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The SAP migration connectivity checklist

The increasing trend of businesses moving workloads to the cloud is nothing new – but for SAP customers there's an upcoming deadline that could accelerate the decision to migrate their on-premise Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems to the cloud.

According to Cisco, by 2021, 94% of workloads and compute instances will be processed by cloud data centres. For SAP customers, where there is a 'hard stop' of 2025 for the support of their current on-premise database environment, this means they will either need to replace it with the on-premise version of S/4HANA or adopt the cloud version.

A customer survey of 300 SAP clients found that 54% of SAP customers are planning on deploying SAP S/4HANA within three years. It also found that SAP customer deployment models have shifted from on-premise to cloud as 72% of respondents are moving to the cloud.

By migrating to the cloud, SAP customers can take advantage of the flexibility, scalability, productivity and advanced features it offers, while reducing the need for expensive on-premise equipment. But the migration to the cloud should not be taken lightly, and businesses are understandably wary of moving core business systems to the cloud.

Rather than overbuying network capacity or trying to make the migration fit within existing network parameters, secure, low-latency on demand connectivity can help smooth the migration process and should be a crucial component of any SAP migration. With so many things to consider, it's easy to put connectivity to the back of the list or assume that it'll be easy to sort at the end. However, this approach can put the whole migration at risk. That's why we've put together this SAP migration connectivity checklist, to help the journey to the cloud go as smoothly as possible.

1 Network depth

What is it?
Your network needs to connect key enterprise buildings with the data centres where SAP's cloud environment resides – for something so critical it's no use relying on third parties or a mish-mash of last mile connectivity options to get from A to B. It's not just the obvious connection, what about branch offices or remote workers, how will they connect to SAP in the cloud and how can you guarantee the connection for business-critical applications. Or what about new offices in the future, or new countries?

What are the risks?
Keeping traffic over a single, end to end network means you can guarantee reliability, performance and uptime, as well as keeping data much more secure.

What do you need and why?
Find a network supplier that can guarantee dense, on net urban connectivity to all key enterprise locations, and any countries or cities that might be marked for future expansion.

Network breadth

2
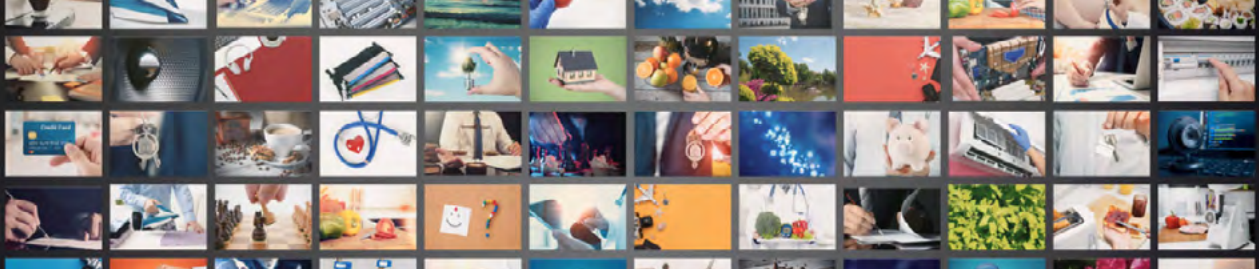
What is it?
It's not just enterprise buildings that need to be connected. Migrating to the cloud means finding a connectivity partner with fibre into the key data centres around the world where SAP's cloud environment resides, along with any other cloud service providers that you might be using to enable the SAP Migration. The network should also link up all the technology providers, platform as a service and technology vendors that your business relies on.

What are the risks?
Moving to the cloud gives you access to a massive digital ecosystem, but poorly architected connectivity can slow progress or result in applications that don't meet performance requirements. Many applications, particularly for SAP, rely on very specific latency requirements and these need to be guaranteed by your network provider.

What do you need and why?
A network that connects you to all of the major Cloud Service Providers and locations in the digital ecosystem. Meeting your needs today and into the future, and one that guarantees performance for your newly, cloud-hosted applications and services.

Flexibility

3

What is it?
Moving to the cloud brings with it the ability to react quickly and add new services, bring new locations online or expand services without requiring expensive on-premise upgrades. You no longer need to plan on-premises servers and storage infrastructure for the next three to five years, based on the expected maximum use and workload, overpaying for the times when utilisation is low.

The problem is that connectivity is traditionally purchased and provisioned based on static, out-dated models where bandwidth climbs gradually each year in slow, predictable steps. Whether it's taking advantage of new technologies, adding new locations or enabling business functions to roll out new initiatives or programmes quickly, all require the ability to provision fast and flex connectivity. When it comes to the migration of your on-premise SAP instance, the average bandwidth needs are not going to be sufficient, but at the same time you don't want to overpay for a year or more of massive capacity that you only need during the migration process.

What are the risks?
Inflexible connectivity means either overpaying for bandwidth or underpaying and then slowing up the migration and restricting the future potential of SAP in the cloud. Migrating the massive volumes of data and workloads to the cloud needs to be done as quickly as possible, giving time back to test and ensure the migration was a success – but relying on business as usual levels of bandwidth will dramatically slow the process. The alternative is paying for bandwidth that you might only need for a few days in the migration process, then being stuck at that level for much longer.

