How to Migrate a Software-Defined Datacenter

Take the next virtual step

The software-defined datacenter (SDDC) is a reality today. CIOs and CFOs wanting more agility and savings from IT infrastructure can have it now. Because the SDDC changes the way we deliver IT, and the business upside is tremendous; organizations are scrambling to find the right dance partner for this new era of pooled resources delivered as software.

SDDC brings speed and simplicity through standardization and convergence that unify in one platform. Racks filled with servers, blinking lights and proprietary vendors become democratized, and managed by fewer resources. The SDDC is a magical place – but not easy to get to.

Enter the SDDC solutions provider.

At this point business leaders are calling the SDDC the future, and find themselves at various stages of the adoption cycle. However, even the most aggressive adopters feel they're sailing into parts unknown. Reinventing the datacenter is a complex mission that may be measured in years.

The SDDC must also enable both cloud and high-performance computing. The SDDC represents a move away from locked-in relationships and dedicated domains, even virtual machine sprawl created by escalating business demands. Expectations are high for the SDDC.

Finding a SDDC partner capable of pulling the most business value out of your IT investment is critical. Whether evaluating, planning or implementing, the endgame is business value your going to need a partner. Below is a roadmap for finding business value

Burning Questions

A rigorous SDDC conversation around risk versus reward for pursuing such a transformative platform needs to be had. As IT planners absorb the technology and analyze the benefits, corporate executives need to frame their questions. Tough decisions are in order. Somewhere between inspiration and implementation, ask yourself these questions and ensure a smoother ramp to SDDC success:

How mature is the technology? How do you evaluate hype and real adoption?

Does my prospective partner have any real SDDC experience?

Where exactly are the savings coming from? What's my ROI? Do I need concrete measures?

Does the proposed financial model align with company objectives?

What changes will I have to make to my IT organization?

Have we considered security, compliance and disaster recovery?

What's the migration plan? How long will this take?

Soft Decisions

You decide, this move is making sense. Why? Because the SDDC is a logical extension of server virtualization, the cost savings and productivity increases are undeniable, and IT delivery must change. Even better, the business case has been approved and you want a solution.

Who has the chops to deploy? Now it's time to dissect providers.

Remember, both man and machine should drive this selection process. According to IDG Research, buyers must identify both internal and external factors that may derail a project, and then realign processes to support the SDDC. Yes, an advanced portfolio of server, storage, software, network and management tools is mandatory for a project of this sophistication, but the softer side of organizational and process change must also be addressed.

Right Stuff

Analysts at IDC identified three key areas a vetted SDDC partner must excel in. Add these must-haves to your analysis**:**

1.) Defining the right architecture and deployment characteristics for systems that meet performance and reliability requirements.

Think of this as the consultation phase, covering a large spectrum of both evaluation and design. Since the SDDC is rooted in virtualization, look for a provider with a trophy case of virtual machines. Step aside and allow potential suitors to hack and measure your current IT environment. Look for proven diagnostics that gauge readiness, and focused KPIs that benchmark competition. And don't forget this must be a cloud-enabled platform.

2.) Integrating converged IT systems with existing IT environments and management systems.

Virtualization, by nature, is an egalitarian technology. And the SDDC aims to eliminate the inequalities caused by custom hardware.

In a software-defined datacenter, virtualization protocols must work across disparate systems and multiple datacenters. Find a provider that talks about crushing silos. And favor those knowing the true path to enlightenment is software running on commodity servers.

Going forward, proprietary systems should be avoided because vendor-specific hardware sabotages centralized pooling and adds complexity to management. Converge the datacenter and simplify management. That's the vision.

3.) Retraining IT staff to support a more unified approach to provisioning and managing pooled IT assets and services.

Your people may be as scattered as your hardware. Moving staff to a unified platform

will limit routine tasks and unchain resources. The essence of the SDDC for people is not the end of manual labor, but the beginnings of IT as an asset, a driver of innovation and strategy.

Make sure people and processes are cooked deep into the plan.

Parting Thoughts

Choose an expert in virtualization. Covet convergence and standardization. Recognize culture is as important as technology. And, above all, enter a SDDC relationship where business value trumps all other selling points or market advantages.