Cloud Business Applications:

Best Practices Uncovered

Featuring insights from over 20 senior
business leaders in the UK

searchlight

TechPros.

Contents

Introduction

Over the past four decades, organisations have relied on business applications to achieve strategic objectives. Investment in an ever-changing array of applications has been critical in helping organisations to grow and thrive.

While much has changed in the business application landscape over these years, the core challenges remain the same. Today's organisations are still faced with the question of how best to align digital, business and application strategies. How can business applications deliver greater efficiency, competitive advantage and value-added products and services?

Searchlight Consulting has invited 20 senior business leaders to share their approach to the challenge of using cloud business applications to enable their business strategy. Many leaders told us it's a challenge they haven't fully resolved yet. Half of the leaders we surveyed told us they rated the success of their transformation initiatives as a 7 out of 10 or lower. Clearly there is still much work to be done to help businesses realise the benefit of modern applications.

This eBook explores the key challenges and best practice in business transformation, including leveraging cloud business applications to support business improvements and deliver long-term benefits. Building on the experience of our contributors, Searchlight Consulting highlights what needs to be done to achieve the potential benefits of cloud business applications and some of the pitfalls to avoid.

Chapter 1:
Don't put the cart before the horse:
The Importance of Strategic Alignment

In an increasingly competitive and fast-moving business environment, organisations are under enormous pressure to deliver ambitious improvement, optimisation and transformation initiatives.

Business applications are crucial in enabling these changes, but it is vital to remember that business applications are just one element of business transformation, and organisations must fully understand the wider organisational changes and decisions involved in delivering transformation.

Rather than asking, "How do we move this to the cloud?" the question should be, "How do we increase our competitive advantage, and could business cloud applications be an effective way to enable that strategy?"

This measured, business-led view of change makes it more likely that cloud business applications will support strategic ambitions, while also offering financial and performance benefits. "Moving to the cloud is not in itself a business goal," comments Mason. "However, cloud business applications may facilitate a number of other business goals."

Mason's organisation needed to deliver more value from business investments but did not assume this meant cloud business applications would be best. Different parts of the organisation had different needs, levels of experience and business processes. The first task was to understand all these departments and functions, then identify what changes would be needed to realise the wider strategy. "We didn't want to start out deciding we have to move to the cloud. We wanted to be aware of the business drivers. The speed and manner of business transformation will always be driven by business outcomes and priorities."

The Importance of Strategic Alignment

For Mike McKay from Polypipe, the organisation's strategy was focused on growth, by both organic means, and mergers and acquisitions. Again, business applications were assessed on their ability to deliver specific business goals, rather than tactical improvements in efficiency. "We are growing as a business, so sustainability and scalability is key for us," says McKay. "Business applications need to enable us to rapidly integrate new organisations into our portfolio and allow us to standardise on a common set of business processes and applications."

> *"We are growing as a business, so sustainability and scalability is key for us," says McKay. "Enterprise applications need to enable us to rapidly integrate new organisations into our portfolio and allow us to standardise on a common set of business processes and applications."* **Mike McKay from Polypipe**

Over time, an organisation's strategy may change – and it is important that any cloud business application can align to such changes. While Nick Skelsey's organisation Harding Retail first turned to cloud business applications to support a strategy to minimise risk and support growth, over time this evolved into a strategy to add value, consolidate processes and manage overheads. "We have been able to free up resources, which enables the team to focus on value-adding activities, and now we're going to see more focus around making sure overheads are managed appropriately. It means we have to make sure remaining activities are balanced and cost-effective." Skelsey says.

The key to successful delivery of strategy is effective communication across an organisation. This means business transformation should have cross-functional business ownership, leadership and support. To achieve this 'guiding coalition' organisations often turn to external expertise to help executives and their teams navigate complex transformation journeys, says Searchlight's CEO Steve Sharp.

Chapter Takeaway

- The key to successfully delivering transformation change is to align business, digital and application strategies to enable the capabilities needed to achieve objectives and differentiate the business.

- Transformation change requires executive alignment, to ensure everybody is driving in the same direction, and there is clarity of purpose and obligations across all parties.

On a scale of 1 - 10: How well aligned is the leadership with the objective of the cloud migration strategy?

