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Cloud Computing / The Coming of the Hybrid Cloud

The Coming of the Hybrid Cloud

By Michael Vizard | Posted 2015-11-25 Email Print

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NEWS ANALYSIS: As the line blurs between on-premise and public cloud computing, demand will be greater for external expertise to make sense of it all.

For all intents and purposes, applications and IT infrastructure dominated the first two phases of cloud computing. Arguably, the first cloud applications were software-as-a-service (SaaS) apps that evolved into platforms. Then came infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) offerings, such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), that over the last 10 years transformed how IT organizations think about servers, storage and networking.

However, as cloud computing continues to evolve, the next phase will clearly be dominated by platform-as-a-service (PaaS) environments that have evolved to the point where they enable a truly hybrid approach to cloud computing.

"It's going to be a hybrid world," said Stacy Nethercoat, vice president of the TDCloud unit at the distributor Tech Data. "Not everything can move into the cloud."

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Similarly, Jason Bystrak, executive director for Ingram Micro Cloud in North America, noted that there is a major opportunity to wrap managed IT services around hybrid clouds. "Service and support is often overlooked," Bystrak said. "Somebody has to wrap an SLA [service-level agreement] around that."

The two major vendors doing the most to enable the rapid movement of application workloads between on-premise and public cloud computing environments are Microsoft and Oracle. Once Microsoft SQL Server 2016 comes out, the ability to integrate applications running on Windows Servers with the Microsoft Azure public cloud will be greatly enhanced. Oracle, meanwhile, is making it possible to move entire databases in and out of its cloud via the push of a single button.

Meanwhile, emerging open-source database platforms, such as Cassandra, come with the underlying technology needed to create a hybrid cloud computing environment baked into the platform.

Platforms such as Cassandra are taking advantage of 20 years of academic research in advanced distributed computing to simplify hybrid cloud computing, said Martin Van Ryswyk, executive vice president of engineering at DataStax, a provider of hosting and managed services based on Cassandra.

"Cassandra is built from the ground up for a multi-data center environment," Van Ryswyk said. "All the rocket science needed to accomplish that is baked into Cassandra."

As a result, as it becomes simpler to deploy and manage middleware software, Van Ryswyk said he fully expects in the year ahead that much of the pricing pressure that has affected the IaaS space to be just as vigorously applied to the PaaS layer of the cloud.

Weaving Applications Together

At the moment, however, cloud computing as it is known today consists of isolated workloads running on top of any number of external services, but it's only a matter of time before organizations move to weave those applications together in an extended workflow.

However, demand for integrating applications across hybrid clouds has thus far been tepid, according to a recent survey from Scribe Software, a provider of an application integration PaaS environment that runs on-premise or in the cloud. Premise-to-cloud integration, cloud-to-cloud integration and cloud data replication are top priorities for only 16, 10 and 10 percent of the organizations, respectively.

Much of that lack of enthusiasm may have to do with the quality of the tools available. The Scribe Software survey finds that 59 percent of respondents are not satisfied with their ability to sync data between cloud and on-premise systems and 61 percent remain unsatisfied syncing cloud-to-cloud applications and data.

12

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