

# Hybrid IT

Make colocation your conduit to the cloud



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## Colocation in hybrid IT

Every company is different, with its own specific business requirements, goals and budgets. That's what makes a [hybrid IT strategy](#) so compelling. You can combine any number of on-premise and off-premise technologies and delivery models, such as colocation, private clouds and public clouds, to create and implement solutions that best meet your company's unique needs now and in the coming years.

Still, there's no denying that the cloud is where most businesses want to be — and for good reason. The benefits are numerous, from flexibility and efficiency to cost savings and predictable operating costs. Chances are that in developing a hybrid IT strategy, the cloud will play a significant role in your plans too. But where does that leave your existing hardware, particularly if you've made recent investments?

The answer may lie in colocation. Colocation not only provides you with a cost-effective way to continue to make use of your existing IT infrastructure. It also can help you make your transition to the cloud. Keep reading to find out how to make colocation a key component in your overall hybrid IT strategy.

**"The benefits are numerous, from flexibility and efficiency to cost savings and predictable operating costs."**

## The case for colocation

If you currently have an on-site data center, making the case for getting out of it is easy enough. Who needs the associated capital expenditures and costs for maintenance, power and cooling, not to mention the staff time required to manage it all? Colocation provides you with a more predictable OpEx model rather than requiring you to keep up with the escalating capital expenses of building, securing and maintaining your own data center.

Simply outsourcing some of your data and applications to a colocation facility can help you develop a level of comfort in letting go of some of the day-to-day control of your assets. You can maintain ownership of your assets; you just don't have to invest in the facilities and manpower to keep them in-house. You also have the option of maintaining your own equipment or leaving it to the colocation provider.

In addition, many colocation facilities offer multiple layers of security that are hard to come by in on-premise data centers. Most also provide you with access to a more robust power-per-square-foot ratio than most private data centers, allowing you to leverage innovations in virtualization and high-density computing. It can be difficult and expensive to maintain 100 percent network reliability in an on-premise data center. Colocation facilities typically offer multiple high-quality networking options, so you have the flexibility to choose the ideal solution for your needs in a carrier-neutral setting. You also can take advantage of volume pricing without having to negotiate and manage multiple contracts and service agreements.

Storage options are available and easily accessed in the cloud. However, if your company has immense data requirements, you may be caught off guard by the high costs of storage with a public cloud service as well as the limited control you'll have of your valuable data. This is another area where colocation proves invaluable. It offers a flexible environment where you can build your solution to suit not only your disaster recovery needs but your financial needs as well.



## To the cloud or not

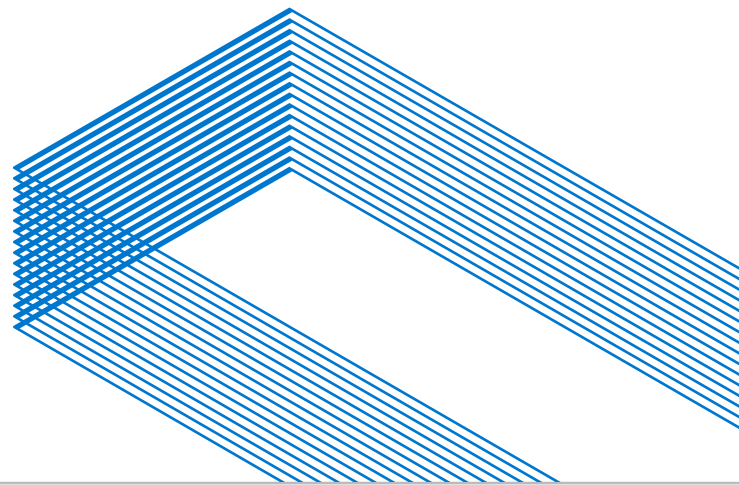
So you're sold on colocation, but the cloud is still your ultimate destination. How are you going to get there, and what about your colocated IT infrastructure? First, consider that there's a good chance not all your applications can easily be moved to the cloud or even belong there. Although just about any application potentially could exist either partially or fully in the cloud, there may be

trade-offs in an application's attributes or functionality if it wasn't originally developed for the cloud. There's also the matter of compliance. If you're in an industry such as manufacturing, finance or healthcare, you may need to meet certain regulatory requirements by utilizing private infrastructure instead of a shared environment. An assessment of your applications — who uses them, how they are used, their impact on workflows, as well as security needs, latency issues and other factors — will help you determine the best place for them.