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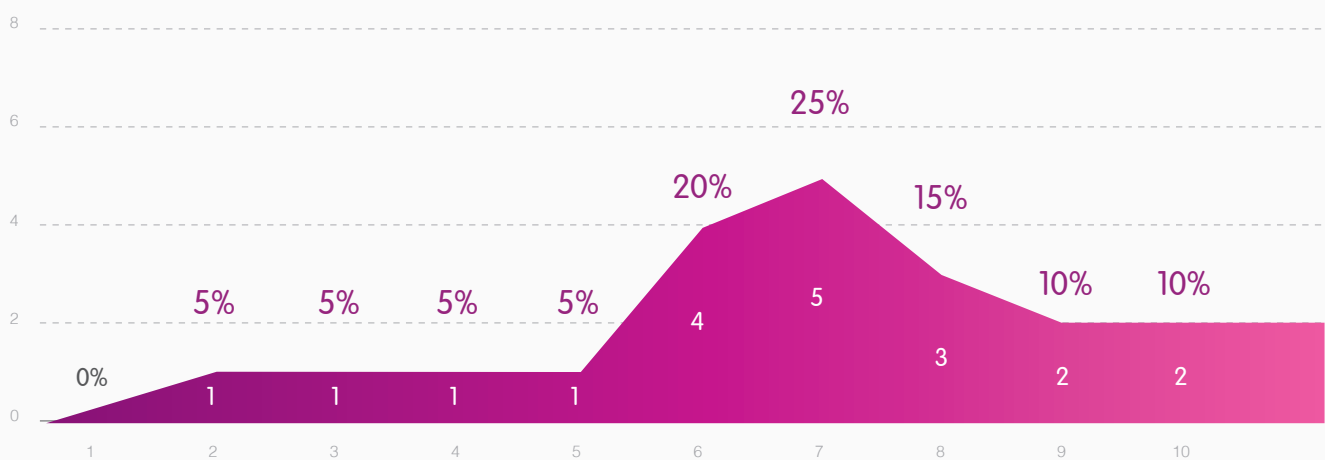
Chapter 2:
The Value of Building a Solid Business Case

The starting point for transformation is predicted on understanding strategic direction, and the differentiating/enabling capabilities required to achieve this. Only then can organisations consider which business applications will deliver those capabilities, and what role cloud applications might play.

A robust business case is required to ensure that any investment in cloud business applications supports the overall strategy. Any cost/benefit model must take account of the following principles:

- Building the business case should be an organisation-wide activity; a collaborative effort involving all business functions and IT teams.
- Benefits must be linked to key business capabilities and will have both tangible and intangible aspects to quantify.
- Costs must be based on end-to-end business processes, not limited by the scope of a specific application.
- Costs must be calculated over the lifetime of a service.
- Costs must be based on a thorough understanding of the service offered, and any associated costs to accommodate changes and new applications.
- The financial treatment of costs shifts from CAPEX to OPEX in a cloud service model.

To add to the complexity, the cloud applicationsector is itself evolving. When compared to the on-premise vendor landscape, the cloud applications sector is relatively immature. There are a wide range of vendors, with applications and service offerings that are changing rapidly, making bold promises – which compounds the difficulty of gaining a solid understanding of benefits and costs.

The Value of Building a Solid Business Case

Business Involvement and Support is Critical

Having the support and involvement of business leaders is critical in creating a strong business case. "We have to sell that vision, that this will increase revenue, give you more visibility and help us manage the organisation in a better, more effective way," says Cox from Pearson.

Executives considering cloud business applications must articulate the strategic benefits of cloud-based application delivery – not merely technical or operational benefits. "There can be time savings, cost savings or increased revenue. Understanding those benefits helps to address challenges and objections that might crop up later," says Ian Gehm from Brighthouse.

Costs Must be Measured over the Long Term

When calculating the costs of cloud business application delivery, organisations must take account of services, adds Guy Mason. "There is a whole set of services needed to deliver and then run cloud business applications effectively," he says. Costs should be calculated based on end-to-end processes for delivering and supporting applications over an extended period of time.

Moreover, cloud business applications usually present 'evergreen' opportunities, with ongoing updates and features that will require support and integration for the lifetime of the service. There may also be new business processes and skills required to take advantage of new features. This means there will be ongoing costs associated with training, communications and upskilling, at a frequency that most businesses do not consider today.

Mason's team at C&J Clark worked to model the costs that would be associated with upgrades and modifications, giving invaluable insight into which modifications could not be supported by the business case. "We did the right thing not to try to be too tailored or focused on some of these things," he says.

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The Value of Building a Solid Business Case

Benefits Need to Encompass Business and Technical Domains

Capturing and articulating the tangible and intangible benefits of cloud business applications can be as challenging as calculating costs.

Business value should not be calculated according to application performance or IT efficiencies, but rather on the related processes, teams and organisational strategy.

These benefits can be more challenging to articulate, but it's important to take this sort of wide view, adds Will Van Zyl from Dyson. "We can't necessarily determine business value just by looking at a cloud-based capability or a cloud-based application or related team and organisational considerations," he says.

For Polypipe's Mike McKay, the key benefits of cloud business applications include greater ease-of-use, simplification, extensibility, scalability and long-term resilience. "A big part of our business case for moving to cloud is about taking away pain," he says. "It means we can say to the business that we can focus on delivering more business value rather than just keeping the lights on."

