Doing more in the cloud: How to get the most from your Microsoft Cloud Solutions

Making smart choices with your cloud set-up and ongoing management can make all the difference, here's why.

Insight · Microsoft

Contents

It's no surprise that the events of the last few years have seen record numbers of businesses moving their workloads and applications to the cloud. A recent survey by McKinsey even suggests that the pandemic accelerated cloud adoption by as much as four years.[1]

As a result, many IT teams are also now faced with the challenge of managing an increasingly complex and multifaceted cloud ecosystem. As well as the complexity of negotiating contracts, licensing and SLAs, there's also the ongoing difficulty associated with maintaining cloud security, while continuing to grow and innovate using cloud-based technology.

Often, the complex tasks associated with cloud can be outside the primary skillset of the team responsible for managing them. They can also take time away from other high-value initiatives. It's why many organisations are turning to Microsoft accredited partners, like Insight, for help.

In this eBook, we explore the benefits of Microsoft Cloud Solutions; the importance of choosing the right agreement; migration tips and challenges; and the advantages of engaging a trusted partner at every step.

Chapter 01

Why Microsoft Cloud solutions?

Microsoft Cloud Solutions offer flexibility, scalability and security that can help your business save money, and equip you with all-important speed and agility. More efficient and centralised processes and workflows also generate time savings, freeing your team to focus on business outcomes.

Powerful security

Security and privacy are the foundations of Microsoft Cloud Solutions. Microsoft is committed to the highest levels of trust, transparency, standards conformance and regulatory compliance – with the most comprehensive set of compliance offering of any cloud service provider.
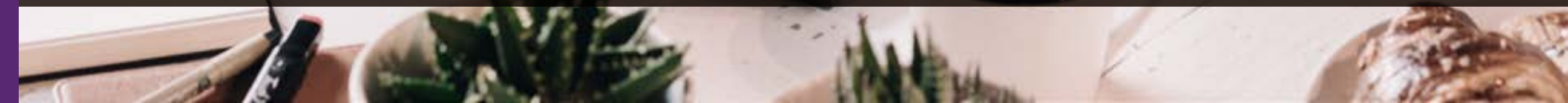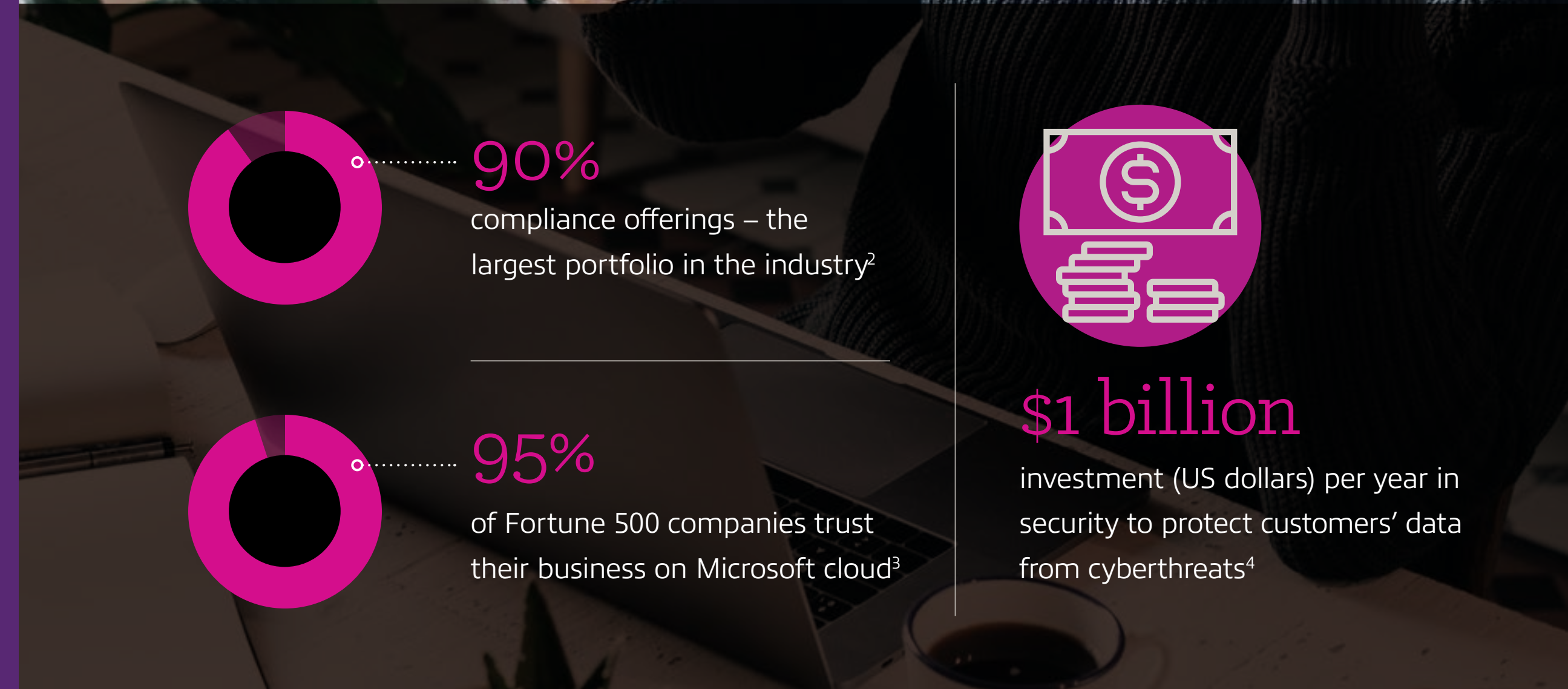
Cost-effective solution

