Migrate, Manage, Protect
Organizations’ Journey to Productivity & Collaboration in the Cloud
The cloud is no longer an enterprise anomaly. Wherever you look—the public sector, Fortune 500 corporations, Main Street businesses—organizations are turning to cloud systems to scale their operations, increase their employees’ productivity, and facilitate innovation around their products, services, and customer experiences.

As of late 2016, more than three-quarters of organizations (76 percent) hosted up to half of their software applications in the cloud. By 2020, this continued cloud shift will impact more than $1 trillion in IT spending—particularly around application software and infrastructure, according to Gartner. At that point, the true anomalies will be the organizations still clinging to on-premises technology alone—rendering “no-cloud” policies as obsolete and out of touch as “no internet” policies are considered today.

For IT leaders, embracing the cloud is not a matter of if, but when—and, more importantly, how. As the demand for cloud solutions grows, so will the number of decisions organizations face: what vendor to use, what migration approach to implement, and whether or not to engage third party service or solution support during the adoption process. And the decisions don’t end after migration. As many IT departments know all too well, once implementation is complete, the ongoing challenge of effectively managing and securing their cloud investments begins.

AvePoint, the Microsoft Cloud Expert, surveyed more than 150 U.S. IT professionals to gauge organizations’ adoption of cloud-based productivity and collaboration applications, and understand the core challenges they face when migrating, managing, and protecting these solutions.

1 AvePoint research.  
Key Findings

77% of organizations use cloud-based productivity/collaboration applications.

Almost half of organizations took three to six months to migrate to their cloud-based productivity/collaboration app. Most spent more than $50,000 to do so.

47% of IT professionals cite security as their organization’s top challenge when managing cloud-based productivity/collaboration applications.

53% Organizations that engage a third party for migrating, managing, or protecting their core cloud-based productivity/collaboration platform are more likely to feel the data in those platforms is secure.
Taking Stock of Enterprise Productivity & Collaboration

The majority of organizations (77 percent) have already made the leap to cloud-based productivity/collaboration platforms. Among these businesses, Microsoft platforms are a clear favorite, but most rely on a blend of vendors rather than locking employees into one.

For instance, although only 13 percent of IT professionals count Google for Work as their organization’s primary productivity/collaboration app, 39 percent say Google Apps are among the variety of programs employees use to get their jobs done. Similarly, 21 percent cite Dropbox as their core productivity app, but twice as many (42 percent) say it is still used actively by staff.

What drives organizations to migrate to the cloud is not as simple as “everyone’s doing it, we should too,” nor is it purely a technical issue. The main factors driving IT leaders to push for migration have much more to do with the cloud’s potential to improve costs, operations, and staff efficiency.

**PRIMARY PRODUCTIVITY/COLLABORATION APP**

- **Office 365**: 45%
- **Dropbox**: 21%
- **Google for Work**: 13%
- **SharePoint 2016**: 10%
- **IBM Connection Docs**: 6%
- **Box**: 1.6%
- **Other**: 1.6%
- **Basecamp**: 2.4%

**WHY ORGANIZATIONS MIGRATE PRODUCTIVITY/COLLABORATION PLATFORMS TO THE CLOUD**

- **Cost reduction**
- **Need for increased employee productivity**
- **Improved transparency and collaboration**
- **Corporate innovation**
- **Speed to market**
Migration: Investigating Who, How Long, and How Much

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to migrating productivity/collaboration data to the cloud.

On average, middle IT managers are the first internal stakeholders to start the conversation about migrating—though they’re not necessarily the final project decision-makers. Fifty-two percent of C-level executives—technical (28 percent) and non (24 percent)—make the ultimate call on cloud migration, highlighting the extent to which cloud computing is considered a business issue as much as a technical one. A comparable amount of CIOs/CTOs and non-technical executives have final authority over migration decisions, highlighting the growing role the lines of business play in IT projects and budgeting.

Of organizations that have completed the migration process, almost half (49 percent) contracted a third party to support the process. Enlisting outside help is slightly more common among larger businesses (58 percent of those with more than 500 employees), than small (43 percent of those with 1–100 employees) and mid-sized firms (39 percent of those with 101–500 employees).

How long migration takes and how much it costs are also far from fixed amounts. Forty-seven percent of IT professionals report that their organization spent three to six months migrating to a cloud-based productivity/collaboration app, while 36 percent wrapped up the project in less than three months.

From a financial perspective, most organizations invest at least $50,000 into these migration initiatives—including 33 percent that spend $100,000 or more.  

Click here to learn more about AvePoint’s Office 365 and SharePoint 2016 migration services.
Research note: This survey was conducted prior to Microsoft’s announcement of their expanded FastTrack program. Microsoft FastTrack is the Office 365 customer success service for business customers, included at no additional charge. Through March 2017, eligible customers can receive free migration support from SharePoint 2013 to Office 365. For more information, visit https://fasttrack.microsoft.com/.