"Working together gives us increased chances of sales success. You can target the right customers, have the right level of conversation and create a lot of value," says Cox. "Before, we had 14 different ways of doing the same thing, depending on which part of Pearson you were in." **David Cox from Pearson**

Cox found a key benefit in the simplification of a complex (and costly) series of enterprise applications and processes. When the company moved to cloud-based delivery, replacing 17 existing ERP applications, the change didn't only improve IT performance. The company also saw increased sales conversations, because the simplified integration and data flow gave more people within the company access to better quality data. "Working together gives us increased chances of sales success. You can target the right customers, have the right level of conversation and create a lot of value," says Cox. "Before, we had 14 different ways of doing the same thing, depending on which part of Pearson you were in."

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The Value of Building a Solid Business Case

Cloud Means a Shift in Financial Management Thinking

Moving to a cloud business application delivery approach also involves a significant shift in financial thinking, from capital expenditure (CapEx) to operational expenditure (OpEx) - moving the investment impact from the balance sheet to profit & loss accounts.

> "We had an aging in-house infrastructure and looking at the capital resources required to refresh it wasn't appealing," says Skelsey. "It was fairly simple to do the calculations, and we have increased our IT OpEx but we have significantly reduced our CapEx spend." **Nick Skelsey**

"We had an ageing in-house infrastructure and looking at the capital resources required to refresh it wasn't appealing," says Nick Skelsey. "It was fairly simple to do the calculations; we have increased our IT OpEx but we have significantly reduced our CapEx spend." This shift in thinking is not always met with enthusiasm, with organisations used to being able to capitalise investments and depreciate the resulting asset over a number of years, spreading the P&L burden.

Rather than looking to create a single, all-encompassing business case, leaders should consider developing transition states - realising the business case in chunks of cost/benefit. "We started with small chunks and proved the business case piece by piece," says Skelsey. "It's about getting the value at each stage, rather than trying to get someone to commit to a long-running, seven-figure programme."

Chapter Takeaway

- All organisations approach building a business case in slightly different ways, but a cloud-based application business case must focus on the cost-impact of ongoing change not just initial implementation.

- Adopting a number of transition stages to deliver the full business case can provide an optimal blend of cost, benefit and ability for a business to realise value.

On a scale of 1 - 10: How successful have cloud business application migration programmes been at delivering the desired business outcome?

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Percentage	0%	0%	0%	5%	15%	15%	15%	35%	10%	5%
Count				1	3	3	3	7	2	1
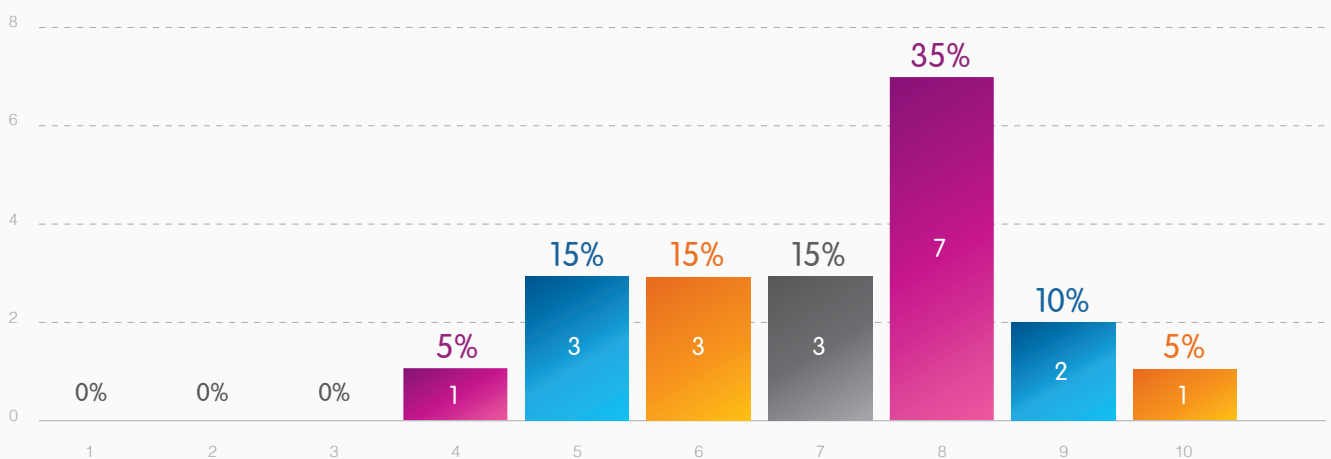
Chapter 3:
Commercial and Delivery Models for Cloud-Based Business Applications

Cloud business applications offer powerful opportunities for effective digital transformation. However, there may be a steep learning curve as organisations get to grips with products, commercials and delivery models that are new, and can be significantly different to on-premise alternatives.

This process starts with proper evaluation of the products and technologies to be used, and potential partners.

When Rank moved to a cloud business application, the company wanted to combine two legacy general ledger systems into a single, cloud-based GL. To ensure the project went well, the business project team did site visits and spoke to companies using potential applications before becoming an early adopter of Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations.

