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From Zero to Hero with Azure Landing Zones

rmmartins ■■ MICROSOFT
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For startups, getting your product to market quickly is critical. Azure Landing Zones provide a structured yet flexible approach that enables you to build a secure, scalable, and well-managed cloud environment fast—perfect for startups that need to move quickly and efficiently. This guide will help you transition from zero to hero in the Azure Landing Zones, ensuring your Azure environment is ready to support your rapid growth.

Step #1: Laying the Groundwork

Implement Identity and Access Management (IAM)

Begin by deploying Entra ID, which serves as the backbone of your identity management system. Secure your environment by enabling Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) across all accounts, providing an extra layer of protection against unauthorized access. To ensure baseline security across your environment, implement Security Defaults, which are preconfigured settings designed to keep your Azure environment secure by default.

Next, implement Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) to assign appropriate permissions to your team based on their roles. This ensures that everyone has the access they need to do their job—nothing more, nothing less. Explore built-in roles to assign common roles quickly, or create custom roles tailored to your specific needs. Additionally, understand how RBAC roles interact with directory admin roles by reviewing RBAC and Directory Admin Roles, ensuring that access is properly managed across your organization. For best practices in RBAC, refer to Azure RBAC best practices. Use the Azure portal to assign roles and manage access effectively.

Outcomes:

- Secure and centralized identity management.

- Protection against unauthorized access.
- Seamless integration with existing systems.

Actions/Follow-up:

- Monitor and enforce IAM policies.
- Quickly address any integration challenges.

Organize Resources

Organizing your resources from the start is crucial for scaling efficiently. Set up management groups to structure your resources, allowing for easy policy application across your startup. Organize your subscriptions based on different environments like development, testing, and production, using guidance from the Azure setup guide on organizing resources. This structure will streamline operations and prevent bottlenecks as your startup grows.

Ensure your subscriptions are optimized for scale by following subscription scaling best practices and understanding subscription limits. To ensure your resource organization aligns with best practices, consider reviewing the detailed guidance on resource organization and subscription design. Establish a consistent naming convention and apply resource tags for better management and cost tracking. You can take a look also in the abbreviation recommendations for Azure resources. These practices will simplify your cloud management as your company scales.

Outcomes:

- Clear resource organization, making scaling easier.
- Efficient management and simplified billing.
- Enhanced discoverability and tracking of resources.

Actions/Follow-up:

- Review your resource structure with your team to ensure it aligns with your startup's goals.
- Optimize the resource organization strategy as you grow.

Step #2: Building a Secure and Connected Network

Network Topology, Connectivity, and Security

Building a robust network architecture is essential for your startup's operations. Start by designing a Virtual Network (VNet) strategy that includes subnets, peering, and VPN connections. This strategy will ensure seamless connectivity between your Azure resources, on-premises systems, and other cloud environments.

Secure your network with Network Security Groups (NSGs) and evaluate Azure Firewall. Consider following network security best practices to protect your network infrastructure. For secure remote access to virtual machines, implement Azure Bastion. Review the Azure's well-architected networking best practices to design a secure and scalable network infrastructure that can grow with your business.

Additionally, explore options for hybrid networking if you have requirements of integration with on-premises or other cloud providers, using the [hybrid networking reference architecture](). This allows for more flexible and scalable connectivity, especially as your company grows and collaborates across different environments. For connectivity with other cloud providers, refer to the [connectivity to other cloud providers guide.]()

Outcomes:

- A scalable network architecture that grows with your business.
- Seamless connectivity across different environments.
- Strong security measures to protect your resources.

Actions/Follow-up:

- Regularly monitor network performance and make adjustments as needed.
- Validate the network setup to ensure it meets both current and future needs.

Step #3: Implementing Governance, Monitoring, and Cost Management

Management, Monitoring, Governance, and Cost Management

As your company grows, maintaining control over your cloud environment becomes increasingly important. Implement [Azure Policy]() to enforce compliance with your internal guidelines, ensuring your environment remains secure and aligned with your business goals.

Set up [Azure Monitor]() and [Log Analytics]() to gain real-time insights into your cloud performance and security. Use best practices for [analysis and visualization](), [alerts](), and [workspace design]() (see [best practices]()) to make the most of your monitoring setup.

To further enhance your monitoring and reporting capabilities, leverage [Azure Workbooks.]() For Identity and Access Management (IAM) in particular, the [Microsoft Entra Workbooks]() allow you to create customizable reports and dashboards that give you deeper insights into your IAM, helping you to monitor health, detect anomalies, and ensure compliance across your startup's Azure environment. Additionally, consider reviewing the [log monitoring integration options]() to effectively integrate logs from various services for comprehensive monitoring.