Streamline IT setup, management, and costs with a single productivity solution. Save on automation and IT costs, consolidate vendor spend and reduce cost of security risks.

Be productive anywhere

With Microsoft 365 your team can get work done and stay connected whether they are working remotely or onsite.

Be future-ready

Continuous innovation from Microsoft supports your development today, and your product visions for tomorrow.

90%
compliance offerings – the largest portfolio in the industry[2]

95%
of Fortune 500 companies trust their business on Microsoft cloud[3]

$1 billion
investment (US dollars) per year in security to protect customers' data from cyberthreats[4]

Chapter 02

Choosing the agreement that's right for your business

Microsoft offers a selection of licensing models to best suit your needs and requirements. When choosing your agreement, you should take the time to discover the right Microsoft partner who provides guidance on the full range of licensing models and ensures you have the best solution for your organisation.

Two popular ways to purchase Microsoft Cloud Solutions include:

Through a Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider

When you purchase your cloud services through a Microsoft Cloud Solutions Provider (CSP), you pay monthly or annually for what you need. There is no minimum user count, and easily manage your asset lifecycle via a self-service, easy-to-use dashboard. You also receive 24x7 support from your chosen CSP. For businesses that require flexibility, and that are going through a period of growth or change, purchasing through a CSP is usually the most ideal option.

In some cases, an organisation can have both an EA for some products, as well as a CSP Agreement for others. This takes some qualification, but in certain use cases, can provide the best of both programs depending on the overall bill of materials required.

The right partner can also offer you a full range of licensing models and support that ensures you have the configuration and set-up that's right for your organisation.

An Enterprise Agreement

Any organisation can have a CSP but not all organisations qualify for an Enterprise Agreement (EA). When you purchase your cloud services through an EA, you receive a fixed agreement for all of your cloud and software needs. You pay up-front every year for a three year term and, in return, receive price protection guarantees.

An EA is ideal for organisations that have over 500 users, and which are certain of their current and future usage requirements. There is a 500 user minimum, and the organisation must provide 30 days' notice to decrease the number of users in the agreement. Also, this reduction can only be requested once a year. Basic support is included in the agreement, and premium support can be added for an additional fee.

