This Issue:

Why a Hybrid Cloud is Right for Your Business

The cloud can bring numerous benefits to a business. Public cloud offerings can reduce technology costs, provide scalability and flexibility to a business' computing infrastructure, promote collaboration, protect your business from data loss, and much, much more. What it cannot do, however, is guarantee the control some organizations wish to have over their technology infrastructure. Some businesses prioritize that control, while others are bound by industry and government-induced regulations. For those businesses, there is the hybrid cloud...
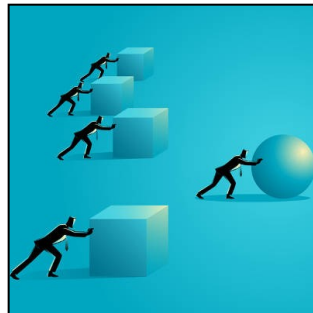
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About Directive

We are a technology consulting firm specializing in technology implementation and management for businesses. We're known for providing big-business, Enterprise-Level IT services to small and medium-sized businesses.

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You Can Benefit from Productivity Consultations

If you were to poll all the business owners in your general area, one point of contention they would all have is that their workforce investments stay static, while their returns are seemingly variable. A lot of the variance is tied to the fluctuations of staff productivity. Anyone who has paid someone else to do work understands that even if the jobs are all the same, people bring a fairly wide range of issues to work with them, and they can have troubling effects on the ability of a business to move forward. Today, we will take a look at the modern worker, their motivations, and how the right IT can work to leverage more consistency for your business.
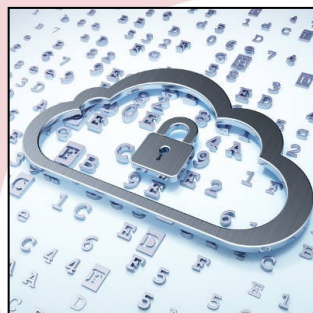
The Worker

The worker today is not unlike workers of the past. If they are focused and engaged, they are very productive, but when they are distracted--and there are many reasons they can be distracted--their productivity is all over the place. If too many distractions are allowed to drive your workforce away from productivity, your business stands to deal with product and service delays, cost overruns, and a general inefficiency that will leave it stagnant and not achieving the growth that you'd like to see.

In many ways, the modern worker is asked to do more than ever before. Businesses integrate technology to drive productivity, but many do it with less staff than before. Since technology is being integrated at a dizzying rate, and all with the same promise: improve efficiency, improve productivity, spur on collaborative efforts, etc. businesses are left depending on their staff to learn and use this technology proficiently. Unfortunately, all this dynamic new technology may be having the opposite effect on their workforce.

While the intention to give workers the technology they need to improve their job performance is a good one, many of the analytics tell a whole other story. The overwhelming amount of tech is being wasted and revenues generated have a smaller profit margin as a

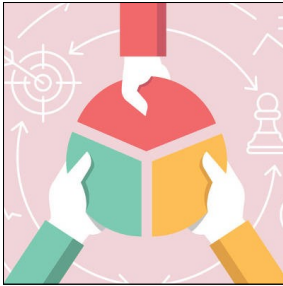## Using the Private Cloud Adds Security to Your Databases

Cloud-based databases are valuable for businesses on plenty of levels, but when you consider how much risk you expose your organization to by using a public cloud over a private solution, you suddenly start to realize that the ramifications could be far beyond repair. Compared to the public cloud, a private solution presents a greater opportunity for security, flexibility, and customization.

The Benefits of a Private Cloud Database

Databases, by virtue of what they are used for, need to be both accessible while remaining secure. The cloud is a great resource to leverage for the former, but the latter can be challenging to leverage properly with a public cloud solution. It's not enough to have the "relatively safe" mindset offered by public cloud solutions. You need to have a private cloud system that's hosted on your in-house infrastructure, or on that of a trusted third-party service provider with dedicated server space for your data.

By working with a managed service provider that can provide you with adequate hosting and security, you can make for a much better experience with private cloud databases. Here are some topics to keep in mind when determining your private cloud hosting op-

Fuel Productivity with Collaboration Tools

The modern perspective of productivity would not be possible without the use of collaboration tools. Some of them are so game changing that they can completely revolutionize the way you hold meetings, deal with clients, and manage in-house processes. We'll discuss how you can implement collaboration tools that work for your business, as well as use them to overcome the many challenges you might face in a business environment.