To protect your environment from potential threats, deploy [Microsoft Defender for Cloud]().

Managing costs is equally important. Set up a budget using [Azure Cost Management]() and [create alerts for cost overruns](). This helps you stay within budget and reinvest savings back into growing your company. You can also [automate actions based in budgets]().

Additionally, use [Azure Service Health]() to set up alerts for any service disruptions or changes that might impact your environment, ensuring that you can respond swiftly to potential issues. To get proactive notifications about the health of specific Azure resources and guidance on how to set up resource health

alerts, refer to the [Resource Health Alert Monitoring Guide](#). For ongoing governance, follow the [Azure management guide](#).

Outcomes:

- Comprehensive control over your cloud environment.
- Continuous monitoring for performance and security issues.
- Effective cost management to support your growth.

Actions/Follow-up:

- Regularly review and adjust your policies and cost management settings.
- Adapt your governance practices to meet your startup's evolving needs.

Step #4: Building on the Basics - Advanced Topics and Reference Architectures

After laying down the essential components of your Azure environment, it's time to explore more advanced topics that can further optimize your cloud infrastructure. A crucial concept in modern Azure architecture is the separation of **Platform Landing Zones** and **Application Landing Zones**. This architecture represents an evolution from the traditional [Hub and Spoke model](#), offering a more scalable and flexible approach that aligns with Azure best practices.
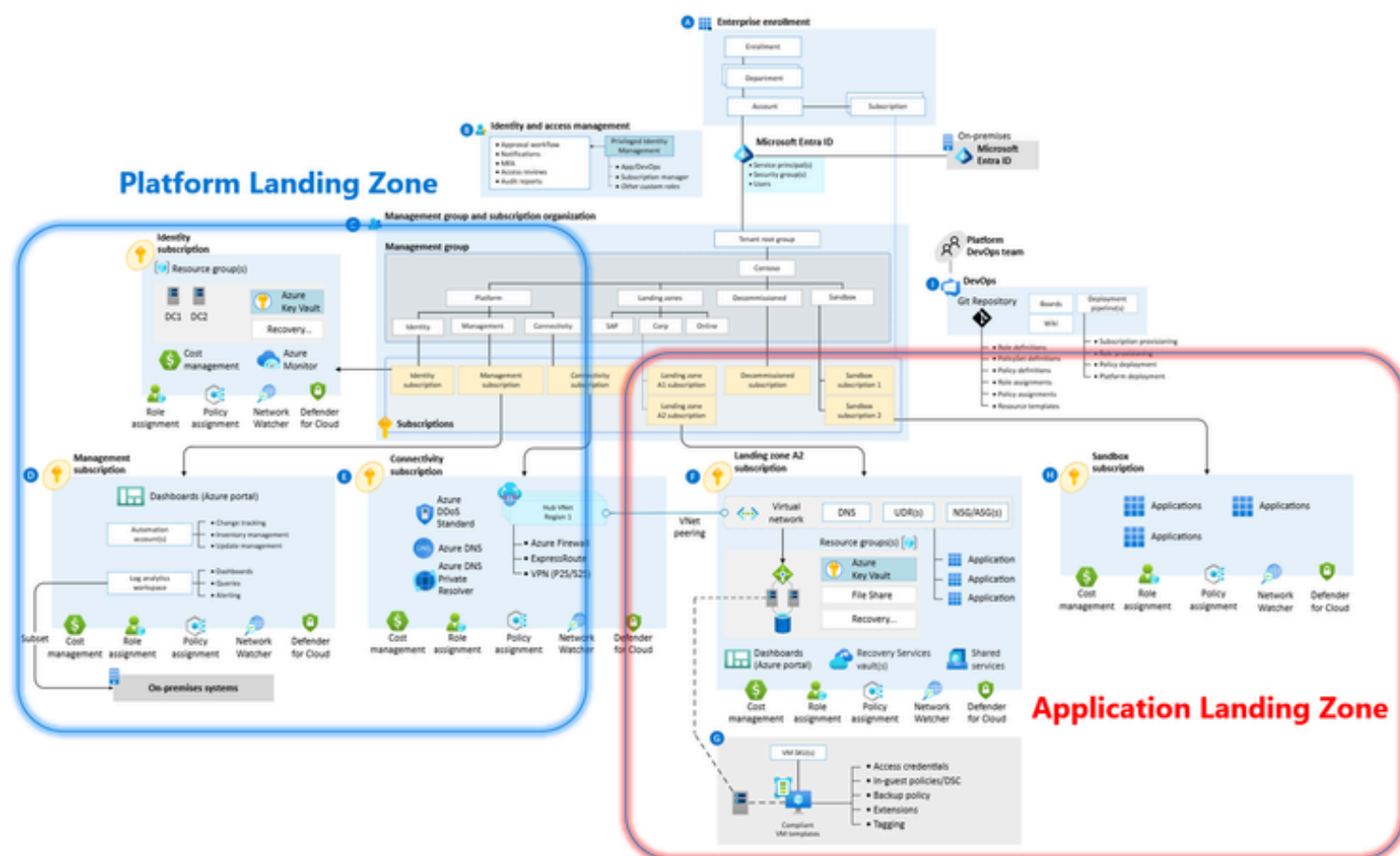
Platform and Application Landing Zones: Evolving from Hub and Spoke