Late to the Game: Plans for Adopting Cloud-Based Productivity and Collaboration Platforms

Nearly one-quarter of organizations are still holding out on cloud-based productivity/collaboration platforms, primarily due to concerns over security (more so than costs or skills gaps).

Hesitations aside, most of this group won’t stick with on-premises, legacy platforms for long: 72 percent are actively planning to migrate to the Microsoft Cloud. More than half (57 percent) of IT professionals whose organizations are preparing for to migrate to the Microsoft Cloud (Office 365 or SharePoint 2016) plan to make a move within the next six months, and only 15 percent will wait more than a year.

Organizations that have yet to migrate know that the process won’t happen without at least a few challenges along the way, but few concerns trouble IT teams as much as data security. While still important factors to consider, issues like project delays and employee workflow disruption are significantly less likely to weigh on IT professionals’ minds. To help clear some of these obstacles, more than four in 10 IT professionals (42 percent) plan to bring on a third-party software vendor or service provider during their migration to Office 365 or SharePoint 2016.

Compared to organizations that have made the switch, those still planning a migration to the Microsoft Cloud may be underestimating the associated costs. Forty-six percent of these IT professionals expect to spend less than $50,000 on the project, and only 19 percent believe they’ll spend between $50,000 and $100,000—projections that could fall flat once the process is complete.
Managing Productivity & Collaboration in the Cloud

As IT professionals in any cloud-reliant enterprise will confirm, migration is only the first step toward unlocking the benefits of cloud technology. Effective, ongoing management is the key to guaranteeing a tangible return on investment.

Currently, the majority (75 percent) of IT professionals say their main internal cost associated with managing these core platforms is the IT department’s time. Overall, 62 percent report that the day-to-day upkeep of these programs accounts for up to a quarter of their corporate IT budgets.

**INTERNAL COST OF MANAGING CLOUD-BASED PRODUCTIVITY/COLLABORATION APPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT department’s time</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtime</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service provider fees</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure costs</td>
<td>23%</td>
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These costs may be why 55 percent of organizations partner with third-party software and service providers to help manage their core productivity and collaboration platforms. For many IT leaders, the cost of retaining a third-party services or solution is dramatically outweighed by the opportunity to free up internal staff to focus on more strategic, revenue-generating work.

As with third-party migration support, larger organizations are more likely to call in reinforcements for everyday cloud management. Forty-six percent of small and mid-sized
organizations (with 1-500 employees) use a third-party software or services provider for cloud management assistance, compared to 61 percent with 500-1,000 employees and 64 percent with more than 1,000 on staff.

An organization’s most pressing cloud management challenges vary depending on its IT department’s expertise and existing resources, but—in line with many respondents’ top migration concerns—security is most likely to keep IT professionals up at night.

As the cost of security incidents skyrockets (the price tag of a data breach hit $4 million in 2016), it’s no surprise that 53 percent of IT professionals rank security as their number one cloud app management challenge. And with industries from retail and healthcare to financial services under pressure to ensure the privacy of their customers’ personal information, regulatory compliance represents a growing burden that IT departments can’t always effectively govern on their own.

**TOP PRODUCTIVITY/COLLABORATION APP MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES**

- **53%** Security
- **34%** Regulatory compliance
- **29%** Usage reporting
- **28%** Platform backup/restore; Disaster recovery
- **27%** Storage reporting
- **23%** Managing metadata
- **22%** SLA compliance

Learn more about how AvePoint helps organizations manage Office 365 and SharePoint.

The Cloud Protection Confidence Gap

From a cloud app migration and management perspective, security is IT professionals’ “Achilles’ heel.” In fact, less than half (45 percent) of respondents say they’re very confident that the data in their core cloud-based productivity/collaboration app is secure; 52 percent are “somewhat” confident.

Despite this lack of assuredness, only around half of organizations (57 percent) work with a third party to protect these critical programs (note that among the largest businesses, with more than 1,000 employees, this jumps to 73 percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence in Core Cloud-Based Productivity/Collaboration Apps’ Data Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very confident 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat confident 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat unconfident 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Steps Taken to Protect Corporate Data in the Cloud**

- File encryption: 58%
- Data calculation: 57%
- End user training: 47%
- Automated archiving: 38%
- File-sharing alerts: 30%
- Adopted DLP solution: 30%
- Real-time DLP monitoring: 26%
- Regular risk assessments: 22%

Learn more about AvePoint’s Office 365 and SharePoint protection services.
Some of this insecurity may also stem from the fact that many organizations have yet to take requisite steps to protect their cloud-based data. Less than half of IT professionals report that their companies have trained end users on cloud app and data handling best practices, and less than one-third have an alert system in place to notify IT when internal file-sharing conflicts with corporate policies. Even fewer conduct frequent risk assessments to identify weak spots in their productivity/collaboration platforms or end user behavior.

