

# 5 Questions to Ask Your Execs When They Say They Want a “Cloud Strategy”

Author:

Michael Tanenhaus  
CEO, Mavenspire



Mavenspire 

These days, in almost every conversation we have with IT decision-makers, we hear that company executives are **asking for a “cloud strategy”**.

However, there doesn't seem to be a common definition of what “cloud” really means and it's impossible for IT leaders to develop a sound strategy without defining terms and understanding the desired outcomes.

At Mavenspire, we are passionate about enabling success for our clients, helping them realize their business goals and understand what cloud solution is right for them long-term. When your C-suite starts a “cloud-first” discussion, here are 5 key questions to ask before you start designing a strategy:

## **1. What do you mean by “the cloud”?**

Industry-wide, definitions vary. Some folks use it to exemplify a swanky portal and a monthly billing model. Others talk about automation and infrastructure as code. A few talk about cloud native applications. Cloud has become a term referring to doing things differently and offloading some of the work of IT to someone else. Despite the efforts of marketing people all over the tech industry, there is less understanding of the differences between public, private, and multi-cloud services than people assume. As you consider making a change, it's important to define what your organization means when it talks about the cloud.

## **2. What is your desired cloud outcome?**

When I ask people why they want to use the cloud, responses range along the following spectrum:

- “My executives want to see a cloud first strategy”
- “I just want to be out of the infrastructure business”

There are many approaches in how an organization can use the cloud, so it's important to be clear about what you hope to gain. Is this need for cloud to reach a goal? Change the current situation on the ground? What problem does it solve? Typically, the conversation is around saving time, money, or the organizational mission. Compliance is also an excellent reason to be talking about (private) cloud.

### **3. How do financial considerations play into your decision?**

In short, if your entire value proposition is about saving money, cloud is not for you. In some (rare) cases, the organizational value is all about elasticity and global scale - and in this one case it's possible to save money with public cloud. Otherwise, without figuring in soft costs, cloud costs more. Many people believe that the cloud will save money because they'll be paying monthly for hardware, but that's not what cloud does. If that's what you're looking for, try financing. Cloud SERVICES are about a turnkey ability to DO something. What you pay for is accomplishing that something, but your hardware costs remain. In terms of hard dollars (not including payroll) – it's not cheaper.

In fact, we've seen a surge of people leaving public cloud for cost reasons and repatriating workloads to their main data center to save money. Modern data center technology provides the same levels of automation and simplicity at home to meet the original value proposition at a lower cost. The cost savings is achieved through a combination of consumption-based financing and software-defined advances that are core pieces of the current generation of IT infrastructure (and next generation data center) products.

### **4. What's your post-cloud administration expectation?**

I am always surprised by the number of people who believe that IaaS means that someone else will fully take over their application management. If you want someone else to take over, you have to pay for it as you contract for day 2 services. When you compare IaaS, PaaS, and SaaS you are choosing increasing levels of management services to remove the burdens of operating specific systems. If you offload those responsibilities on day two, expect your administrative costs to remain the same or even increase (see #3). Google made a great [April Fools video](#) about their cloud products. Everyone always laughs during the "storm boost" segment, but then the reality hits - there is no magic cloud fairy. Understanding day two operations, and what happens when problems occur, is key to understanding whether cloud will meet your expected value proposition.

## 5. Who's your Sherpa?

Where does someone get the knowledge to navigate through this transition to cloud? Usually by contracting experts to help. These guides determine the base camps needed to reach the end result and then provide the labor, training, and long-term support to ensure that day-after-day, you achieve your desired outcomes. As someone in the technology consulting field - this is an exact description of the services I have provided for decades. Cloud platforms are toolsets, not really different from any of the other infrastructure and application platforms I've worked with over my career.

### **Your Sherpa should map a path to your cloud ascent by understanding:**

- What are the business drivers? (value proposition)
- How does it need to look? (Portal / Self-Service)
- What are the desired economics?

Cloud is just a geography change and a new toolset. So when people ask what will I do when cloud puts me out of business, I shrug and answer them honestly: "It takes all my energy to keep up with constant technological innovation and help my clients navigate it (including cloud). That keeps me relevant, whatever the toolset of the day is".

Let Mavenspire help you evaluate your cloud strategy.

## Interested in learning more about how to get your organization on the cloud?

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443.433.0106 | [info@mavenspire.com](mailto:info@mavenspire.com)



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