SECURE, CONNECTED CLOUD AND THE PATH TO EFFECTIVE IT MODERNISATION

Research Highlights

Improve Security

Businesses that implement unified hybrid cloud, cybersecurity, and connectivity with a single vendor are 45% more likely to see improved security.

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Importance of Integration

21% of businesses with disconnected infrastructures are challenged by poor integration.

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Leading Practices

Leaders in IT infrastructure are 2x more likely than laggard businesses to utilise an end-to-end, unified hybrid cloud environment.

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Top Criteria

56% of IT leaders successfully partner with solution providers who have experience enabling a unified and integrated infrastructure architecture.

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Jim Rapoza
VP & Principal Analyst, IT

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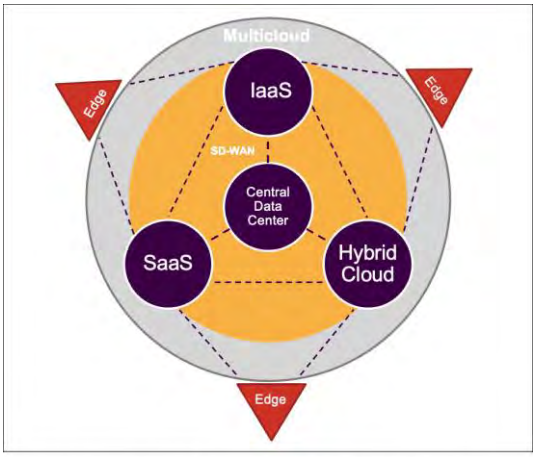
Overview

This research report uncovers how leading businesses collaborate with a seasoned partner to develop future-proof environments, yielding significant benefits in terms of enhanced cybersecurity, reliability, and cost efficiencies. Additionally, it offers actionable steps you can take for selecting the ideal hybrid cloud partner capable of constructing a comprehensive, secure, and dependable hybrid cloud infrastructure.

Embracing Hybrid Cloud: Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies for Success

The cloud revolutionised business operations, but despite the cloud's transformative impact, organisations quickly realised that a public cloud-only approach has its limitations, particularly in terms of cybersecurity, control, and reliability. Enter hybrid cloud: the new standard for IT infrastructure.

Aberdeen research shows that most businesses now embrace the hybrid cloud, enjoying the best of both worlds—public cloud and on-premises environments. Yet, implementing an effective hybrid cloud comes with its own challenges, especially in securely connecting hybrid infrastructures and deploying critical new technologies such as artificial intelligence.



A secure, connected cloud combines multicloud, on-premises, and hybrid cloud in end-to-end infrastructure with secure, software-defined connectivity.

Successful hybrid cloud deployments hinge on unified, end-to-end solutions that seamlessly integrate compute, connectivity, security, and management. Leading organisations are leveraging edge and secure connectivity technologies to modernise and ensure high performing and secure connections across their business.

To gain a deeper understanding of the secure, connected hybrid cloud journey, we'll explore the key benefits of selecting an end-to-end solution from a single partner. We'll also examine the key challenges hindering hybrid cloud implementations and the strategies that leading organisations leverage to enhance their connected IT infrastructure.

The Impact of Choosing a Secure, Connected Cloud Solution

Aberdeen's research on the effective deployment of IT infrastructures shows that businesses with fully integrated, end-to-end secure and connected hybrid cloud environments collaborate with a partner who understands all aspects of the infrastructure, including cloud, edge, connectivity, cybersecurity, and resiliency.