What do you need and why?
Find a network connectivity partner that offers self-provisioning and flexibility. The ability to scale bandwidth up and down as needed so that you only ever pay for what you need, and that the network will never hold up the migration or future projects. This should be easy for you to do on demand, not requiring lengthy negotiations or engineers to make changes.

Security and resilience

4
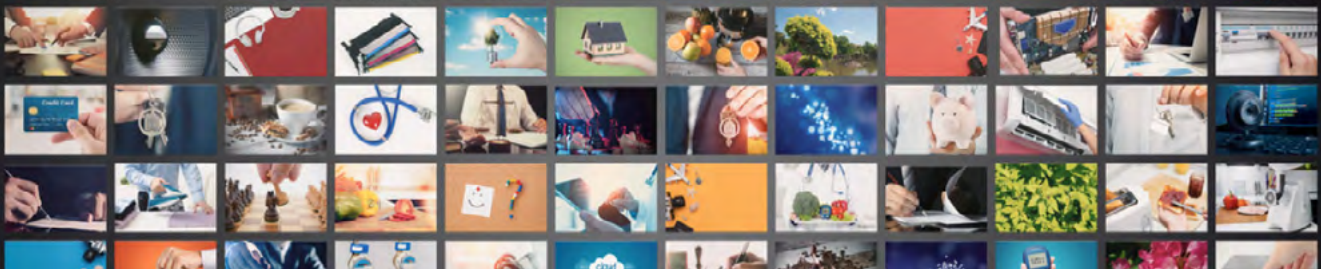
What is it?

Businesses rely on SAP for many mission-critical applications, so any move to the cloud needs to ensure security and resiliency. Both during the migration and in business as usual operations, traffic between your business and the cloud instance of SAP needs to be protected – particularly given that regulations such as The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) have increased the burden of responsibility on all companies that process personal data.

Effective security relies on multiple layers of defence at both the edge and core of the network, and along the network path. The challenge is that, as data travels over disparate systems and networks, the network perimeter no longer exists and security measures must adapt.

Moving to the cloud also means that your connectivity has now become critical to the running of your business, so the network needs to guarantee up-time and that the teams are in place to help if something does go wrong. The user experience also needs to be the same regardless of location – it's no use having a great experience at head office if branch locations don't experience the same.

What are the risks?

With the average cost of a data breach reaching $3.92 million, and DDoS attacks increasing by 967% this year alone, there's never been a more critical time to secure your network. For resiliency, moving to the cloud means putting faith into your cloud connection and so suppliers need to meet strict SLAs to keep the business online.

What do you need and why?

A key aspect of keeping data secure is knowing where it's going and who's responsible – so find a network supplier with control over the end-to-end network, not one that pieces together your connections from multiple partners. For resiliency, make sure that they can meet strict SLAs and find out how they can support you if something does go wrong. Finally, ensure that they can meet the same requirements for every location.

Neutrality and planning for the 'stay state'

5

What is it?

There's no one size fits all approach to cloud migration generally, particularly when it comes to SAP S/4HANA. So being locked into an ecosystem with preferred partners can make the initial migration more complicated, as well as proving difficult in the long run. The best data centre for your business needs to be the best one for you to connect to – not the best one for your partners.

Once the migration is complete and things are back to business as usual, it's a good time to evaluate your other cloud providers and connections, but again these need to be the best for you and not for the partner.

What are the risks?

Getting locked into a preferred ecosystem can slow down progress, add cost and restrict your ability in the future to consolidate suppliers.

What do you need and why?

Find a partner that is supplier, data centre and vendor neutral. Then work closely with them to put together a network solution that is the best for your business, choosing the right cloud or data centre partners for every region, application or business need.

Migrating SAP to the cloud brings with a wide range of benefits and potential savings, but like any large-scale project, it needs to be carefully managed and every aspect considered. By finding the right connectivity partner, the migration can be made quicker and easier and several risks minimised. To find out more visit **https://www.colt.net/sap-migrations/**

The SAP connectivity checklist

Network depth
- Does it connect your key buildings today?
- Does it link up between key countries?
- Does it cover cities or regions where expansion is planned?

Network breadth
- Does it connect to the key data centres you need?
- What about your other cloud providers?
- And technology partners or platform/ software as a service partners?
- Does it link you into the digital ecosystem that you need today and into the future?

Flexibility
- Can you flex bandwidth to meet the changing needs of your SAP migration?

- Can you then set bandwidth at the right level for business as usual?
- Can you change capacity on demand to meet business needs?
- Is it easy for you to take advantage of new technologies?

Security and resilience
- Will you be connected over a single owned network?
- Do you know where your traffic is going at every step of the way?
- Can your partner meet strict SLAs for up-time and to meet application requirements?
- Can you guarantee that service will be the same in every country?

Neutrality
- Is your network partner data centre and cloud service provider neutral?
- What about platform as a service providers and vendors?

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