

Cloud Migration and Modernization for Growing Businesses

Streamline, automate, and reduce costs with Azure



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Accelerate your goals on a modern cloud foundation

Cloud value¹

\$902,700

average annual benefits per migrated and modernized business application

3.7x ROI

for every \$1 invested in generative AI

Nimble small and medium businesses are the engine of the global economy, innovating in market niches and serving their communities. The top performers make strategic investments in cloud computing to stay competitive and amp up performance. These tech-forward companies at the leading edge are twice as likely to achieve high revenue growth than peers running applications and data on-premises.²

Striking the right balance between immediate needs and tech priorities is a challenge when you're managing rising costs, combating cybersecurity threats, managing IT sprawl, or facing a shortage of skills.

For growing businesses, cloud migration and modernization are the keys to driving immediate, bottom-line results while also preparing for the future. Using Microsoft Azure, you can accelerate growth, improve operations, and increase profit margins.³ You gain operational confidence from platforms and services built on a foundation of security, trust, and reliability—and you can extend that trust across on-premises and multicloud environments. Using AI-powered tools, you can cut through complexity to meet your goals, whether you want to boost data-driven decision-making, build new customer experiences, or simply drive more sales. You can run your business with confidence using a platform recognized as a leader for its completeness of vision in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Cloud Application Platform.⁴

The rapid pace of change and the evolution of AI are disrupting industries everywhere. By making strategic choices about modern cloud platforms and services, you can stay competitive, optimize costs, and safeguard your digital assets.

This e-book offers practical guidance for migration and modernization using Azure to improve workload security, increase your business agility, and integrate next-generation technologies into your products and processes.

Capitalize on cloud services to drive business results

Cloud outcomes for small and medium businesses⁵

21% more profit

26% faster growth

According to businesses already on the modernization path, helps you solve fundamental business questions, and promotes progress toward your business objectives.⁶ The transformation starts with the move to highly reliable, pay-as-you-go cloud infrastructure, databases, and managed services.

The shift ripples out to your operations, culture, and business models as reactive processes, rigid systems, and strapped resources become proactive measures, agile systems, and financial efficiency.

Azure is your intelligent cloud. AI-powered capabilities are built into the services you already rely on—like databases, security, and app development. You can work smarter and outpace the competition without a complex IT setup.

Western Sydney University taps into elasticity, efficiency

Western migrated to Azure from a managed private cloud within three months. Using Azure Migrate and Linux and Windows virtual machines, it scaled to add new services like a datalake and AI, helping unlock unlimited potential for Western, its students, and staff.⁷



"The great thing is that there was a cost saving to migrating our environment as it stood to Azure, and when you consider the modernization and optimization in flight, it was a no-brainer to move off our managed service provider."

Karina Foley, Services Portfolio Manager –
Academic and Business, Western Sydney University

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Build on a trusted platform

Cloud migration is the ideal time to modernize security. Despite business leaders' best efforts, cybercrime costs small and medium businesses more than \$2.2 million a year. According to Mastercard, almost half have experienced a cyberattack, and nearly one in five of those attacked files for bankruptcy.⁸

Compliance and trust are business essentials. As a global leader in cybersecurity, Microsoft processes 84 trillion security signals daily and has developed unparalleled insight into evolving threats. Leadership in multiple Gartner Magic Quadrants for security makes Microsoft the only cloud operated by a leading security vendor.⁹ You get assurance with:

Comprehensive protection. To help safeguard your business, Azure provides multiple layers of protection across physical datacenters, infrastructure, and operations—continuously monitored by cybersecurity experts.

Global compliance. You can stay ahead of regulatory requirements and streamline audits. Microsoft leads with more than 100 compliance certifications, offering the most comprehensive coverage of any cloud provider.

Operational transparency and control. Microsoft provides clear service-level agreements, a detailed shared responsibility model, and transparency into platform operations.

Data sovereignty. You retain control over where and how your data is stored and accessed. Azure supports national, regional, and industry-specific compliance needs. For highly regulated industries and government, Microsoft Sovereign Cloud provides the most comprehensive set of sovereignty solutions on the market.

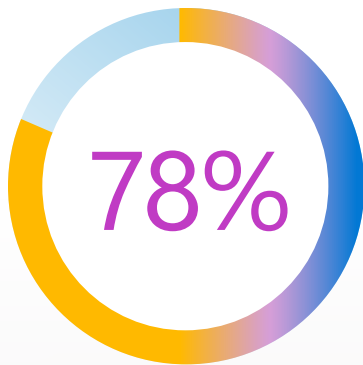
Code-to-cloud security. You can use Azure Policy and role-based access control to help enforce governance and compliance. To strengthen your security posture, Microsoft Defender for Cloud provides comprehensive security management and threat protection across hybrid and multicloud environments.