Done well, a cloud migration can result in up to **30–40% total cost of ownership savings**.[5]

Enterprise Agreement

- Minimum 500 users and/or devices

- Payment upfront, annually

- Pay upfront annually over fixed 3 year agreement (price and licensing protection)

- Detailed billing

- All Microsoft licensing products

- Annual license management via True Up's or Downs (EA subscriptions) and online reservations for subscription licensing

- Basic support only. Additional cost for premium support.

- Dedicated partner has in-depth knowledge of your account and environment

Cloud Services Provider

- No minimum user count

- Pay monthly or annually for what you need

- Detailed billing

- All cloud subscription licenses some perpetual licensing

- Manage your CSP asset lifecycle with ease via the self-service portal

- 24x7 essential support from your chosen cloud services partner

- Dedicated partner has in-depth knowledge of your account and environment.

Chapter 03

Migration made easy

While maintaining outdated IT infrastructures is expensive, so is a mismanaged cloud implementation. It's vital to carefully plan your migration for minimal business disruption.

77%
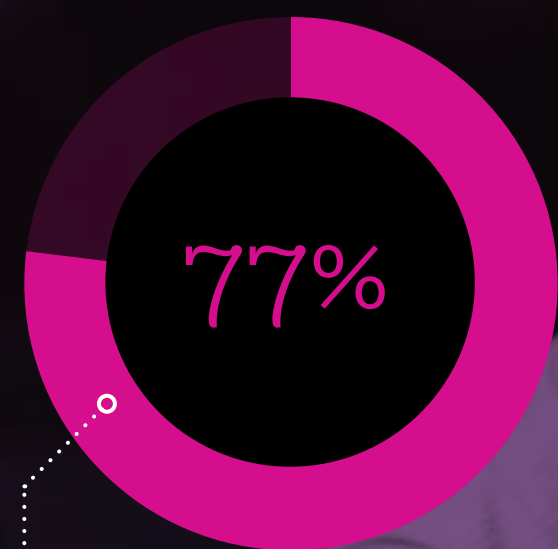
Gartner: A lack of resources and expertise is a major cloud challenge for 77% of SMBs.[6]

Defining your cloud needs and strategy

The starting point for any cloud migration is to understand what your business wants to achieve from using cloud services. As cloud migration impacts many areas of your business including IT, data and analytics, security, infrastructure and operations, having a strategy will streamline the process and help keep milestones and budgets on track.

A unified strategy needs buy-in from across the business and should factor in your organisation's:

- Current skillsets – do you have the right people in your team?

- Level of cloud maturity – is there a risk of lack of adoption that could lead to wasted costs?

- IT and administration capacity – are you resourced for a migration undertaking?

- Hosting requirements – have these been assessed in relation to workloads and technical complexities?

- Knowledge of your security obligations – what does your Microsoft partner provide and what are your responsibilities?

- Training and adoption – are you resourced for this? Does your Microsoft Partner provide additional ongoing support and change management advice?

- Change management capabilities – are there resistance and/or legacy issues from particular business areas? A cloud specialist can help you clarify these requirements, answer these questions and execute your migration accordingly.

Cloud migration challenges

To avoid any delays, cost blowouts or complications, be sure to identify any challenges or risks up-front. You can then take steps to mitigate any risks as part of your migration.

Lines of business legacies

When planning your cloud move, identify if you have legacy or Line of Business (LoB) applications – e.g. point of sale systems – that may not be cloud enabled and which therefore may pose compatibility challenges. Dependencies between infrastructure, operations and applications must also be considered.

Rushing your migration

A lift and shift approach is rarely an ideal strategy. A better result will come from breaking your migration into carefully planned phases. For example, you might look at implementing Microsoft Dynamics first, then Azure and so on.

Change management

Different business areas may have apprehensions about what the cost, implementation and management of cloud services will mean for them. Organising

a demonstration from a CSP partner before you commit can help address these concerns and pre-emptively lighten cognitive load during installation.

Compliance and metadata

Compliance risks also need to be considered before you shift. Drill down into which data can be moved quickly, and what files have more stringent compliance and metadata constraints. Assess what other data needs to be modified so it's cloud compatible.