Early adopters may find independent, specialist third-party support at the vendor discovery stage beneficial. Specialist consultancies may have experience of working with new commercial models, and can offer insight on how to tailor commercial frameworks and services to best realise digital transformation.

Getting the right advice makes it easier to evaluate potential vendors and commercial models. Larger organisations, with ongoing cloud-based procurement needs, are likely to invest in their own internal procurement resource. For smaller organisations, with only infrequent procurements, it may be more prudent to buy-in this expertise when needed.

Commercial and Delivery Models for Cloud-Based Business Applications

There should be a senior executive who has a solid understanding of the underlying business strategy, with insight into the business' needs, as well as the IT organisation and its abilities. Brighthouse's Ian Gehm recommends having a senior leadership figure who can look at the IT and business elements of potential contracts and scrutinise the detail of what is being offered. "You need someone to really get into the nitty gritty, who can see if something in a contract isn't viable or enforceable, before it's signed off," he says.

This insight can provide opportunities to adjust the buying process to suit your capabilities and strategy. Rick Bisset from The Cotswold Company recently worked on a transformation programme which would involve a three to five-year applications contract. Rather than signing upfront, his team negotiated a professional services contract for the discovery phase. "Based on the outcome, we would then decide on the terms of the license agreement," he says.

Having access to the right expertise allowed Mason to ask the right questions upfront and minimise the risks associated with digital transformation. "The niche consultants we talked to have some really good tools to model cloud business application costs, and allow us to understand them," he says. "We have been very careful to make sure that people who are in a position to control costs are responsible for the services that drive those costs."

"The niche consultants we talked to have some really good tools to model cloud business application costs, and allow us to understand them," he says. "We have been very careful to make sure that people who are in a position to control costs are responsible for the services that drive those costs." **Guy Mason**

Software as a Service (SaaS) vendors may provide more flexible, cost-effective services, but the devil can be in the detail. Organisations should not assume that cloud necessarily means "easy to implement". Cloud business applications still need to be provisioned, integrated, maintained and upgraded. Current (retained) applications may need to be modified, requiring additional effort and investment.

Organisations must also consider full, end-to-end processes, which may extend beyond the boundaries of cloud applications. For processes to continue to work end to end, there needs to be full integration between cloud and on-premise applications, maintaining data quality throughout.

Commercial and Delivery Models for Cloud-Based Business Applications

Another important issue to address during vendor evaluation and discovery is how licensing will work over the lifetime of an agreement. Avon Rubber's Rob Morgan says this was a significant concern for his team during the move towards a cloud business application delivery model. The company was able to convert some perpetual software licenses into subscription licenses during the transition period, but it's a complex area that will need to be revisited. "We are up for renegotiation next year, and we'll work with specialist consultants at that point to ensure we get the right deal," he says.

Chapter Takeaway

- Programmes will only be successful if all parties' obligations and expectations are clear, and risk is 'balanced'.

- While cloud business application commercials are typically usage based, take care to not get locked into a '10-year cloud usage deal' and ensure clarity exists with respect to the cost/benefit of the contracting period.

YES / NO: Do you feel that you have a commercial framework (with vendors and partners) that comfortably accomodates business change over the next 5 years?

60% Yes

35% No

5% Business environments influence this
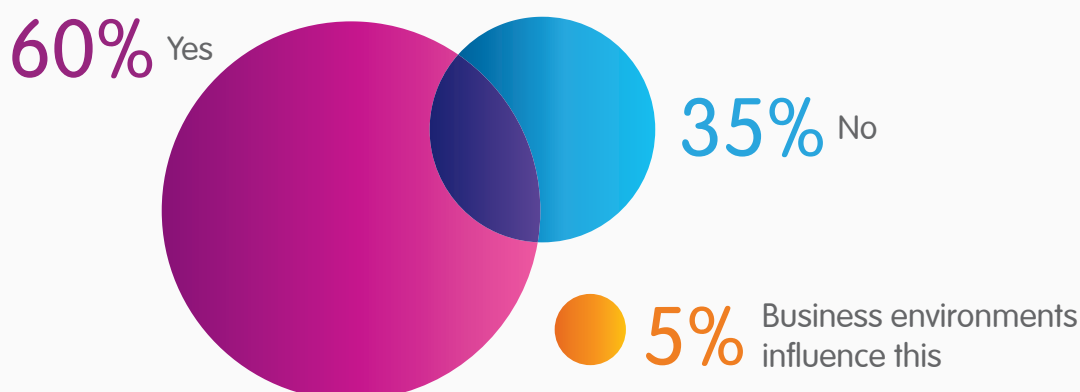
Chapter 4:

Adjusting to a Cloud Operating Model:
Continuous Release & Innovation

Organisations deploying cloud business applications must establish an ongoing cloud operating model as soon as possible. It is useful to automate delivery in key areas, so that the benefits of an evergreen/continuous release environment can be realised. Automated delivery and tools may be managed in-house or outsourced, with popular opportunities for automation including:

- Test management, execution and test data set creation
- Environment provisioning and solution configuration management tools
- Training and continuous learning
- Portfolio, programme, project and benefit management
- Process authorisation management, monitoring and control

"Automation provides organisations with the ability to fully deliver the benefits of ongoing releases with minimum additional cost," says Searchlight's Steve Sharp. "If the delivery of cloud business applications does not include establishing a cloud operating model, the perception of business colleagues will be that the application refresh or IT programme never ends, due to constant updates."

