

## The Seven Looming Cloud Pitfalls that SMEs Must Avoid

We've seen a significant shift in the impact of the increasing complexities of Cloud, the intensely competitive behaviour in the market, and the growth of AI powered cyber attacks.

We describe and analyse seven looming pitfalls are commonplace for SMEs that depend on Cloud, and need action from decision-makers before they become critical.



### 1. Growing Security Threats and Weaknesses

Many UK SMEs see security as a relentless and escalating challenge, with almost all firms suffering daily cyber attacks. Mis-configuration of infrastructure and human error are widespread, and growing complexities expand the available attack surface.

This conspires with the rapid evolution of potent threats, particularly AI-enabled attacks, has created a perfect storm.

#### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **Increasing complexities and change** must be matched by growing expertise,
- **Monitoring must continuously track** the changing threats and infrastructure adjustments,
- **Fast response is required** to trap and resolve problems swiftly before real damage is done.

### 2. Cost Escalation and Uncertainties

Ballooning, unexpected and unbudgeted costs are all too common. The complexity of pricing models, hidden fees, and difficulty in forecasting Cloud spending often threaten cash flow.

This is frequently caused by an insufficient understanding of how Cloud services respond to loading, and their commercial intricacies, in the design and modification of systems

#### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **Cost problems** are often built in during design due to a lack of commercial understanding,
- **Frequent changes and growing complexity** of Cloud pricing have to be tracked closely,
- **Specialised skills are required** in each of the different Cloud services needed.

### 3. International Data and Sovereignty

Data sovereignty has become a political tool, with changing regulations and government policies. SMEs are faced with a changing landscape that is becoming more and more challenging, especially for firms that operate internationally or expect to in the future.

Assuming that Cloud providers will provide answers to regionalisation of data limits ways to control costs and avoid lock-in to that Cloud brand, and can constrain business choices and commercial opportunities, later.

#### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **Knowledge of how data regulation changes** is required for compliance,
- **Expertise in the different Cloud services** and brands is needed to underpin decisions,
- **Constant vigilance and specialised tools** are required to monitor and maintaining compliance,
- **Sophisticated systems and solutions** are needed to manage data in different Cloud providers.

### 4. Lock-in Constraining Flexibility and Choice

Concerns over vendor lock-in is growing as competitive behaviour gets stronger and increasingly sophisticated between brands to make it seem ever easier to enter, but actually harder and harder to leave. Business choice and flexibility are compromised, and technology options constrained.

The ability to adapt and optimise Cloud infrastructure in response to cost, security, compliance, and commercial and technology opportunities become severely limited, effectively trapping businesses with their current providers.

#### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **It's a big task to build expertise** in the wide range of increasingly complex services,
- **Technical teams are usually limited** in their scope and will prefer to go with what they know,
- **This inevitably restricts** practical choices, increases lock-in, and constrains ambitions.

### 5. Incident Response and Management

Customer expectations of service and business continuity are the imperatives that dictate the ability to respond and manage problems and issues.

Incidents and problems must be detected and remediation started swiftly, to minimise recovery time and preserve service availability when it's required.

Even service that's limited to business hours in one time zone requires effective capability outside these hours to allow for time to respond, fix and recover. Widening service hours and including other time zones must each be matched by multiplying the capacity of support service.

#### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **The right expertise must be available** when incidents begin if outages are to be minimised
- **Dedicated internal teams are expensive** to maintain the cover required,
- **Few traditional MSPs have the expertise** to resolve increasingly sophisticated incidents,
- **Specific skills and systems** are needed to monitor, anticipate, and navigate around up-coming problems.

## 6. Resilience and Performance Bottlenecks

Performance issues and system resilience have become increasingly critical as businesses depend more heavily on Cloud infrastructure. There are significant challenges in maintaining high availability and performance across distributed systems of growing complexity.

### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **Advanced knowledge and experience** is needed to design high-availability infrastructure,
- **Specialised skills, tools and procedures** underpin the quality and resilience of Cloud services,
- **Experience of how infrastructure responds** to operational loading and scaling is often missing.

## 7. Barriers to Scalability

Business scalability can be blocked on many different dimensions, including systems performance and capabilities, service providers, external factors, the range of staff skills and experience, team sizes and budgets.

Availability of the right technical expertise will determine the significance of barriers to scalability as a result of dependency on Cloud infrastructure. In particular, the design and development of service infrastructure must be driven by the specific aspirations, intentions and commercial objectives of the business.

### Why it's challenging to resolve:

- **Understanding of commercial and business imperatives** rarely exists in technical teams,
- **Identifying the business implications** of performance trends is a specialised task,
- **Internal technology teams and traditional MSPs** rarely have the required knowledge and skills

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