In the traditional Hub and Spoke model, a central hub (typically a Virtual Network) connects to various spokes (subnets or separate VNets), each representing different environments, such as development, testing, or production. While effective, this model can become complex and harder to manage as your business scales rapidly, especially if you need to support multiple applications with varying requirements.

Platform Landing Zones and **Application Landing Zones** offer a more modular and scalable approach:

- **Platform Landing Zones**: These zones are dedicated to managing core infrastructure components that are shared across your entire organization. This includes services such as identity management (Entra ID), networking (e.g., Virtual Networks, ExpressRoute), and security (e.g., Azure Firewall, DDoS Protection). The platform landing zone essentially becomes the foundation upon which all other environments are built, providing a consistent and secure baseline.
- **Application Landing Zones**: These zones are specifically tailored to individual applications or workloads. Each application landing zone operates within its own subscription and can be customized to meet the specific needs of that application. This separation allows for greater flexibility, as different applications can have distinct configurations, policies, and security postures without impacting the overall infrastructure.

This evolution from Hub and Spoke to Platform and Application Landing Zones enables you to:

1. **Scale Effectively**: By isolating platform resources from application resources, you can scale your infrastructure without needing to constantly reconfigure core components. This modularity allows your startup to grow quickly and add new applications without disrupting existing services.
2. **Maintain Consistency**: The platform landing zone ensures that core infrastructure components are managed consistently across your entire cloud environment. This reduces the risk of configuration drift and ensures that all applications adhere to your security and governance policies.
3. **Enable Autonomy**: Each application landing zone can be managed independently, allowing development teams to innovate and deploy changes without waiting for central approval or risking conflicts with other applications. This autonomy is crucial for startups that need to move fast and remain agile.
4. **Align with Best Practices**: This architecture aligns with Microsoft's Cloud Adoption Framework and Azure best practices, ensuring that your cloud environment is built to be secure, compliant, and ready for growth from the start.

Reference Implementation Options

To implement Platform and Application Landing Zones effectively, Microsoft provides several reference architectures that can be tailored to your specific needs:

- Wingtip: Best for companies focusing on online-only operations with no hybrid connectivity. This setup uses a single subscription for simplicity, with platform services integrated directly into the application landing zone.
- Adventure Works: Ideal for companies needing hybrid connectivity. This setup introduces the Hub and Spoke architecture but with separate subscriptions for management, connectivity, and identity, allowing for a clearer separation of concerns.
- Contoso: Designed for companies with a global presence, using Virtual WAN for worldwide connectivity. This setup provides dedicated subscriptions for core services, allowing you to scale your infrastructure globally.
- Trey Research: Simplified for small startups. This model consolidates management, connectivity, and identity into a single platform subscription, making it easier to manage without sacrificing the ability to scale as the startup grows.

These reference architectures offer a solid starting point and can be adapted as your startup evolves. By leveraging these advanced concepts, your startup can build a cloud environment that not only meets your current needs but is also ready to scale rapidly in alignment with industry best practices.

Next Steps

- Dive deeper into these architectures to select the one that best fits your business needs.
- Use tools like the [Azure Landing Zone Accelerator](#) for quick deployment and customization.

By incorporating Platform and Application Landing Zones into your cloud strategy, your company will be well-positioned to handle rapid growth while maintaining a secure, compliant, and agile cloud environment. This advanced setup ensures that you can continue to innovate and scale without being held back by infrastructure limitations.

For more detailed guidance on each step, refer to the [Azure setup guide overview - Cloud Adoption Framework](#)

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