While continuous innovation can sound great, in reality it can be a headache. Avon Rubber's Rob Morgan takes a more cautious approach to these applications. Where possible, the company opts for a mid-frequency service where new capabilities are released quarterly or every six months, rather than "fast lane" services with unpredictable, frequent updates. "It's a little more controlled, because we don't need to be at the leading edge. Our business model doesn't require that," he says.

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Adjusting to a Cloud Operating Model

Retaining complete control of the release process may not be possible for companies who are not on a top tier contract, comments Bisset. The Cotswold Company's warehouse management system is entirely cloud-based and has been through one forced upgrade cycle. The company was given access to a sandbox version of the application some weeks in advance, allowing them to test it against their interfaces. This was essential in ensuring any issues could be resolved before the upgrade, which could not be delayed. "You have to keep an eye out for all the updates and make sure you understand the consequences of those changes, and your assigned resource is ready," he says.

Creating a sandbox environment and consistent, automated testing helps with the ongoing innovation of cloud applications. Richard Johnson from Meggit has several such environments along with a User Acceptance Testing (UAT) programme. Typically, vendors allow three months to turn around upgrades and new features, and a workflow created to manage this process has been helpful, Johnson says. Vendors do not always include provisioning of multiple sandbox or pre-production environments, and often have restricted service level agreements (SLAs) for refreshing environments to allow for clean data to be loaded for testing.

Testing is especially important where an application has been customised or has integrations. "The temptation to customise cloud applications is high, and upgrades and improvements would then be much harder," says Mason. Some basic features in an application will be able to be upgraded almost seamlessly, but if there is a new feature or enhanced capability, then it is likely to be more disruptive.

If an application has been customised then it is virtually impossible to maintain the natural trajectory, adds Van Zyl. "It comes back to adoption versus adaptation," he says. "If you need order management, get order management components. Don't make one system adapt to do the job of three others, then expect to be able to benefit from that clean upgrade trajectory."

Chapter Takeaway

- With 'evergreen' applications it is essential that design is built with change in mind. Always enter into a transformation with a view that you must design the end-to-end process and be able to maintain them, including integrations and the business users have to be ready to adapt to changes.

- Resist customisation of business applications - opt for bolt-on "best of breed" products or develop software that delivers justified, unique functionality.

On a scale of 1 - 10: How well are you able to keep abreast of new releases and innovations as they become available?
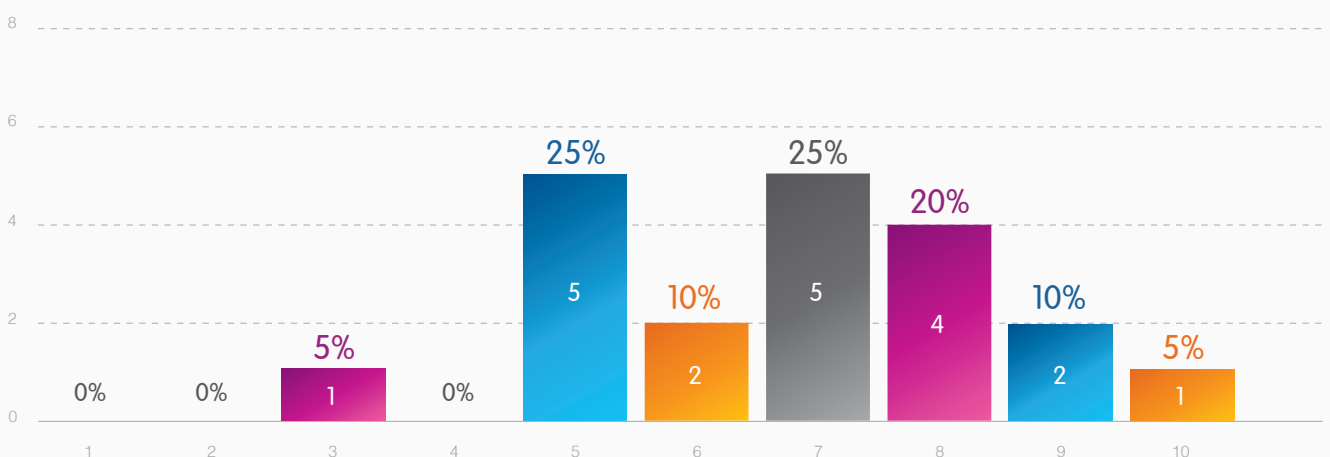
Chapter 5:

Some things don't change:
Other Lessons and Best Practices from Deployment

In most respects, the core challenges and best practice approach to delivering technology enabled transformation do not change in a cloud-based application model. In creating this eBook, Searchlight interviewed 20 senior business leaders from a wide range of sectors and organisations. Despite their varied positions, there was a good deal of agreement on best practice.