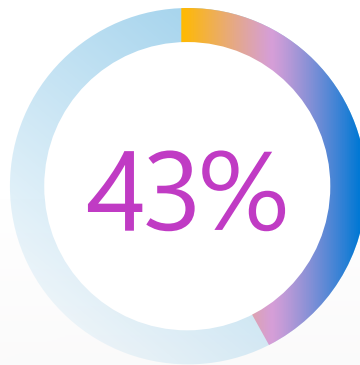
Quick win: Migrate identity and access management to Azure—often included in your subscription. And no extra hardware or complex deployments are needed.

Gain business agility

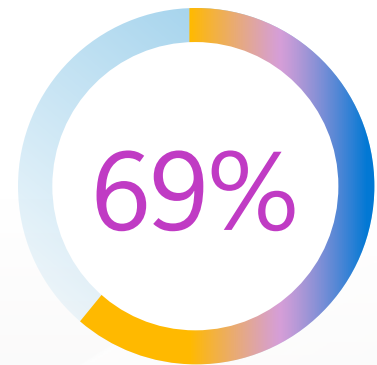
Azure maximizes business agility¹⁰



faster time to respond to and execute business changes



faster time to build and deploy new features



more time back to focus on innovation

Moving workloads to cloud infrastructure gives you the operational resilience to handle unpredictable business volumes, seasonal spikes, and changing customer expectations. Instead of overprovisioned servers and siloed legacy applications and databases, you have access to autoscaling computing power, managed services on demand, and unified data for powering real-time analytics and AI—all without heavy upfront investments in infrastructure.¹¹

You can also automate manual operations and deploy new capabilities quickly, without disruption or downtime. Always-on services improve business continuity, and they scale as you grow. Automation and AI-powered workflows streamline your operations.



Quick win: Build business continuity by adopting a cloud-based disaster recovery and backup strategy. Services like Azure Site Recovery and Azure Backup simplify setup, automation, and scaling.

Drive value and control costs

The cloud pricing model shifts upfront capital expenditures (CapEx) to operational expenditures (OpEx). Instead of wasting capacity, you pay only for the cloud resources you use. You also save on operational overhead compared to on-premises datacenters.¹² Coupled with more effective security management, cloud investments can lower your infrastructure's total cost of ownership, with an average ROI within 3 years of 344%.¹³

The real value comes from the long-term investment in building a secure, reliable foundation for the future. As you move more workloads into the cloud, you can find new ways to save as you go:

Optimize your spending with free recommendations from Microsoft Cost Management. Its dashboards and tools help you analyze usage patterns, forecast expenses, and make costs transparent.

Apply your existing Windows Server and SQL Server licenses to cloud-hosted resources. Azure Hybrid Benefit offers significant savings compared to standard pay-as-you-go rates.

Make spending predictable by reserving Azure capacity in advance. The Microsoft Azure Compute Commitment requires an upfront obligation, typically one to three years, in return for significant discounts.



Quick win: Use Azure Accelerate to reduce cloud migration costs, speed up deployment, and modernize infrastructure with expert support and funding.

Get high performance for all workloads

Azure gives you choices for the workloads you run. With scalable computing and specialized services, you can quickly get the resources you need to operate efficiently, such as:

Scalable, on-demand VMs with the configuration you need, such as graphical processing units (GPUs), high memory, massive storage, and more.

Managed database and application services with built-in tuning.

Native integration with existing business systems.

Scalable, low-latency global infrastructure.

Platform support for legacy and modern development stacks.

Services tailored to the unique needs of each platform, framework, or application type.



Quick win: Right-size workloads using autoscaling compute, storage, and networking resources. Azure Advisor can suggest how.

Make the most of mixed environments

Migration and modernization efforts usually take place in stages, leaving you to manage resources hosted on-premises and in one or more cloud infrastructures. This hybrid approach lets you run workloads where they perform best, improving resilience and reducing dependency on a single provider. For many organizations, hybrid environments provide better security and compliance flexibility.¹⁴ Hybrid environments also let you preserve legacy assets in place until you're ready to modernize them.

Azure can help you manage even the most complex hybrid and multicloud environments. You can:

Get unified management for your hybrid resources.

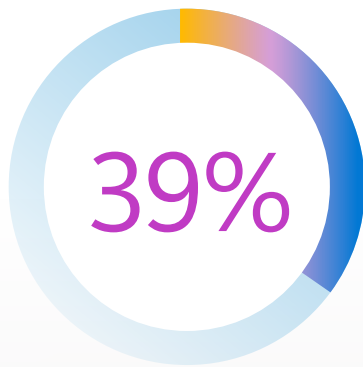
Azure Arc is a suite of services that extends the Azure platform into your on-premises environments.

