**Cloud Platform: A Shifting Landscape *(Part 1)***

 *- A paradigm shift is no longer just a possibility, but a reality -*

The 3 Ds ‘Design, Development and Delivery’ have always been at the forefront of technology, and never more so than today.

The landscape is changing once again. In the past, the public sector (along with the private sector) moved away from inflexible mainframe applications, to a client/server app model. This was made possible through the extensive use of the PC desktop acting as the client. The reasons for this move were because of a more cost effective delivery model together with far greater ease of use. The problem though is that this also caused greater complexity, and over time associated costs increased, as the number of applications went up.

Then, there was another wave of improvement. Server and desktop virtualization, where applications and servers were delivered through a simpler, thin client. While improving things a lot, this required even greater complexity at the datacenter, with variable demands, unpredictable usage patterns and most importantly, still largely tied users to their base.

Today, most applications are becoming “as a Service” based, delivered entirely through a browser. This new fundamental shift affects almost all areas of formerly desktop applications from productivity and email, to complex specialist and line of business applications.

Furthermore, this standardization on the web browser as “client”, affords us a unique opportunity to reduce complexity across our IT infrastructure by no longer running the servers. So as before the reasons, are based on cost savings and ease of delivery, now through the utilization of web-based SOAs (service-orientated architectures) such as PaaS (platform as a service) and SaaS (software as a service), which relies on fast, reliable and affordable resources, i.e. public cloud platforms such as force.com from salesforce and AWS Amazon Web Services.

This paradigm shift purports to do-away with complexity, and as with every shift a new set of technical challenges awaits. The problem as with the move away from in-house / non-scloud environments is that existing applications are not designed for a multi-tennant service platform.

But a major IT win, especially for the Public Sector is the opportunity to create new applications that reflect the changing needs of their user community. The disbandment of complexity and the resulting reduction of costs is an added bonus.

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