It should be noted that businesses of all sizes and industries can benefit from the following collaboration tools.

Cloud-Based Collaboration

This is more of a broad kind of solution rather than a specific kind of software or service. The cloud is a great environment for hosting and accessing collaborative solutions. Therefore, many organizations are taking advantage of it to create opportunities for employees to work together in a secure online environment. Examples of how the cloud facilitates collaboration include working together on documents, sheets, projects, and so much more, both in and out of the office.

Instant Messaging and Communication

The ability to send and receive messages immediately without having to compose an email is invaluable, as not every single task is going to require the time it takes to put together a solid message. Instant messaging can also lend a sense of urgency to a request, as it takes the guesswork out of hoping someone will see your email or missed call/voicemail in time to address the issue.

Task Management

Collaboration is made much easier with a central point of contact, also known as an intranet or productivity hub. One modern example of this is Slack, which offers communication and collaboration tools integrated into a single platform, allowing individuals, teams, and departments the ability to stay connected and efficient while working on projects.

Video Conferencing and Meeting Software

It's easy to hold meetings in the workplace, but it gets more complicated when the person you're trying to meet with isn't in the office. With the right technology on your side, you can be just as productive and break down barriers holding your organization back. Video conferencing provides a method of face-to-face interaction that you can't get otherwise, and you can opt into other services that mesh well with video conferencing to further improve the way you communicate.

Directive can help you implement the best and brightest technology solutions to augment collaboration. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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result. The ROI of adding a certain technology is only as good as the benefit the organization sees from it.

Another issue with the disengaged worker is that they typically don't warm to collaboration. In fact, with all the collaboration tools that are available, only three-to-five percent of employees are responsible for one-third of all collaboration efforts, a troubling trend; and, one that is on the rise, albeit slowly. Workers today tend to have more flexible hours and work conditions than ever before, but the productivity gained from this shift is more in the hours of available coverage than it is in overall productivity.

The Middle Manager

Productivity has only improved by one-to-two percent over the past eight years despite the often enormous technology advancements we've been privy to over that time. More technology investment typically comes with a lack of investment in the workforce. This is a troubling trend that has a real impact on many organizations' bottom lines. Decision makers understand they need a base-level of human productivity in order for their processes to churn out a profitable product. Some industries have a larger margin of error than others, but all-in-all, these executives depend on their middle management to handle the day-to-day administration of their staff, and they don't have time to actively manage staff.

This truth is that there is often a lot of inefficiency, and unhappiness, with modern workers. Consider that over two-thirds of the average middle manager's job is spent in meetings or replying to various forms of correspondence, and you can see why they struggle providing the type of leadership decision makers require from them.

This all creates a situation where the company is dependant on the technology systems, not merely using them as to augment the organization's productivity efforts and a workforce that is disengaged, unprepared, and reliant on technology that they despise. This is obviously not an ideal situation. After all, technology is supposed to be there to help your staff build better, more collaborative processes, that keeps people engaged and happy coming into work each day.

The Decision Maker

The average decision maker is one...

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Using the Private Cloud Adds Security to Your Databases

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tions.

Considerations for Choosing a Provider
Location— Depending on the type of solution you're going for, you can either implement a fully hosted private cloud on your service provider's infrastructure, or you can host your private cloud solution in-house, maintained and managed by your in-house technicians.

Reliability— Access to your cloud-based databases needs to be constant and consistent, as you never know when you'll need to access the data contained on them (or add to them). You should shoot for maximum uptime and a reliable provider with a reputation for quali-

ty service.

Security— Your private cloud databases give you great power and influence over the security of the chosen solution, but you need to make sure that you take advantage of it. Ask your cloud provider what kind of additional cloud infrastructure security they can offer for you, including secondary authentication measures, encrypted databases, and more.

Flexibility— Private cloud databases are great, but only if they can provide your business with accessibility on a flexible basis. You should be able to provide (or revoke) access to your private cloud on a whim, as your workforce can change

by the day.

Choosing a cloud provider doesn't have to be a pain. In fact, it's downright easy if you have a solid IT provider like Directive around to back you up. We can host your business' private cloud solutions on our servers where they will be protected, maintained, and managed without your business lifting a finger. To learn more, reach out to us at 607.433.2200.