Security

When planning your migration, ensure that you identify any potential security risks that may arise as a result of updating your infrastructure. Ensure that you have precautions in place during the migration itself, as well as a plan for continually and automatically updating your security once the migration is complete.

Chapter 04

Choosing the right migration partner

Having a cloud solutions partner with a strong relationship to Microsoft is also critical. The right provider can help you leverage the might of Microsoft's data centre, global infrastructure and security technologies.

Why Insight?

Insight has the expertise and experience to help ensure your cloud migration runs smoothly. We work closely with you to understand your specific goals, challenges, and requirements with regards to your cloud migration. We also have a tier 1 affiliation with Microsoft that has spanned 25 years, and are in the top 1% of partners globally, with more than 2,000 consultants, and 250 dedicated Microsoft resources globally, for all Microsoft solutions.

Insight has multiple Microsoft accreditations, awards and specialisations, which showcases our deep knowledge, extensive experience, and verifiable expertise in deploying Microsoft workloads.

Direct support

Make a quick call or email to chat about issues and troubleshooting, or simply talk to an expert and discuss your ideas. Your consultants will also proactively keep you up to date on new technology and solutions.

Easy procurement and contract management

A trusted cloud advisor will ensure a straightforward procurement process with no high-level technical requirements. Contracts are in line with the Microsoft customer agreement. It's a single agreement that covers everything and is set in stone with no amendments.

Training, onboarding and adoption

Before you commit, we provide demonstrations on request to show how your agreement brings all your Microsoft together under one roof. After implementation, our cloud specialist will support with training and onboarding sessions, as well as the option to provide ongoing support.

Insight Cloud Care

Cloud Care is Insight's sophisticated cloud management program for Microsoft 365 and Azure. This seamless and flexible program provides access to Insight's highly experienced Microsoft team, and offers instant self-service via a secure portal for organisations of all sizes. Cloud Care is available in two levels: Essentials and Advanced.

Cromwell Property Group

Cromwell Property Group (Cromwell) is a publicly-listed business with headquarters in Australia, and offices around the world. Recently, they furthered their expansion by acquiring a pan-European commercial real estate platform. While this delivered countless strategic benefits, it also raised some sizeable technology challenges.

The business now had a disparate technology environment, with significant duplication. They had to manage user identities across two separate markets, while meeting the compliance requirements of both the Australian Privacy Act and Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and they also had to ensure the business ran as usual, with minimal disruptions to the team.

The solution

Insight worked very closely with Cromwell to deliver on the five key goals for this project:

Consolidate the multi-tenant environment into one global tenant.

Improve security and compliance by migrating to a single, easy-to-manage cloud environment – with data hosted in either Australia or Europe to meet compliance requirements.

- Amalgamate the business' disparate Office 365 E3 licensing agreements.
- Align multiple licensing agreements under a single, global enterprise agreement.
- Pave the way for new security measures, including robust, cloud-based identity management and multi-factor authentication.

The results

Just a few months on, the business now has clear, consolidated and more cost-effective licensing. Users are all on the latest technology and are able to communicate, collaborate and work effectively – regardless of when and where they are working. Utilisation of Microsoft teams is also increasing, and data is located on-shore in both Australian and European data centres respectively, as per compliance requirements. The business has also extended its centralised, cloud-based IT infrastructure, which offers an ideal foundation for agility and innovation.

"

Cromwell is very much a cloud-first business. Following the acquisition, we engaged Insight to help us bring this new entity into our existing cloud environment, without disrupting our people's ability to get their work done – wherever they may be.

Daniel Dickens, CTO – Cromwell Property Group

"

Chapter 05

Top cloud trends for 2023

Use of cloud services to deliver employee wellness and experience

The experience of the past two years has reshaped our priorities, identities, and worldview, drawing a bright line between what's important – health, family, time, purpose – and what's not. As a result, employees' "worth it" equation — what people want from work and what they're willing to give in return — has changed. The power dynamic is shifting, and perks like free food and a corner office are no longer what people value most.

In our recent study,

47%

of respondents said they are more likely to put family and personal life over work than they were before the pandemic.