Compounding the issue, corporate protocol around cloud and data security are not always silver bullet solutions. Though most organizations (82 percent) have a governance plan in place around their core productivity/collaboration app, only half say these policies are well-enforced—an area where the help of a third party services or solutions provider can make a noticeable difference.

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**Microsoft Cloud Companies’ Management Benefits**

Long before the cloud took organizations by storm, Microsoft products were business staples for productivity and collaboration. Today, even as the vendor landscape for productivity tools diversifies (thanks to both bellwether brands and VC-backed startups), Microsoft platforms deliver somewhat of an edge.

Compared to organizations that rely on other vendors for their core productivity/collaboration app, those that use Office 365 or SharePoint 2016 are less likely to contend with common cloud management headaches. Even still, organizations relying on Microsoft’s productivity tools can create a better end user and IT experience with the help of a third-party software or services provider.

![Comparison graphic](image-url)

- 17% (41%) Less likely to struggle with *platform backup/restore*
- 24% (31%) Less likely to struggle with *disaster recovery*
- 18% (28%) Less likely to struggle with *managing metadata*
- 52% (37%) More likely to be very confident that the data in their app is secure

- Organizations that rely on other vendors
- Organizations that use Office 365 or SharePoint 2016

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When Third-Party Support Matters

Across the cloud platform migration, management, and protection processes, organizations are split in their decision to partner with an external firm. But while contracting third-party experts often requires additional time and financial investments, the added support (for migration or ongoing oversight) sets organizations up for more robust cloud platform security in the long run.

Compared to organizations that adopted a cloud-based productivity/collaboration platform on their own, those that brought in a third-party software or service provider were less likely to wrap up migration in less than three months (47 percent) versus those that didn’t consult an external partner (28 percent). Those that hired an outside firm were also three times less likely to keep the project under $50,000—illustrating the time and resource investment inherent to contracting external support. Having third-party expertise during migration, however, may pay dividends in peace of mind later on. Fifty-two percent of IT professionals who used outside migration support are very confident that the data in their productivity/collaboration app is secure, versus 38 percent who migrated solo.

The security advantage of working with a dedicated partner extends to IT departments that contract third-party software or services for ongoing cloud app management and protection as well. In both instances, organizations that engage outside experts are more likely to be confident in the safety of their cloud data, and have comprehensive cloud governance structures in place.

**CLOUD MANAGEMENT WITH V. WITHOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT**
- Third-party protection
- Solo protection

- Very confident that cloud data is secure: 52% (third-party) vs. 37% (solo)
- Cloud app governance plan in place: 94% (third-party) vs. 67% (solo)
- Governance is very well enforced: 55% (third-party) vs. 42% (solo)

**CLOUD PROTECTION WITH V. WITHOUT THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT**

- Very confident that cloud data is secure: 50% (third-party) vs. 38% (solo)
- Cloud app governance plan in place: 91% (third-party) vs. 69% (solo)

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Conclusion

Most organizations today have embraced the power of cloud-based productivity and collaboration tools, making another step toward rendering “no-cloud” policies obsolete. Migrating away from on-premises systems, however, by no means marks the end of an organization’s cloud challenges.

Cloud app adoption is not a zero-sum game. Business and IT leaders push their organizations toward the cloud to drive gains in efficiency, innovation, and cost savings. But when cloud management and security creates a resource-intensive burden for IT departments, the technology’s advantages become less potent.

This is all the more reason why organizations should not be so quick to confront cloud migration and oversight alone. With third-party support, IT departments can take a more methodical approach to adoption—addressing flaws in their current productivity software strategy, getting a firm grasp on the data they already have, and pursuing a migration plan that stays on-time and on-budget.

An external provider can also help organizations automate (if not takeover) routine cloud management and security tasks, from backups to governance enforcement. As a result, IT teams reclaim time to focus on more valuable, higher-level projects—and can rest assured that their corporate data is protected.

Tackling cloud-based productivity and collaboration with outside help may not necessarily be the road less traveled, but it can make a world of difference.
AvePoint is the Microsoft Cloud expert. Over 15,000 companies and 5 million cloud users worldwide trust AvePoint to accelerate the migration, management, and protection of their Office 365 and SharePoint data. AvePoint’s integrated cloud, hybrid, and on-premises software solutions are enhanced by 24/7 support and award-winning services. Organizations across six continents and all industries rely on AvePoint to ease transition to the Microsoft Cloud, increase IT administrator productivity, and satisfy governance and compliance objectives.

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Find out how AvePoint can help your business accelerate the migration, management and protection of Office 365 and SharePoint.