These findings show that organisations successfully undergoing modernisation take advantage of enterprise-ready solutions from an experienced provider in order to achieve the best outcomes. With a fully secure, connected cloud infrastructure deployed, these businesses achieve several key benefits, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Secure, Connected Cloud Brings Key Benefits

Businesses that implement unified hybrid cloud, security, and connectivity with a single vendor are:

45%	More likely to see improved cybersecurity
48%	More likely to report lower IT costs
50%	More likely to experience less downtime
38%	More likely to speed up deployment of applications and services
50%	More likely to report increased ROI for IT investments

With an infrastructure in place that has cybersecurity baked into everything, ranging from cloud to servers to how everyone and everything is connected, businesses are 45% more likely than competitors to report improved security and take advantage of key technologies such as SASE (Secure Access Service Edge). These advantages also lead to increased reliability and availability for vital systems, as they are 50% more likely to see less downtime.

Compare this to an organisation that must try to bolt cybersecurity onto disconnected and disparate public cloud and on-premises systems. Our research consistently shows that this band-aid approach to security leads to more complexity and less reliability.

Businesses that adopt a unified secure, connected cloud solution from an experienced single provider are 38% more likely to report faster deployment of applications and services, leading to improvements in the bottom line. When compared to their competitors with more disconnected and siloed infrastructures, secure, connected cloud businesses are 48% more likely to report lower IT costs and 50% more likely to see increased ROI.

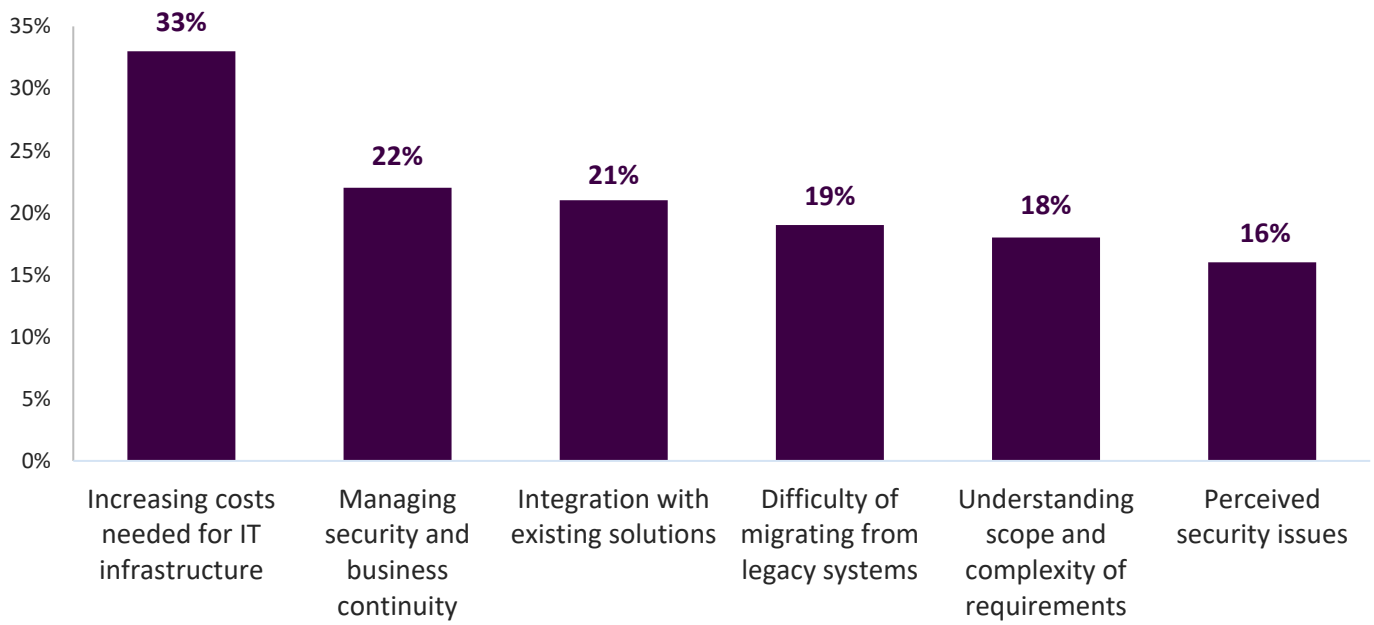
Barriers to Business Connectivity and Innovation

For many businesses, building a hybrid cloud infrastructure entails a multitude of choices. But for organisations that are strapped for time, personnel, and resources, making the right decisions can be difficult, especially if they lack internal expertise in cutting-edge cloud, cybersecurity, and connectivity technologies. In cases where different partners with siloed experience and knowledge are involved, there's a risk of constructing an infrastructure that is strong in one area but weak in all others.