In addition,

53%

particularly parents (55%) and women (56%)—say they're more likely to prioritise their health and wellbeing over work than before.

There has never been a bigger need for technology, data and insights that are designed to enable a great employee experience, regardless of location.

Employees want to feel more connected, more aligned with their company purpose and mission. They want to grow, make an impact, and make a difference. Leaders need a modern way to engage and develop their employees. And IT teams need to be able to quickly enable this modern employee experience without having to rip and replace all their existing systems. Cloud-based workloads and tools which allow people to work productively from anywhere are becoming increasingly vital in delivering on these requirements.

Even greater focus on security

It's no secret that the threats to organisations are increasing on a daily basis, as is the complexity of the ecosystem which many IT teams are now responsible for. Ensuring the security of the organisation's data and assets is a critical and increasingly challenged propriety.

Operating with disjointed legacy solutions and an abundance of new tools creates overlap, overwork, blind spots and silos. This type of security environment creates more vulnerabilities and is also a drain on resources. And yet, this is where many organisations operate — in a multi-vendor security space which results in overwhelm, overspending and underperformance.

Too often, organisations also assume the cloud is automatically secure. It's easier to suppose cloud providers are responsible for protecting data than to take on the responsibility of adding cloud security and compliance to an already-full task list.

Microsoft has proven to be a powerhouse for the modern workforce, with products that enable collaboration and flexibility, while built-in security and support protects users and devices. Engaging a CSP can also be vital in ensuring your security is regularly monitored, up to date and best-practice.

Secure Access Service Edge

The shift in the security landscape driven by hybrid work means the majority of IT assets are no longer behind a corporate firewall and on your corporate network. Instead, these devices are living on the edge. You may have heard of the "intelligent edge" — Internet of Things (IoT) devices with compute leveraged for advanced network functionality at the edge. As more users adopt hybrid and multi-cloud strategies, cloud-centric network security has taken centre stage.

One of the strongest strategies for securing the modern network edge is Secure Access Service Edge (SASE). This is a solution that uses the cloud to connect and secure geographically disparate endpoints in a flexible, adaptable way — enabling seamless and very robust security right across the network.

Top cloud trends for 2023

Distributed cloud

Hybrid cloud allows users to migrate some services to public cloud while keeping some Line of Business (LOB) workloads on-premise, leaving one part of the cloud operated and owned by the customer while the other is owned by a cloud provider.

The downside of course is having to manage two separate infrastructures. Cue the next evolution of hybrid cloud: distributed cloud. It allows customers in on-premise data centres to manage everything from a single pane of glass. Advantages of distributed cloud services include:

- Customers running as many locations as they want all under one management console
- Simplifying IT infrastructure management
- Improved latency issues and reduced risk of global network-related outages Enhanced compliance with regulations that require data be in a specific customer location
- Improved AI and IoT, which benefits from reduced latency issues, helping to drive innovation.

Cloud automation

With cloud automation, users can automate, configure and install updates across hybrid environments. It enables users to collect resource inventory and track changes, integrate management systems using serverless runbooks and ensure consistent management for Windows and Linux.

Cloud automation can save a lot of time, lower costs, and avoid errors. Beyond these efficiencies, it can also result in:

- Improved security and resilience – when sensitive tasks are automated, less people need to log into mission critical systems. The risk of human error and malicious activity are reduced, and security best practices can be enforced in every deployment.
- Improved backup processes – automating backups on the cloud, or backing up on-premise systems automatically to the cloud, dramatically improves an organisation's resilience to disaster.
- Improved governance – cloud automation lets you set up resources in a standardised, controlled manner, which also means you have much more control over infrastructure running across your organisation.

Ending the era of passwords

Passwords have been a staple of online security for as long as anyone can remember. They've also been a major headache for individuals – who tend to compromise security when they use the same simple password across multiple platforms – and for IT departments, where hours are wasted having to reset them.

More significantly, the World Economic Forum[7] reported over 80% of cybercrime, which costs the global economy $29 million every minute, are due to attacks directed at passwords.

