner that knows the market and the plethora of offerings available. Crayon's expertise in this area can make transitioning to a hybrid cloud infrastructure a breeze.

Our team will work with yours to decide the most efficient way to achieve your business goals, and our unique tools and solutions will ensure your technology estate is fully optimised within the new world of Hybrid Cloud. By getting to know you and your business, we can advise on the best set up for your organisation as a whole, rather than simply selling you an off-the shelf solution.

Of the platforms available, Azure is the one taking the plaudits and as a top 3 SPLA (Service Provider License Agreement) reseller, Crayon are best placed to help you start benefiting from the market-leading[6] Azure solution.

So why not speak to us today and start taking advantage of the Hybrid Cloud to decrease your costs for building and expanding your current on-premise infrastructure. What's more, as Azure's pricing is based on consumption, the cost of IT administration as a whole is reduced as the hardware is being taken care of for you off-premise and you'll only pay for the computer processing time and storage space you need at any given time.

The hybrid cloud may have been around for a while but now it has finally arrived. It is time that you transitioned to an enterprise-class platform but without the hassle, headaches and costs that go along with it - let us handle that instead.

For more information about Crayon and how we can help your business optimise it's IT estate and the opportunity of the Cloud, visit us at www.crayon.com or call your local Crayon team today.

References and Additional Resources

1. Nasuni Cloud Report

2. Microsoft

3. RightScale

4. Eurostat

5. TechCrunch

6. Microsoft News

Additional Resources

- UK Retailer Uses Cloud Services to Quickly Scale Major

- http://azure.microsoft.com/blog/

- http://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/community/ newsletter/2014/october/

- http://www.slideshare.net/windowsazure/ presentations

- http://azure.microsoft.com/en-us/document ation/infographics/azure/

- http://azure.microsoft.com/blog/2014/01/2 4/storage-price-match/

Crayon are the global leader in Software Asset Management (SAM) & Volume Licensing Services. Trusted advisers to the world's leading organisations we help our clients truly optimise their licensing estate.

We take a consultative approach to understanding our customer's requirements by simplifying the management of software assets and indentifying opportunities for cost savings, whilst maintaining a compliant state.

Optimising your technology solutions can offer increased benefits by ensuring that you only deploy what you need, when you need it. Deploying technology often means complex licence requirements and this is where effective SAM processes can really help.

Crayon can offer your organisation a broad range of SAM Services which enable organisations to mitigate their risk by establishing effective licence management and therefore realise an ROI within weeks of the initial engagement.