All interviewees agreed that the foundation of successful transformation is a comprehensive business case, executive alignment and a clear agreement on the commercial and delivery model for cloud business applications.

The respondents also agreed that a successful outcome hinges on having access to the right skills and experience to deliver transformation. In particular, our research identified skills including business process expertise, project and change management capabilities, in addition to the more obvious technical skills as being particularly relevant to technology-enabled change.

Cloud Deployments Require New/Different Skills and Personnel

One of the biggest challenges organisations face when adopting cloud business applications is having skills in place to support application configuration, deployment and management.

Such skills may not be available in-house at smaller organisations or where technology is not a specialism. "We don't have the scale of Amazon or Sainsbury's, so it is difficult to attract, retain and develop all the skill sets we need," says Mason.

Other Lessons and Best Practices from Deployment

In this case, organisations should partner with specialists to bridge skill gaps during peak workloads. Mason works with third party providers when he requires specific skills, at times bringing in specialist professionals who work temporarily or permanently within the in-house team.

Leading Implementations from a Business Process Perspective

Skill gaps can occur in business as well as technical roles. At Pearson the company needed to invest significantly in training around business process mapping, says Cox. Understanding business processes was critical to ensuring cloud applications were configured correctly, but this wasn't something the company had done, historically. "It was a different mindset for us, we didn't have skills in-house to do that," he says.

The company invested in expert support to help map our core business processes, which was challenging. "Many of the processes were undocumented and homegrown, but once the business process was mapped, you could see better ways of working, and where best practice is for supply chain or ERP," Cox says.

"Getting the right people on the team is critical to overall success", Cox adds. This means identifying people who understand the processes and engaging with business to ensure those high-calibre people are released. "That gives you better quality outputs, and I think it's something we'd do better next time," he says.

This focus on Business Process skills is echoed by Mike McKay. "We're starting to get a bit better at understanding the business process element. Recently, we've started to bring more business process mapping skill-sets into the team, and we've really looked at our operating model and how that interaction with technology really needs to work. We're at an early stage of adopting a new approach."

"We're starting to get a bit better at understanding the business process element. Recently, we've started to bring more business process and process mapping skill-set into the team, and we've really looked at our operating model and how that interaction with technology really needs to work. We're at an early stage of adopting a new approach." **Mike McKay from PolyPipe**

Cloud Business Applications: Best Practices Uncovered

Other Lessons and Best Practices from Deployment

Choose the Right Delivery Approach and Invest in Tools for Programme Management and Automation

The importance of programme management and planning cannot be overstated in a cloud business application deployment.

Organisations will often adopt a favoured delivery model such as waterfall or agile. However, it is more effective to adopt the right delivery model for the programme context. This may be agile, scaled agile, waterfall or a hybrid of several approaches. One size does not fit all, and the company culture, capability and type of project should be taken into account.

Searchlight has automated how they deliver their programme, project and portfolio services - enabling real time distributed delivery. The company uses Hydra Cloud for portfolio, programme, project delivery and benefits management. The platform includes cloud-based tools to capture knowledge, learnings which work well with existing document management repositories and used to accelerate the pace of delivery where possible - maintaining the right balance between time, cost and quality.

Bisset adopted a mixed agile delivery approach with a high-level waterfall plan. The waterfall plan was used for process design work and functional configuration, while agile was used for technical integration. "That worked well because we had no idea how long it would take to unpick one set of applications and plug in the new ones," he says.

However, with hindsight, Bisset says the company should have allocated more time to the process change side of the programme. Bisset says the team underestimated how long it would take to move away from an application that had been in place for ten years. "Everybody had worked out the workarounds and process efficiencies for the legacy application, and they had to relearn all those shortcuts on a new application. Resourcing within the teams, freeing up key people and experts to work exclusively on the new programme would have made for a more successful go live."

Cloud Business Applications: Best Practices Uncovered

Chapter Takeaway

- Address business change before implementing new business applications. Too often we see projects that go live, and someone thinks, "Oh, I need to change the way I'm working to use the business applications."

- When making decisions about cloud business applications, think about what skills you may want in-house to manage the applications landscape and what might need to be outsourced now and/or in future, and the associated costs of that.

On a scale of 1 - 10: How well informed or advised do or did you feel by a cloud vendor or systems integrator?

