

Conversational Cloud Backups for MSPs

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Learn about:

- The opportunity cloud-based backups provides and how to choose a vendor
- How cyberattacks have influenced the role of backups as a necessary service offering

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by Nick Cavalancia

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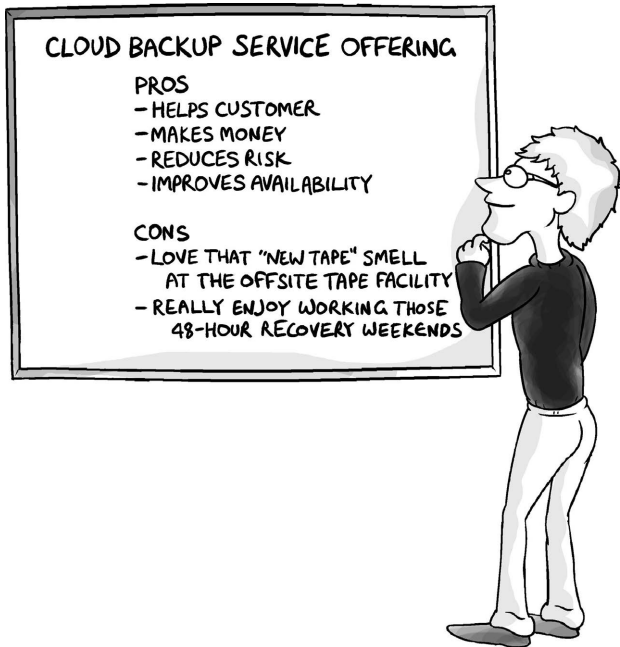
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The Opportunity of Cloud Backup



Most MSPs today recognize the need to move well-beyond just IT infrastructure management and cybersecurity services as their sole sources of recurring revenue. Advancements in the cloud and

in software have made it possible for MSPs to offer a wide range of services, often at levels rivaling that of enterprise-caliber offerings.

Organizations of all sizes have come to realize the necessity of ensuring the business is resilient to even the most remotely possible disruption. They've also experienced the need to evolve their use of the cloud to accommodate the shift to a remote workforce – whether by hosting on-premises applications within the cloud, or by moving to new cloud-based services. Lastly, the need to protect the systems, applications, and data that now live in the cloud is critical to maintain operations.

Backup services have become an imperative in order to safeguard the ever-growing set of customer data that needs to be accessible and durable to protect the business from disruptions – which now includes the present (and growing) threat of ransomware attacks and other cyberattacks that have plagued businesses and their supply chain vendors.

Additionally, cloud-based Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications like Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace see your customer's data that resides within those platforms as *your customer's data* and – therefore – leave it to the individual customer (and you, by proxy) to backup that data.

Some MSPs have chosen to go the route of an on-premises backup offering, simply to tick the checkbox for “backups” for their customers. But we're at a point between the cybersecurity concerns, reliance on cloud applications, and the industry trend to provide business resiliency that the cloud, as part of their cloud backup offering, is now mandatory.

But if I still need to convince you, read on.

Why Cloud-Based Backups?

Assuming that you haven't been hiding under a rock and already get the value of the cloud in general, lets jump into why *cloud-based* backups are your best option. While plenty of on-prem backup solutions are still being created in this day and age, the use of the cloud, for the purpose of backup and

recovery, makes more sense for MSPs for a number of reasons:

- 1) **Better Predictability** – When every customer is facing the potential threat of a complete loss of operations from a cyberattack, you need to use a backup infrastructure that will meet your customers' availability, accessibility, scalability, and affordability requirements. The cloud does this, delivering better degrees of service availability, performance, elasticity, and cost than an on-prem solution.
- 2) **Better Protection** – Data durability, availability, immutability, and secure accessibility are all key to ensuring your customer's data is protected. Cloud providers offer as many as 16 (yes, 16!) nines of data durability, immutable encrypted copies of backups, and air-gapped access to backup data only through the backup interface to ensure your data is in-tact, safe from harm, and ready for recovery.



The “3-2-1 Backup Rule” has been modernized to be the “3-2-1-1-0 Backup Rule” where the additional “1” represents 1 immutable copy (an absolute necessity to protect against ransomware attacks that seek to delete backups as part of the attack), and the “0” represents ensuring zero errors during recovery.

- 3) **Better Pricing** – On-prem backups tend to involve costly hardware, requiring either a hefty customer investment, or you to carry the burden of the expense while offering affordable pricing to your customer. Cloud backup does away with all that, offering monthly pricing that aligns with your recurring revenue business model, making it easy to incorporate the cost of cloud resources into your pricing.
- 4) **Better Profitability** –At the end of the day, you want a profitable service offering – and predictability breeds profitability. The basis of the cloud is to provide a cost-effective and reliable set of services (whatever they may be). In the case of cloud backups, the result of the previous three

reasons is a more predictable – and, therefore, profitable – service offering.

- 5) **Better Positioning** – Your ability to deliver a quality service depends on your capacity to monitor and manage backups, as well as to address recovery needs. The cloud puts you in the driver’s seat for every one of your customers, no matter where they – or you – are. It also differentiates you from those MSPs that are (for reasons unknown) still managing their customer’s backups on-premises.