Improve protection for hybrid workloads. Microsoft Defender for Cloud and Microsoft Sentinel deliver continuous threat monitoring, real-time alerts, and automated responses to help you detect and contain threats before they become business disruptions.

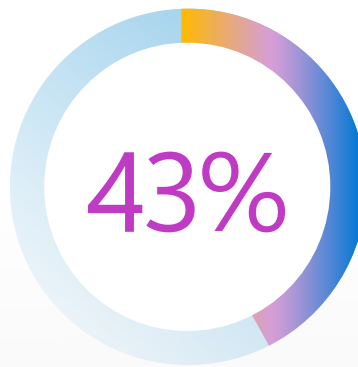
Quick win: Modernize without the cost and complexity of a full migration by running SQL Managed Instance or Azure App Services on-premises through an Azure Arc-enabled infrastructure.

Build your way and get to market faster

Developer benefits on Azure¹⁵



higher developer
productivity



faster to market new
products and solutions

If your business has developer teams, Azure helps remove barriers to development and speeds up iteration cycles, so you can go from idea to deployment faster and do more with AI.

You can deliver resilient, autoscaling solutions using cloud-native development practices like containers and API-first architectures. Managed services like Azure App Service and Azure Kubernetes Service enable you to rapidly build, test, and release cloud-native applications using your preferred languages and frameworks. In addition, you can quickly pivot as your needs change. Integrated monitoring, diagnostics, and DevOps tools in Azure make it easy to iterate and optimize.



Quick win: Complete coding tasks faster with AI. AI-assisted workflows in GitHub and GitHub Copilot help you generate, test, and debug code more efficiently.

Power your growth with connected data

You can make smarter decisions faster with the data you already have. Modernizing your data lays the groundwork for automation, real-time analytics, and AI innovation at scale. It starts with centralizing your existing business data from apps, customers, and operations, so you can surface insights that propel your business forward.

For example, AI-powered assistants in Azure help your teams get answers, automate workflows, generate content and code, and more. You can even customize your own sophisticated copilots, chatbots, recommendations, and more using familiar, popular tools such as GitHub, Visual Studio, and Microsoft Copilot Studio.

Azure provides a connected foundation for analytics. Using low-code and no-code tools, you can tailor solutions that uncover customer trends, measure team performance, and track progress toward business goals.



Quick win: Bring together sales, finance, and operational data using services like Azure SQL, Azure Database for MySQL, and Microsoft Fabric.

Info-Tech: 10x growth in customer base

Finding it hard to maintain an on-premises HR management system, the company migrated its application to the cloud using Microsoft Azure for efficiency and scalability. This strategic move helps Info-Tech deploy software 97% faster and save 50% on maintenance costs.¹⁶

10x

increase in its customer base

90%

rise in customer retention

"After shifting to Azure, we saw a 10x growth in our customer base—from 2,000 to over 20,000 customers—reaching 1 million mobile app downloads. If we wanted to scale our business with the on-premises application, we would have had to double or triple our team."

Dinesh Kamal Somanchi, Chief Technology Officer,
Info-Tech Systems

[Read the full story](#)

Migrate, modernize, and move on your terms

Your path to the cloud depends on many factors, including your existing applications, processes, data management methods, and skills. No matter how you plan your cloud journey, Azure can support you.

The sweet spot for maximizing business value lies in striking the right balance of impact and effort. For a quick win, you can follow a high-value, low-effort tactic, such as migrating existing workloads as-is, or outsourcing storage, to infrastructure as a service (IaaS), where you pay only for the resources consumed.

Or you may be ready to expand your investment in AI and cloud-native efficiency. For example, you can modernize older Java or .NET applications using fully managed platform as a service (PaaS) like Azure App Service. Or move the data layer to Azure SQL. Some code changes may be needed so you can take advantage of cloud capabilities. But you also reduce the need for manual updates and infrastructure maintenance, so you can focus on innovation instead of upkeep.

Which path should you take? The short answer: For the greatest long-term benefits, move toward PaaS. Today's AI-assisted tools dramatically speed up and simplify the process.



Quick win: Build momentum with a simpler modernization path that helps you reduce costs, such as moving on-premises SQL Server databases to managed Azure SQL. Then modernize your application through integration with cloud services, such as Power BI for business intelligence or Azure Arc for simplified governance and management.

Choose a path



Migrate your workloads

for the fastest, least disruptive path.

A straightforward lift-and-shift, known as **rehosting**, reduces costs and frees up datacenter space with minimal disruption. Or with minor code changes, **replatforming** enables you to adopt a PaaS solution like managed databases so you can offload maintenance, simplify reliability and disaster recovery, and reduce licensing overhead.