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Percentage	0%	0%	0%	5%	20%	0%	40%	20%	15%	0%
Count				1	4		8	4	3	
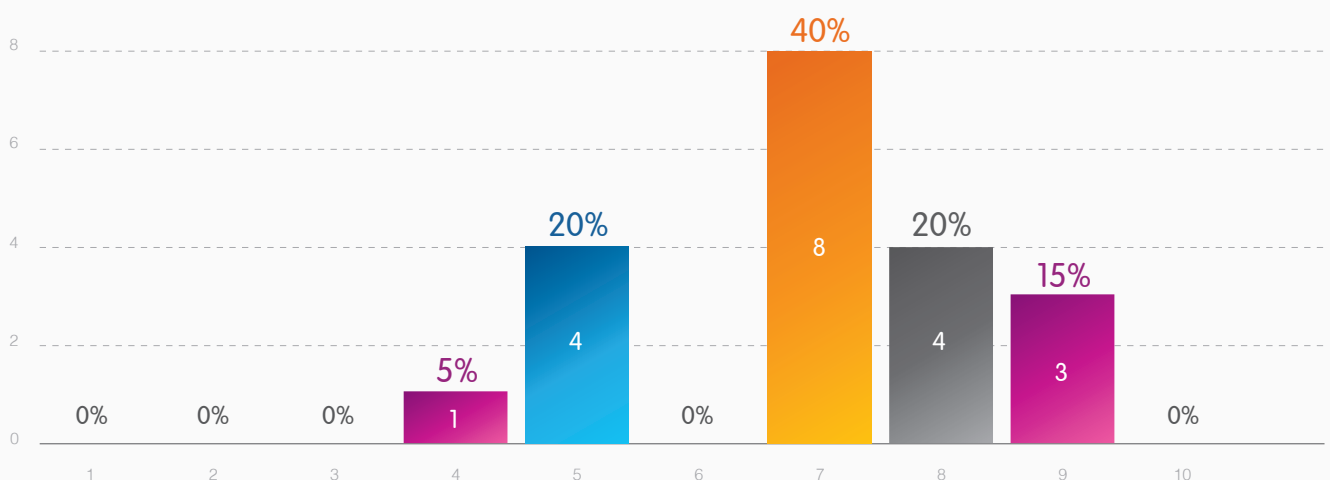
Executive Summary:
From Searchlight's CEO Steve Sharp

The contributors to this eBook include business leaders who are already navigating the journey to cloud business applications. However, that journey is not without challenges – half of those business leaders rated the success of their migration as a 7 out of 10, or lower. Most respondents agreed they are still evolving the way they deliver business change, and lessons have already been learned.

Organisations must learn from these early adopters, and not rely on cloud vendors and systems integrators to provide the knowledge, skills and experience required. When asked to rate how well systems integrators and cloud vendors kept them informed and advised, 65% of our respondents rated their experience as a 7 out of 10 or lower. Several respondents pointed to the importance of expert, independent advice and guidance at key stages of the journey.

At Searchlight we observe that the greatest success comes from organisations with a clear sense of purpose. They have the support and culture that drives that mandate across the whole business community. Without it, the benefits of any technology enable programme can be eroded.

Executive Summary

The key learnings from the executives who participated in this research include:

- Ensure that your business case supports the wider need for change.

- Split delivery into a number of transition steps, deploying changes in a manageable way that can be readily adopted .

- Ensure the right commercial and delivery models are established with clear responsibilities, governance and controls.

- Secure the right experience in business processes, business readiness, programme management and also the technology skills through the entire delivery lifecycle to ensure change is embedded and benefits realised.

- Ensure the organisation is set up to fully exploit ongoing cloud vendor releases and enable the company to gain continuous advantage.

- Invest in tools and automation throughout the journey to decrease risk and speed up the realisation of benefits.

Executive Summary

Clearly, many of the challenges and risks associated with delivering traditional business application programmes and projects still remain in a cloud-based world:

- A robust business case for change is paramount as opposed to starting with "cloud" as a driving factor for change.

- Standardisation is a key mantra - many cloud business applications have been architected to preclude customisation - "adoption not adaption" is the controlling design principle for application configuration and process design. Adopt standard business processes and get the business/people to adapt their ways of working to fit.

- "Cloud business applications are simple to deliver", is a distracting myth. While the complexity of delivering cloud applications can be reduced by following the "adopt, don't adapt" principle, end-to-end process, cross-application design, data migration and acceptance testing of an integrated solution presents the same complexity and challenges that it always has.

- Investment in business change is increasingly more important. Change has always been a critical success factor, however the "adoption" principle, means the level of change often increases during cloud application delivery.

- We have all heard of the agile, start-up "fail fast" philosophy, and many experiences relayed from the research have highlighted the lessons they've learned along the way. The level of investment required to deliver enterprise business applications is usually significant, and a balance is needed between engaging business colleagues into a project for the first time and supporting them with experienced practitioners to avoid having too many "learning opportunities".

- Finally, the major area of change for cloud business applications, that is often only considered very late in the day, is what is needed to maintain cloud applications and cope with ongoing, frequent change. Introducing a cloud operating model early will be key to the benefits and perceived success of cloud business application initiatives.

