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Understand the three stages of delivery automation maturity.

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#5

Leverage the knowledge of experts.

Top 5 Tips for Automating Infrastructure Provisioning Via the Cloud

Turn the “promise” of the cloud model into positive IT outcomes.

You want to harness the cloud to accelerate the delivery of apps and IT services. That means you need to automate infrastructure provisioning across multiple hardware platforms, hypervisors and clouds. But what are the key considerations and critical steps? And what is the right starting point? Here are five key points to help you focus on what matters most: Creating positive IT outcomes.

#1. Examine your attitude about infrastructure provisioning.

The days when “infrastructure” referred to clusters of physical systems are gone. The notion that infrastructure provisioning is a function—a “thing”—is passé. And the idea that IT’s role is to be the Ministry of No is hopelessly outdated. If your team is serious about becoming a true service provider to its constituents, you’ve already taken the first step forward on the path to cloud-based automation of infrastructure provisioning. If not, that’s the first issue to address.

#2. Understand the three stages of delivery automation maturity.

There are three phases to cloud-based infrastructure and application delivery automation. Stage 1 is about automating delivery of Infrastructure across heterogeneous physical and virtual environments and being able to track the VM costs effectively. Stage 2 focuses on application and middleware automation, so IT organizations can more quickly support business requests for applications such as Exchange, Oracle, and middleware requests such as a PaaS environment. Stage 3 extends the capabilities for infrastructure, middleware and application delivery automation to the hybrid cloud. When your organization arrives at this stage, it can automate across public clouds such as Amazon AWS, Microsoft Azure, and VMware’s own public cloud vCloud Air.

#3. Specify what you want to achieve at each stage.

Assessing the full range of potential benefits at each phase can help with cost-justifying your move to cloud-based infrastructure provisioning and building support among business leaders. Here’s a brief recap.

Stage 1, which includes automated VM provisioning, infrastructure costing, and heterogeneity support, can help you reduce planned maintenance for storage and servers, cut the length of outages, increase scalability, save money on power consumption, improve compliance and security, and help you avoid the costs of projects that are not revenue-positive. 451 Research¹ puts the ROI of this phase at 34%.

Stage 2, which involves automating middleware and apps provisioning and creating policy-based network/storage services, can create administration and management savings, cut CapEx, dramatically reduce storage system failures, and delay the need to build new data center facilities. 451 Research calculates the average ROI of this phase to be 66%.

Stage 3, which entails hybrid cloud support, application release automation, and delivery of IT as a service, can reduced administrator time, slash downtime, lead to faster recovery timeframes, and accelerate time to market. 451 Research finds that the average ROI at this phase is 78%.

#4. Don't choose between cloud-based and on-premises management tools. Unify them.

Companies move to the cloud model for automated infrastructure provisioning so they can become more agile and responsive and deliver IT services that scale. However, IT must also maintain control and efficiency to address key requirements of uptime, performance, security and compliance with a relentless focus on cost. This appears to create a difficult choice for management: deliver on the need for speed and agility or provide control and efficiency.

Do both. With an SDDC architecture, you can take advantage of a purpose-built cloud management solution that provides speed and agility and the policy-based control that enables uptime, performance, security and compliance. It also provides service cost transparency information that both business and IT decision makers need for data-driven provisioning and management decisions.

#5. Leverage the knowledge of experts.

Even the most talented and skilled IT teams benefit by supplementing their knowledge with the expertise of product specialists who have hands-on, day-to-day experience and can provide documented, real-world-tested best practices. Take advantage of their know-how and ability to provide knowledge transfer. Equally important, don't scrimp on education. The more your staff knows and understands about the cloud-based automation solutions you implement, the faster you'll achieve the positive IT outcomes you're expecting.

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¹ TheInfoPro (a service of 451 Research), "Enterprise Cloud Computing Poised for Explosive Growth," September 2013.