These strategies are part of the six cloud rationalizations (6 Rs for short)—**rehost, replatform, refactor, rearchitect, rebuild, and retire**.



Modernize workloads

to reduce technical debt and unlock cloud-native capabilities.

Refactoring, rearchitecting, and rebuilding are high impact strategies that help you start to future-proof your investments while improving performance, costs, and long-term efficiency.

It's common to adopt multiple paths, execute strategies in parallel, and work in phases as time and budget allow.

Use a lifecycle approach

As you migrate and modernize workloads, a lifecycle approach based on the following best practices helps you make the most of your options:



For the greatest ROI, start with a thorough assessment of your existing assets so you can identify the best candidates to migrate or modernize based on your goals.



To reduce security risk, lower operational effort and overhead, or just get more flexible pricing and pay-as-you-go options, use managed cloud services.



View migration and modernization efforts as part of a cycle of continuous improvement. Reevaluate the workloads you migrated earlier and optimize them based on everything you've learned.

Get expert guidance for the journey

An expert guide makes your journey easier. A cloud specialist or solution partner can address your specific challenges and offer recommendations that meet your goals and budget. Microsoft validates partner capabilities and expertise, making it easier for you to find the technical expertise, services, and solutions you need to transform your business, be profitable, and grow in new ways.

For self-starters, Microsoft provides step-by-step guidance, support, and out-of-the-box solutions tailored for small and medium businesses.

Simplify migration and modernization with Azure Migrate, a unified platform for assessing, discovering, and migrating servers, databases, web apps, and more.

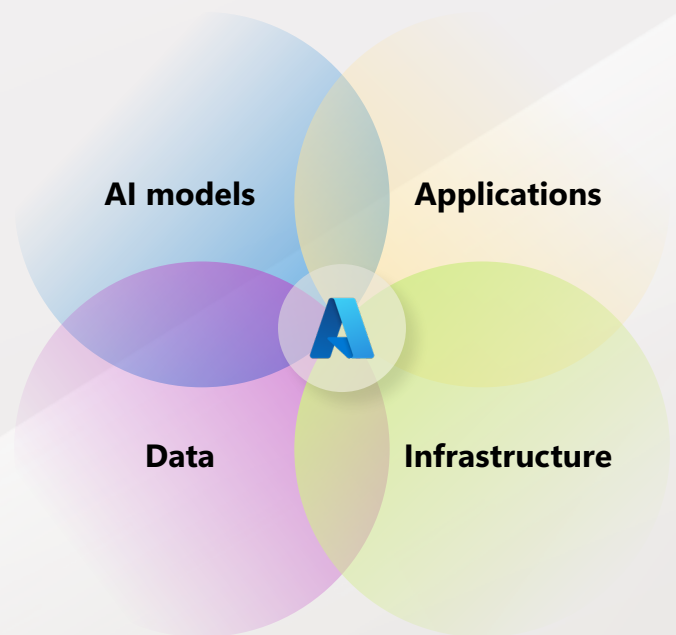
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Explore role-based training and ask questions at Microsoft Learn.

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Follow time-tested best practices in the Cloud Adoption Framework.

[Learn more](#)



Azure is designed to handle every workload—from AI models and applications to databases, operating systems, and infrastructure.

Next steps

Azure helps your business focus on its priorities and stay agile in a constantly changing technological landscape. With AI-powered infrastructure, tools, and resources, you can accelerate your migration and modernization plans.

Microsoft is your strategic partner throughout your cloud journey. We provide comprehensive resources and support every step of the way, from idea to deployment. Global specialists, partners, and funding are available to help you get started.

Next steps



Find a trusted Microsoft partner



Fuel transformation with Microsoft experts and investments using Azure Accelerate



Learn more about Azure solutions

¹ [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.

² [Microsoft small and mid-sized business blog](#). 2022.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ [Microsoft is a Leader in Gartner Magic Quadrant for Cloud Application Platform](#). Microsoft. November 24, 2024.

⁵ [Closing the cloud strategy, technology, and innovation gap](#). Deloitte. 2025.

⁶ [Microsoft small and mid-sized business blog](#). 2025.

⁷ [Western Sydney University taps into elasticity, efficiency in a few clicks with Azure](#). Microsoft. January 23, 2025.

⁸ [Too small to be ignored? Not anymore](#). Mastercard. April, 2025.

⁹ [Industry-Recognized Cybersecurity Leader](#). Microsoft Security website.

¹⁰ [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ [Cloud Adoption Statistics 2025: Growth, Migration Drivers & ROI](#). SQ Magazine.

¹⁵ [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.

¹⁶ [Info-Tech offers speedy, cost-friendly HR system on Microsoft Azure, leading to 10x growth in customer base](#). Microsoft. April 09, 2024.