Cloud Business Applications: Best Practices Uncovered

Featured Participants

Richard Johnson
MEGGITT

Richard Johnson has been working within the aerospace industry in a variety of Engineering and Sales roles, for the past 20 + years. He has enjoyed a varied career in engineering design, release to manufacture, software development and process improvement. Currently, he is developing functionality to help better collate and understand his customer's problems and hence work with them to develop the right solution. Whilst Richard is primarily a data geek, he finds immense joy from working with people; in that, we are all different, and this diversity helps develop a better solution.

Nick Skelsey
HARDING RETAIL

As a self-confessed generalist, Nick has over 20 years' leadership experience in a range of organisations and sectors. From an early career in the drinks industry, he built up experience in projects & programmes across Diageo's markets and subsequently with Allied Domecq, leading Nick and his family to settle in Bath. Having undertaken IT Director roles at Unite Students and The Bradfords Group, in 2016 Nick joined Harding Retail - a leading cruise retail concessionaire - to develop its technology agenda for growth. Nick's recent responsibilities include modernising Harding's HR function and leading the development of its corporate strategy.

Rob Morgan
AVON RUBBER

Rob Morgan has over twenty-five years' experience in IT Transformation and innovative and cost-effective service delivery across a wide variety of infrastructure technologies, business systems and software packages. Extensive experience in leadership of change, programme creation and management, corporate governance, outsource contract negotiation and IT procurement.

Rick Bissett
THE COTSWOLD CO

Rick Bissett is a dedicated IT leader and technology strategist with multi-sector experience including retail, financial services and telecoms. Currently responsible for technology at The Cotswold Company helping this omnichannel furniture retailer to continue its fast growth success story.

Biographies
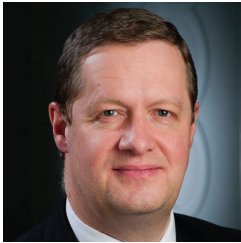
Guy Mason
C&J CLARK

Guy's career focus has been technology-based business performance improvement, predominantly in the Consumer, Retail, Distribution, and Leisure industries. Initial work in Oil & Gas and Management Consulting led to internationally-based global CIO roles with GKN/ Brambles, English Welsh & Scottish Railway, EuroCargo Rail and TNT Express. Guy graduated with an MA from Cambridge in Engineering and tertiary studies at ENSAM Paris.

Ian Gehm
BRIGHTHOUSE

A Solution Architect who specialises in bridging the gap between new, digital solutions and old legacy whilst delivering value for money on IT investment. Whilst always looking to 'do the right thing', I will also take the practical approach in solution design when needed to ensure all stakeholders are satisfied with the delivery of a project. With 18 years of IT experience I have covered plenty of areas including IT Support, bespoke application design, CotS design & integration, middleware, e-commerce implementations and service design to name a few. This has covered varying business areas including retail, finance, HR and supply chain to name a few.

David Cox
PEARSON PLC.

Over 15 years' experience leading and managing large scale, complex programmes within an international context, starting in utilities before moving onto education and publishing. David has effectively delivered customer-focused transformation often utilising global enterprise cloud technologies. Striving to ensure that the new ways of working fully embrace the new processes and drive the organisation to the next level. Programmes have ranged from the full transformation of all customer-facing contact in the UK for an FTSE 100 organisation (sales, customer service and marketing) onto new Salesforce platforms, through to new product development tools using Oracle.

Biographies

Will van Zyl
DYSON

Will van Zyl is a senior Change and Transformation leader and leadership coach. He has enjoyed senior leadership and change leadership roles with known brands, such as Dyson, Virgin Media, Dixons Carphone, Aviva (Friends Life) and the John Lewis Partnership; leading critical transformation, coaching and performance improvement initiatives. He left his most recent role as Global Commercial Change and Data Director with Dyson to build a niche performance consulting and coaching offering. He now advises in a private capacity on team and organisational performance and establishment of effective, trust-based ways of working that raise workplace wellbeing, creativity, engagement and performance.

Mike McKay
POLYPIPE

A technology leader with 25 years' experience in IT related roles but with specific focus on ERP and Business Applications design, implementation and support.

Originally from a manufacturing management background progressed into roles managing business systems across US & UK plants for APV Baker, then Project Management of SAP R/3 implementations in Defence, Manufacturing and Consumer Goods sectors for SAP VAR, Ascent Technology. Since 2000 he has assumed IT functional leadership roles firstly with Wm Grant and Sons, producer and distributor of various spirits brands, and most recently as Group IS Director for Polypipe plc, a leading manufacturer of construction products.

Philip Johnson
RANK

Philip Johnson is an experienced financial systems manager with great knowledge of Dynamics 365, having worked on the product since inception and through all recent guises. He has built extremely strong relationships with his customers over the years, frequently going above and beyond the level of service he was required to provide and has a thoroughly justified reputation for the quality of his work.

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