### Among the questions to ask

- How do each of your applications use current cloud and data center resources?
- Do any of your applications run in the cloud if the local resources fail using failover?
- Do any of your applications require cloud bursting to elastically expand into the cloud?
- Do some applications run permanently in the public cloud and others run using private resources?
- Do the applications you want to move need to scale?
- Do you require load-balancing capabilities, not just for service availability, so you can distribute workloads and automatically redistribute resources when needed?
- Do you have applications that require secure communication to a back-end database that needs to remain in your data center?
- Do you need services to run from different geographic regions for disaster recovery purposes?
- Are some of your applications subject to regulatory or compliance requirements for security, availability or access?

Some of your applications may be better served by remaining in a data center setting, but that's okay. The cloud is just another tool that you can leverage; it doesn't need to replace your existing IT systems — including any colocation facility you use. Your goal shouldn't be to move everything into the cloud, but rather to optimize your IT assets.



## If not the cloud, then what?

The results are in. Not all of your applications are eligible to move to the cloud, and you still have hardware on hand. What's next?

Consider using the latest hardware that you have already purchased to host any legacy images or applications that cannot go to the cloud. You may want to consolidate some of these environments to a single box in order to use your existing hardware more efficiently and to avoid a misuse of these assets.

Yet another use for your hardware assets is to improve your backup and recovery infrastructure, which may not have all the resources it needs to work in an optimal state. The reuse of servers is a great excuse to optimize this important piece of your IT infrastructure, offering increased reliability for your backup servers, more disk space available for temporary backups and reduced restore times.

You might also use some of your existing IT infrastructure as a kind of "proof of concept" as your cloud migration team select the first applications to move to the cloud. If you move to a private cloud, for example, you can try to replicate the platform at a smaller scale before the actual migration to help determine full compatibility between systems.

Once you start moving applications to the cloud, make it gradual and keep in mind that you don't have to go it alone. Your colocation provider may be able to help if it also offers cloud services and has the security and regulatory compliance requirements you need in place.

Your colocation provider may be able to help if it also offers cloud services...

## The colocation connection

One of the issues with a hybrid IT strategy is that data needs to move in a variety of directions between internal and external resources. It also needs to move fast and

reliably. Few organizations have or can afford to invest in advanced networking capabilities. There is also the issue of actually moving your data to the cloud or, in the case of a hybrid IT strategy, between internal and external resources. Colocation providers that offer cloud services can help on both counts.

First, they enable you to put your non-cloud infrastructure in the same facility as your cloud systems, simplifying data movement between the two environments. They also provide you with access to their operator and interconnect networks, which makes it easier and more cost efficient to quickly move data over large geographical areas and between internal and external assets. These private interconnects and specialized network systems get data to corporate WAN and LAN systems, adding a layer of security for how information is delivered.

There can also be regulatory requirements that make colocation a better option than the cloud — at least for now as regulatory bodies become more familiar with the protections the cloud can and can't offer. Of course, if you can find a colocation provider that offers cloud services and its data centers and cloud infrastructure have all undergone independent assessments for compliance with the requirements of HIPAA, PCI DSS and other standards, all the better. Even for companies in the most highly regulated industries, not every workload needs the same level of security or controls. Being able to mix and match with one provider can be very advantageous.

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## The bottom line

Using both colocation and the cloud as part of your IT strategy can enable you to create the most effective and efficient infrastructure for your company. You can choose the services and platforms that make the most sense for your company today, but retain the flexibility to change and evolve as business demands shift — without throwing away your investment in existing IT assets.

Flexential helps organizations optimize IT transformation while simultaneously balancing cost, scalability, compliance and security. With a focus on building trusted relationships, providing valuable support and delivering tailored solutions and reliable performance, Flexential delivers colocation, connectivity, cloud, managed solutions and professional services to 4,200 customers across the U.S. and Canada.