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How Downtime Kills Productivity

Downtime is the enemy of the modern business, and it's easy to see why. However, not all organizations have the foresight to imagine a scenario when their operations are impacted so badly that they simply cannot function. We're here to share our knowledge of downtime, its effects, and what you can do to keep it from affecting your organization.

What is Downtime?
Downtime can come in many forms, whether it's caused by a data breach, natural disaster, or hardware failure. The common factor among them is that your operations are impeded to the point where your organization simply cannot function as it's intended. We want to emphasize that it doesn't matter what the cause is; any situation you find yourself in where your business isn't functioning at its best can be considered downtime.

Sometimes downtime isn't as obvious as you might think. While some situations,

like your Internet or electricity being down, are beyond your control, others might be prevented with the right countermeasures--but more on that later.

What Are Its Effects?
Let's use some of the more common instances of downtime to explain what downtime causes. Look at any instance when your organization isn't working like it should be, like the electricity in your office shutting off unexpectedly. Your employees might be sitting around in the dark, talking to each other and

not getting any work done. After all, what can they do without computers? In today's business world, it's not uncommon for organizations to rely entirely on the power of machines, and they are therefore at the mercy of electricity to keep office technology operating.
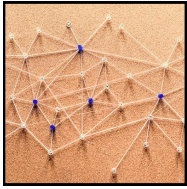
Consider the fact that you are paying your employees for the time they are spending in the office, whether they are working or not. Consider the amount of lost revenue from clients trying to access your infrastructure. Consider the fact that you can't provide support without access to your organization's technological assets. All of this coalesces into a considerable expense for your organization--and that's not even mentioning the issues that arise regarding fixing the problem itself.

In fact, fixing the issue can be one of the most expensive parts of the whole process. It could mean replacing a server unit, implementing a solution that resolves the problem, damage control for your reputation, and most important of all, the massive strain it can place on…

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Is Your Infrastructure Hindering Your Business' Growth?

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMB) have historically been restricted in what they can do with their technology infrastructures. However, there are now options that an SMB can leverage that enable it to accomplish more with their infrastructure - but this requires the SMB to have a plan in place.

What Is Your IT Infrastructure?

In short, your IT infrastructure is everything that contributes to your business' ability to store and use the data it has collected - including your network, your storage system, and the hardware and software solutions used to access them. In other words, it's your business' backbone, supporting your operations and allowing data to be transported where it needs to go.

It should go without saying that your IT infrastructure is a critical consideration for your business' success. This means that you will need to dedicate the time and energy needed to devise a strategy for your IT infrastructure to follow.

Determining Your IT Infrastructure Strategy

In order to be optimal for your business' needs, your revised infrastructure strategy should touch on a few best practices.

Simplification

As you've needed to improve your infrastructure, it's likely that it has grown based on the individual needs it had at the time. As a result, there's a good chance that your IT infrastructure has a mix of technologies in it, which makes it harder to improve and update it later.

When designing your new infrastructure, you should leverage the modern standardization of software and integrations to create a centralized platform that enables data to be utilized across the business. This will help to simplify your IT and improve your workplace experience, often providing more functionality and flexibility for your users.

Flexibility

Speaking of flexibility, information technology is always adapting and changing, which means that your IT infrastructure needs to be able to accommodate these adaptations and changes. Considering your current infrastructure, ask yourself where your biggest speed constraints are, and how they can be rectified. Furthermore, are there any ways that you can consolidate your existing system to further limit your risks while advancing your processes?
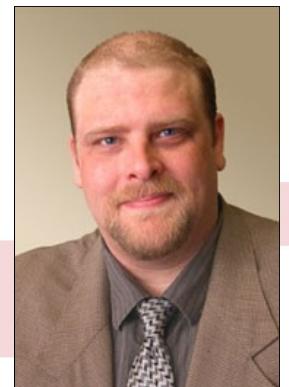
Service-Focused

When you really consider it, your IT provides a service to your operations, in that it enables them to happen. While this may be a simplistic view of it, it isn't any less true. When designing your infrastructure, you need to keep in mind that it will be providing your entire business with the tools that it needs to function.

Consider what you need your infrastructure to do, and what you will need it to do in the future, and plan it accordingly...

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AND HE WAS LIKE, "I'M BEHIND SCHEDULE BECAUSE MY PC IS SO SLOW!"

AND I'M LIKE, "I KNOW YOUR BROWSER HISTORY, MAN. I AM NOT THE PROBLEM!"