This scenario can lead to disconnected systems, poor reliability, and complex security requirements. For example, a business with unreliable and slow connectivity will end up with limited access to vital applications and services and will waste vital resources constantly dealing with connectivity issues and looking for support from multiple providers.

This is why our research shows that adopting a multi-solutions approach is not typically the best way to create a modernised hybrid cloud environment. Businesses opting for this strategy often find themselves increasing their workload and adding more challenges, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Top Challenges without a Secure, Connected Cloud



Source: Aberdeen Strategy & Research, 2024 n=210

Looking at the top six challenges (out of a list of over twenty), it is unsurprising to find that IT costs are a top pain point (and as we've seen it's one of the principal benefits of a secure, connected cloud solution). Additionally, challenges relating to security issues and ensuring reliability are also among the top six, highlighting areas where a secured, connected cloud excels.

Interestingly, the remaining top challenges all deal with the difficulties of trying to get disparate and disconnected technologies to work together. We see that these businesses face pain points around integration of solutions, migrating to new technologies, and complexity.

Our research further indicates that a disconnected approach poses difficulties in leveraging AI. These businesses face greater obstacles in areas such as compute capabilities and cloud capacity when it comes to using AI.

Leading organisations address these challenges by collaborating with a single vendor that offers an end-to-end secure and well-connected cloud. This strategic approach allows them to overcome hurdles and establish a future-proof foundation for their business.

Key Strategies for Businesses to Modernise from Edge to Cloud

Organisations that are leaders in IT infrastructure reliability and performance take advantage of unified, secure, connected hybrid cloud environments designed for modern hybrid and cloud native architectures. These businesses, equipped with solutions from single partners that offer the best capabilities of hybrid cloud, cybersecurity, and high-performance connectivity, have the agility and innovation required for today's top organisations.

A top strategy of leading businesses to address the complexity of multicloud and hybrid cloud environments is to focus on improving connectivity.

Leaders in this domain are leveraging hybrid cloud architectures that come from a provider who offers end-to-end infrastructures that enable high performance, reliability and data security. In fact, looking at our data on leaders in IT infrastructure, (defined as those in the top 30% of key metrics around reliability, cybersecurity and performance), we see that they are twice more likely than laggard businesses to utilise an end-to-end, unified hybrid cloud environment.

Organisations can gain many of the advantages and improved capabilities of the leaders by implementing hybrid cloud architectures with end-to-end cybersecurity and connectivity capabilities.

Looking at the leaders, we see that, along with implementing an end-to-end secure, connected cloud environment, they also focus on other key IT infrastructure strategies to improve. Among their top strategies are:

- **Improve Network Connectivity (57%):** Leaders understand that the most critical element of any infrastructure is how it is connected, especially to optimise performance and end-user experience, and enable key cybersecurity capabilities such as zero trust and SASE. The best applications, services, and data are useless if employees and customers can't access them reliably, quickly and securely.
- **Upgrade On-Premises Hardware (74%):** A common mistake that many organisations make when utilising the cloud to modernise is to focus too much on the public cloud. However, our research shows that the main factor in a

successful hybrid cloud implementation is to have a private infrastructure that is designed to work in hybrid cloud environments. This is why leading businesses heavily focus on upgrading and modernising their on-premises hardware. In fact, they are 50% more likely to do this when compared to average and laggard organisations.

The Importance of Picking the Right Partners and Technology Solutions

When choosing hybrid cloud technologies and partners, organisations typically consider criteria such as reputation, support, and costs. But often businesses focus too much on one aspect of the infrastructure like cloud or security without taking into account the end-to-end nature of their infrastructure.

