What to Consider While Selecting Public Cloud Service?

Cost usually rules the mind, when it comes to choosing a public cloud service provider. What actually matter are several other factors such as VM migration, storage and auto-scaling, and above, all ease of support interaction, and not having to deal with a faceless organization.

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No road is ever perfect. This is as real to enterprise technology as it can get. To address dynamic business needs while preparing to grow and maintaining the lights on, the enterprise IT teams juggle quite a lot of balls in the air while watching out for pitfalls. Charting a course without tripping over is a feat in itself. CIOs and their teams have to pay rapt attention to their paths to migrate onto newer technologies and adopt more advanced ecosystems.

Similar to almost everything else in the tech world, the adoption of a public cloud in the enterprise works on the same logic. With meticulous planning, foresight, effective execution of plan, the risks and uncertainty associated with a public cloud platform can sure be minimized. However, you need to be prepared to jump through multiple hoops to get there.

Mapping out a public cloud strategy starts with selecting a public cloud provider that fits your environment and executes on your business objectives. These are the top 6 parameters on which you must assess the cloud service provider before sealing the deal.

COST

The initial promise of public cloud was low-cost, flexible access to scalable computing. Cloud solutions are often hawked on the promise of cost savings. But finding the pot of gold at the end of the cloud rainbow is not as easy as it seems. To avoid nasty little surprises later, make sure you examine the pricing structure.

Often times, new public cloud users are taken aback by the fact that IaaS has a complicated pricing structure. There's hardly ever flat rate pricing for running a VM in the cloud. Though transparent with their pricing formulae, most of the cloud providers tend to keep their pricing matrix extremely complex making it difficult to correctly estimate the cost of running a VM on public cloud.

Before running a public cloud VM, you should set up trial accounts with different cloud providers. This will help you compare how pricing differs from one provider to another at least at a holistic level.

SECURITY

It is important to engage in a comprehensive review of the cloud service providers' security prowess. Cloud providers need to have stringent and robust security measures in place. Firewalls, anti-virus, multi-factor user authentication and data encryption, and routine security audits are par for course and cannot be overlooked. Get comfortably sure with your cloud provider's approach to security. Do ask tough questions, if need be.

As a start point, properly vet your vendor to know who at the cloud company will have access to your data in the cloud and whether the cloud provider does employee background checks to eliminate potential cybercriminals or identity thieves.

VM MIGRATION SUPPORT

Once signed up, most enterprises would migrate on-premise VMs to public cloud. While most of the leading public cloud providers offer a mechanism to import existing VMs, it is hardly easy to use irrespective of being a graphical interface or programmatically operated. Hypervisor support may also vary widely among public cloud providers.

Enterprises must watch VM migration costs like a hawk. Most public cloud providers charge you on a pay-as-you-use model, including the storage space the new VMs occupy. But the smaller players may impose a surcharge for importing VMs. This is the most common stumbling block of hidden costs that enterprises may face.

AUTOSCALE

It is a key requirement, based on the fact that server workloads are nonlinear in nature. There are peaks and troughs in business demand. For example, insurance companies may experience a surge in demand during the last quarter of the financial year. Similarly, e-tailers have bumper sales during festive season. Conversely, usage demand may shrink, at times. Auto scaling enables VMs to respond to these changes while delivering consistent performance.

Hence, your compute and storage requirements grow in sync with your business growth. So you must choose a flexible cloud provider and figure out what additional compute, storage capacity and other services can be offered over time and the cost involved with both scale up and down.

STORAGE

Online storage is usually the make or break equation while evaluating most of the public cloud providers. It is important to pay rapt attention to the storage types offered. Some may offer object storage especially if they are providing unstructured data storage for backups, others run block and file storage systems to host apps. Similarly, some providers treat databases as storage options, while others treat databases as VMs.

Major cloud providers allow a lot of customization as part of their premium storage offerings. For instance, customers might be able to choose between rotational storage and solid-state drives at additional cost. Some premium service providers may go for performance and opt to offer storage over SSDs only.

CLOUD GRID

Every microsecond counts if your business is being served out of the web. Higher latency and inaccessibility have proved massively detrimental to customer experience. If your customers can't access or interact with your online presence in time, you will lose the plot. Hence, it is critical to consider the latency to access your cloud service provider, especially if majority of your customers are expected from a specific geography. It is pertinent to understand how close the cloud provider runs to your intended geography.

It may make more sense to opt for the public cloud service provider that has created an expansive mesh to interconnect its datacenters and offer robust cloud grids. Higher the number of such grids, the better the availability of cloud services for your business. Not only multiple grids help your customers always find your business accessible, you can also leverage the closest grid to offer your services depending on the geolocation of your customers. Lower the latency to reach your business on cloud, the better it performs for your customers and improves your customer experience.

LOCAL SUPPORT

Regional availability of cloud provider goes a long way in forging relationships of trust and collaboration. The dominant cloud providers set up their data centers regions across geographies. This ensures faster resolution of issues that might crop up and effective delivery of services.

Also, if your industry is bound by regulatory requirements that mandate your data be kept within a specific country, the location-specific datacenters can be a major deciding factor. Moreover, for most of the enterprises and businesses, dealing with a faceless cloud provider becomes quite a daunting experience. No amount of automation calms nerves down when business technology hits a rough patch.