The solution? Eliminating passwords altogether. Gartner predicts[8] that by 2022, 60% of large and global enterprises and 90% of midsize enterprises will adopt passwordless methods in more than 50% of cases. Microsoft has been a supporter of passwordless technology for quite some time and in 2021 offers its customers a number of authentication options that integrate with its Azure Active Directory:

- Windows Hello for Business (for information workers with their own PCs) allows users to log in with biometrics and PIN credentials
- Mircosoft Authenticator App, which turns any iOS or Android phone into a strong, passwordless credential
- FIDO2 security keys, an open standard for passwordless authentication.

Chapter 06

Meet Insight's Microsoft customer success team

Insight's highly experienced team can partner with you to provide the in-depth and ongoing support you need for your Microsoft Cloud Solutions.

- A client-oriented team of Microsoft technology and licensing specialists.

- Delivering continuous improvement of systems, processes and reporting functions for enhanced engagements.

- Working to improve and manage the Microsoft Agreement Lifecycle with and for our customers.

- Working in collaboration with our valued clients and teammates to drive customer success.

- Closely working with Microsoft both locally and globally.

Geoff Sutton – Director Microsoft Customer Success Team

Geoff leads the team and has 20+ years' experience helping customers navigate the Microsoft landscape. He contributes extensive public sector and education experience and has worked with a very wide selection of customers across Australia.

Roland Leggat
Modern Workplace Specialist

Andrew Woods
Volume Licensing Specialist

Darshun Arun
Modern Workplace Specialist

Jon Verzosa
Volume Licensing Specialist

Ashley Guth
Microsoft Solutions Specialist

Imran Shakoor
Volume Licensing Specialist

Ryan Mansell
CSP Specialist

Farid Yaqub
Licensing Consultant

Cherie Reed
Microsoft Specialist

Ivy Huang
Microsoft Licensing Specialist

Cassandra Parsons
Microsoft Licensing Specialist

Jolina Ricafort
Business Development Manager

Volume Licensing Management (VLM) Team

The Insight VLM team includes five dedicated Microsoft certified licensing professionals who can support you with your Microsoft licensing. This includes understanding customer licensing programs and recommendations, management of licensing contracts and amendments, ad -hoc licensing queries and escalations, licensing tenant management in the cloud, engagement with Microsoft's Licensing Specialists and providing licensing updates and training.

Solution Specialists

Our Microsoft solutions specialist works with you alongside our frontline Account Management Team, bringing deep knowledge, experience, and relationships. Where our account managers offer broad knowledge across multiple vendors and technologies, your Microsoft Solution Specialist works with you as required, aligned to specific stages of your agreement lifecycle, renewals, technology adoption, and through major organisational changes which may affect your Microsoft Agreement.

Microsoft Vertical Specialists

Our team has several technology vertical specialists who can help you on your technology adoption journey. The Specialist team works closely with you in a presales capacity as you look to invest, adopt, and migrate within your business. Currently our team includes specialists with expertise in Office 365, Azure, Dynamics and Surface solutions. This team's focus is on continually streamlining and adding value to your Microsoft experience.

Ready to manage your
products in the cloud?

Get in touch with an Insight specialist to talk about how Microsoft
Cloud Solutions can work for your business.

au.insight.com | 1800 189 888
nz.insight.com | 0800 933 111

Insight®   Microsoft

1. McKinsey, How Covid-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point and transformed business forever, [online], https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever
2-4. Microsoft, What is Azure? https://azure.microsoft.com/en-au/overview/what-is-azure/ **5.** Accenture, Green behind cloud, [online], https://www.accenture.com/au-en/insights/strategy/green-behind-cloud **6.** Gartner, Cloud strategy leadership, [online], https://www.gartner.com/imagesrv/books/cloud/cloud_strategy_leadership.pdf
7. WeForum, Forgotten your password? Not having one will make you safer, [online], https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/01/forgotten-your-password-not-having-one-will-make-you-safer-says-world-economic-forum **8.** Gartner, Embrace a passwordless approach to improve security, [online], https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/embrace-a-passwordless-approach-to-improve-security