Examining organisations that are leaders in IT infrastructure success, we find that a top criterion in their partner and provider selection process (endorsed by 56% of leaders) is whether those partners possess experience and skills in unified and integrated infrastructure architectures. These leaders understand that selecting core infrastructure elements like cloud, on-premises compute, cybersecurity and networking separately and then trying to integrate them after the fact will only increase complexity and make it much harder to ensure strong security and reliability for their IT environments.

Exploring key innovations such as AI, our research shows that a secure, connected cloud approach can improve an organisation's ability to leverage artificial intelligence. With an end-to-end architecture in place, they are:

- **20% more likely to have successfully implemented AI**
- **18% more likely to have generative AI programmes in place**
- **2x more likely to be using AI to automate application and server deployments**

Recommended Steps

Businesses that implement a hybrid cloud IT infrastructure that combines strong cybersecurity with an updated on-premises infrastructure and reliable and fast connectivity achieve several vital benefits. However, to reach the level of IT infrastructure leaders, they must follow some key best practices.

If your business is frequently putting out fires due to issues such as unreliable connectivity, data security holes, lack of scalability and poor performance, then you might need to do some work to become a leader as well as adopt a strong hybrid cloud foundation.

Achieving the maximum potential of this hybrid cloud approach requires choosing a partner with experience and solutions that cover everything from cloud to servers to connectivity to cybersecurity.

To build a complete, secure, and reliable hybrid cloud infrastructure, organisations should:

- **Know Your IT Technology Requirements:** A business can't improve and modernise systems that they don't fully understand. In order for organisations to achieve the best results from a hybrid cloud transformation, they need to work with a partner who can help them gain complete visibility and understanding of all of their servers, applications, network needs, and cybersecurity processes, both on-premise and in the cloud.

- **Create an Infrastructure Ready for Hybrid Cloud:** At the beginning of this report, we listed the key benefits of a secure, connected cloud approach, including increased network security, high availability, reliability, and lower costs. But achieving these gains can become impossible if a business has on-premises systems, including servers, storage, and network connectivity, that are older, stressed, and difficult to manage. Organisations that succeed with hybrid cloud work with a partner who can ensure that their entire IT foundation is modernised, reliable and ready to meet the demands of today's technologies.

- **Understand Cloud Needs:** Many organisations believe that deploying a public cloud infrastructure is as easy as choosing a provider. However, leaders in IT infrastructure know that success means putting in the work up front to know what should run in the public cloud and what should be on-premise. Through the work of understanding how services and applications need to run, businesses will have a more effective hybrid cloud.

- **Future-Proof for Tomorrow's Technologies:** Businesses must be prepared for the new technologies that are constantly emerging as they provide both increased opportunities and additional challenges. With a reliable and secure end-to-end and connected hybrid cloud infrastructure, organisations will lower the complexity of emerging technologies and boost their ability to leverage them and build competitive advantages.

- **Unify Cloud, Cybersecurity, and Connectivity:** The ability to avoid siloed systems and build an end-to-end cloud, cybersecurity and connectivity infrastructure is both a top challenge and a top criterion for businesses looking to deploy a hybrid cloud. By working with a partner who understands and offers cloud, cybersecurity and network connectivity, these organisations can get the most out of their entire IT infrastructure and reach their IT and business goals.

Organisations can achieve their vital IT needs by working with an experienced partner with the capabilities and expertise to implement a secure, connected hybrid cloud environment. This approach provides the agility, reliability, performance, and security necessary for success both today and in the future.

Related Research

- *Growth of Multicloud Raises Stakes on Cloud Training Needs*, November 2023
- *Overcoming AI and Cloud Hurdles to Build a Carbon-Neutral and Sustainable Business*, November 2023
- *Building an Integrated and Optimized Platform for Getting the Most Out of AI Inference*, September 2023

About Aberdeen Strategy & Research

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