- 6) **Simplicity** – When you consider how all your customers have varying ways to operate (e.g., where they host their applications, which applications they use, how they utilize cloud services, etc.), having a cloud-based backup solution (that still supports on-prem backups) places you in an advantageous position where you are able to consistently provide the needed protection from a single solution.

It just makes sense that, as an MSP looking to offer backups, you leverage the cloud. The challenge with this is that there are so many cloud providers vying for your business, it's confusing to decide which to use.

What Should You Be Backing Up?

MSPs should be thinking about protecting as much of the customer's environment as possible. The modern MSP is focused on backing up the following:

- **Everything Still On-Premises** – This includes any servers, services, applications, and data that still reside within the four walls of the customer.
- **Anything Moved to the Cloud** – Whatever is now virtually hosted by a cloud provider needs the same level of protection.
- **SaaS Application Data** – As previously mentioned, most providers of cloud applications, such as Microsoft 365, don't see backups of your customer's data as their responsibility. Providing there is an API and a

supporting backup solution, any operational data in a cloud application should be included.

In other words, *anything the customer can't live without*. Imagine a customer being hit with ransomware that takes out a material portion of their environment. Whichever parts your customer can't be without for very long (or otherwise start losing money) needs to be included.

Keep in mind where your customer's operations exist is going to be shifting over the next few years as well; the pandemic has given even the smallest business a taste of why they need to embrace the cloud, which will no doubt be the catalyst for more shifting to cloud-based services in the future.

It's one of the most important reasons you should be thinking about cloud-based backups today. But with so many cloud backup vendors, where should you start?

Comparing Your Cloud Backup Options

There are a wide range of backup solution vendors, each presenting themselves as a viable option for your customer's cloud backup needs. But how do you weed

through all the marketing hype of each to determine which one is right for you?

The vendor that fits the bill for your cloud backups will depend on the scope of your service offering, the needs of your customers, and several other factors:

Recovery Capabilities

You need to be thinking beyond just storing backups when selecting a vendor; you already know that the name of the game isn't backups; *it's recovery*. So, having an ability to recover on-premises, as well as in the cloud establishes added levels of resiliency.

Security Capabilities

Keeping your data safe has become as important as the ability to recover it – after all, if your backups are easily found and deleted as part of a cyberattack, you have nothing to recover. So, security-focused features like end-to-end encryption, multi-factor authentication to access a management console, role-based access control, and immutable backups all should be top of mind.



You can no longer afford to think of your backup service as just a means to maintain copies of your customer's data; today backup services are an extension of your security and infrastructure management services.

Cloud Costs

The choice of cloud storage provider can impact the pricing of your service (and not every backup vendor supports every cloud storage vendor). Even with cloud storage vendors out there touting the easiest of pricing models, it's not always as simple as a cost/GB. Often, the *real* monthly costs you'll be paying – while not hidden – aren't entirely defined up front. As is appropriate for a given cloud storage vendor, you need to calculate the cost, which may include one or more of considerations, including: The amount of storage used, the storage tiers used, retention requirements, data ingress/egress fees, and data management.

Cloud backup vendors that support multiple clouds give you options to best meet your customer's needs.

Manageability and Support

In your customer's time of need (whether that be due to a cyberattack, a power outage, act of nature, etc.), you are going to obviously want to be utilizing a solution that gets your customer back up and running as quickly as possible. That implies the solution itself is easy to use, as well as the vendor is focused on making the MSP successful through high-quality support.

Additional Security?

Ok, this eBook **is** about *backups*, but given the prominence of cyberattacks these days, as well as how backups are now seen as a necessary part of an organization's cybersecurity strategy, I do want you to take note that backups should be a *last resort* when it comes to protecting your customers from any form of cyberattack. So, just be thinking about building a layered security strategy that *includes* backups. And if the backup vendor also offers security solutions, it's one less finger to be pointed in the inevitable "blame game" that ensues should a material attack occur.

The Big Takeaways

Today's MSP simply can't do business that does right by its' customer without including a backup offering – and one that is designed to protect the customer against both traditional business disruptions *and* cyber threats that may impact the viability and/or accessibility of a customer's operational systems and data.

Cloud backups provide you with better data protection and give you more recovery options than legacy on-premises backup solutions. And with the expectation today of businesses always being open, backups have shifted from a proverbial “insurance policy” to a necessary part of operations.

By leveraging a cloud backup solution and choosing the right backup vendor, you significantly improve your ability to protect your customer's data and operations from disruption, ensuring a predictable result and a profitable service.



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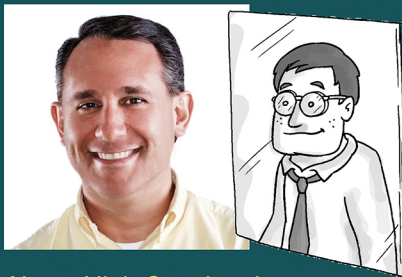
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Cloud backups offers MSPs the opportunity to add on a needed and profitable service. But the threat of cyberattacks and demand for businesses to always be operational, backups have become a necessity. In this book, I'll cover why you need to offer cloud backup and how to pick the right vendor.



About Nick Cavalancia

Nick Cavalancia is Microsoft MVP, a Technical Evangelist by trade, and is a 25+ year IT veteran who regularly speaks and writes for some of today's most recognizable companies.



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