Top Cloud Priorities for CxOs

A framework for developing the initial research deliverables for the CSA CxO Trust Working Group
Acknowledgments

Main Authors:

Pete Chronis
Jim Reavis
John Yeoh

Key Contributors:

Illena Armstrong
Craig Balding
Vincent Campitelli
Daniele Catteddu
John DiMaria
Elad Yoran
CSA CxO Trust: Addressing the C-Suite

The Cloud Security Alliance (CSA) has been addressing cloud security challenges since 2009. Architectures and frameworks originated by CSA are used throughout the industry to establish baseline security levels and compliance in the cloud. Documented cloud best practices and implementation guidance from CSA have helped Global 2000 companies securely expand into cloud and other emerging technologies while adopting next generation methodologies such as DevOps and Zero Trust. Cloud has become the dominant compute model worldwide. C-level executives are the decision makers on the use of cloud to advance and secure the enterprise.

CSA CxO Trust is a broad-based initiative to create a common understanding of and seek solutions to cloud computing and cybersecurity issues of concern to all stakeholders within organizational executive teams and governing bodies. The initiative has as its focal point the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), and its mission is to support an accelerated and safe adoption of cloud and cybersecurity practices by aligning the priorities of the entire C-Suite. The CxO Trust initiative will enable CISOs with tools to communicate business risk, governance and compliance issues of cloud computing and cybersecurity in the proper context to their peers within the C-Suite and the boards of directors. This initiative will be forward looking and innovative in advancing cloud computing and cybersecurity within the C-Suite.

The CSA CxO Trust Working Group is currently being formed to conduct research consisting of best practices, metrics, surveys, C-level presentations and other tools in support of the overall initiative mission.

The working group will regularly update and maintain a source document of Top Cloud Priorities for CxOs. This document combined with overall Cloud Security Alliance research priorities will create a foundation for the working group research roadmap. What follows is the initial draft of Top Cloud Priorities for CxOs for the working group to debate, modify and build upon. We ask interested experts to join the working group and work with us to refine these priorities and help us build valuable best practices and tools related to each.
Top Cloud Priorities for CxOs

Top Cloud Priorities for CxOs is created to equip C-level executives with industry guidance to build pragmatic cloud security projects and strategies that accelerate the secure use of cloud and bring added value to the business. Even though the content analysis is catered towards C-level technology owners, the entire C-suite can benefit from these guidelines for integrating and defining corporate level cloud security strategies.

The following twelve priorities were selected for further analysis based on popularity and applicable content found within CSA and industry publications. Other topics will continue to be assessed and can be found later in this document. The reader will note that some of the priorities are explicitly related to security, while in other cases addressing the cloud priority is enabled by implementing the appropriate security strategy.

**How do I explain cloud strategy to the board?**

An enterprise in the process of making a significant investment into cloud technologies may accelerate innovation and reduce cost, making the move to the cloud a strategic business enabler. Company boards need to have a better understanding of how cloud can enhance a company’s competitive advantage, optimize its existing business and help address risk.

It is common to find highly experienced board members who do not have an adequate understanding of cloud. It is important for senior executives to educate corporate boards in the value and risk of embracing cloud technologies.

**How do I reduce IT overhead moving to the cloud?**

This is a priority that has several dimensions. It is critical that the optimal technology and migration strategies be identified. Security requirements should be preserved and hopefully enhanced. The accounting treatment of the various costs encumbered and reduced should be understood for the short and long term.

**How do I manage 3rd party cloud security risks?**

While the typical enterprise is familiar with supply chain risk, the highly dynamic nature of cloud will challenge conventional practices.

**How do I develop a secure enterprise cloud operating model?**

Technology and cybersecurity executives need to understand the best model for developing, deploying and operating in the cloud once the migration has occurred that is business friendly and assure that their C-Suite counterparts understand their role in leveraging this model for their business priorities.
How do I cultivate the skills to support cloud environments?

Enterprise knowledge and employee skill sets are critical to business success. Cloud adoption renders some skill sets obsolete. Other existing skill sets are still critical but may be the responsibility of the cloud provider. Still other skill sets are new to the organization and comprise vendor-specific technical acumen, industry standards or introduce new operating models. The authoritative source of education in this highly dynamic environment may come from non-traditional sources. It is generally understood that the global cybersecurity workforce is undersized by several million professionals. Enterprises face challenges in hiring, training and retraining professionals adequately.

How does digital transformation change my approach to security?

Digital transformation, enabled by cloud, encourages a highly virtualized, software-defined view of the enterprise. CISOs need to assure that their security programs and control frameworks are compatible with this worldview.

What are the top 5 critical security considerations for cloud migration?

The importance of the migration phase of adopting cloud computing cannot be overstated. It can be critical to the overall success of the enterprise business priorities and when performed incorrectly can saddle the enterprise with technical debt for years to come. Building a consensus list of critical security considerations for this phase is an important endeavor.

How do I maintain compliance in the cloud?

We know it is not typical that an enterprise can outsource compliance responsibility, but the means by which we can gain assurance of satisfactory compliance in cloud’s shared model is often very different in practice.

How does cloud security bring value to the business?

The goal is that cloud security is not merely an operational overhead requirement in adopting cloud, but is shown to have greater intrinsic value by making the business operate at a much higher level.

How can I take advantage of automation in the cloud?

The massive increase in compute being used by businesses over the last several years is projected to continue to grow. Even with an increase in the staffing of qualified cloud and cloud security professionals, greater adoption of automation in cloud will be necessary to solve business problems.
How do I manage a hybrid cloud/legacy IT technology stack?

Most enterprises have developed a degree of complexity and business requirements that cannot be addressed by a single technology or vendor at any given point in time. Managing a hybrid cloud/legacy IT stack will be a reality, but how it is best done is a source of debate.

How do I manage risk in the cloud?

A fundamental question that requires surfacing the correct risk considerations and analyzes popular risk management frameworks and methodologies for their suitability for cloud.

Other CxO Priorities for Discussion

- How do I enhance speed to market using cloud technologies?
- How do I refactor legacy applications to make them cloud compatible?
- How do I develop a multi-cloud strategy?
- How do I control tech sprawl (unsanctioned use of cloud services)?
- How can CSA accelerate my secure adoption of cloud?
- How do I transition from on-prem to hybrid to 100% public cloud
- What are the top areas in cloud to focus on?
- What are the cloud specific compliance requirements I should be aware of?
- How do I train/educate employees on cloud?
- What is the path to a ZeroTrust environment?
- What is required is to apply a consistent approach to managing security across the entire enterprise?
- How will the cloud provide return on investment?
- How do we utilize the cloud to make our organization more resilient?
A Call for Participation in the CSA CxO Trust Working Group

Our landing page for the CSA CxO Trust initiative and the related working group is at www.cloudsecurityalliance.org/CxOTrust. This page will be regularly updated with news about the initiative and opportunities for industry participation and volunteering.