



*Talking Point*  
Discussion Document



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# Consistency is key with hybrid cloud

Can Microsoft Azure Stack Hub  
negate your public cloud barriers?

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## Transformation means doing things differently

We can think about business transformation in a variety of ways, but doing things differently, i.e. changing the way that things are done, is fundamentally what it's about. Every business is a mix of people, process and technology, so any significant business transformation is likely to involve change across all three areas.

If we think about the technology dimension of transformation, especially information technology, then the word 'cloud' usually springs to mind, with public cloud often at the forefront of today's cloud technology conversations. However, early adopters and experienced CIOs are also thinking about their hybrid cloud and hybrid IT strategies as they juggle priorities, capabilities and costs.

Public cloud service providers, such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google, have developed a range of offerings that enable organizations to do things differently. However, there are many reasons (control, risk, security, latency, etc.) why public cloud isn't always appropriate, and this is where discussions relating to hybrid cloud tend to originate.

You're no doubt familiar with the benefits (easy access, scale as needed, no upfront cost, etc.) of public cloud, and have a good understanding of where this sits within your overall IT strategy. But what about those restrictions we listed above? It would be unusual if some of these didn't apply to every large enterprise in some shape or form.

## Cloud is an IT model, not a location

The cloud services market is still evolving, so it's easy to get distracted by vendor strategies when it's your strategy that matters. We need to remind ourselves that 'cloud' is fundamentally an architectural IT model, not a specific location or one vendor's view of the IT universe. Yes, public cloud service providers do things differently, but they still operate out of data centers, they still maintain physical hardware, and they still manage software. And of course, they do this at hyperscale.

Physical and operational scale are a major part of the public cloud service provider story, but there's nothing stopping enterprises from adopting this model. Indeed, you may have already done so. If we zoom-out to a high-level, we can see that it's all about standardized processes, standardized configurations, automation and orchestration. Together, these deliver the speed, consistency and predictability that have become synonymous with cloud.

The combination of IT virtualization, containerization, and infrastructure-as-a-service has helped develop the concept and realization of hybrid cloud for many organizations. For example, a virtualized system composed of many components can be represented by a file that can be moved, copied and modified almost anywhere, just like a document or spreadsheet. This means that different workloads can be instantiated in different locations (on-premises, hosted, public cloud) and moved around as circumstances dictate.

If we continue the analogy, we can see that files created by Microsoft Office are innately different to those created by Google Docs. The latter is inherently cloud native while the former is not. And the applications that create these files are different too. This points to arguably the most important aspect of your hybrid cloud strategy: modern application development.

## Bringing consistency to hybrid cloud strategies

New application platforms give rise to new application capabilities, and these capabilities can make all the difference when it comes to digital transformation initiatives. By embracing the platform-as-a-service model, modern cloud-native applications are typically built around loosely-coupled apps and micro-services, and they can implicitly define the underlying resources that are required for their operation and instantiation.

Applications are the things that really matter from a business IT perspective, so any change to the way that applications are built, deployed and maintained will present some form of business impact. Changing the way that things are done is all well and good, but we know that productivity and agility can take a hit when we do unfamiliar things. So, how can your enterprise developers and IT ops teams do things differently yet in a familiar way? The answer lies in consistency.

We associate the word ‘consistency’ with reliability, uniformity, stability and dependability. But how do we obtain it in the challenging world of enterprise IT, where multiple different business requirements are vying for attention? If your IT department functions like many others, then you probably lean towards a handful of strategic hardware, software and services partners, with Microsoft being one of them.

Microsoft has a longstanding presence in the enterprise, so you’re probably evaluating or maybe using Azure today. If you are, then Microsoft Azure Stack Hub won’t have escaped your notice. Available on certified, “cloud-inspired”, partner hardware, Microsoft Azure Stack Hub offers a consistent, end-to-end IT model for hybrid cloud.

It’s still early days for Microsoft and its Azure Stack Hub integrated system partners, but the promise is to remove the barriers associated with the adoption of Azure public cloud while remaining consistent with it. Azure Stack Hub offers a subset of Azure services today, but these are by no means inconsequential. You can read more about the platform in the documents listed in the Further Reading section<sup>[1][2]</sup>.

## Pragmatic IT is hybrid IT

No one can argue that we live in a topsy-turvy world where the future often seems to be disobedient. This, to say the least, can make life very tricky for any organization. If you’re a CEO or business leader, then you already know that IT is an important contributor to business success, especially where digital transformation is concerned, but this doesn’t take the sting out of increased IT budget requests.

Enterprise IT is often about selecting ‘horses for courses’, but ‘owners’ will be delighted if the new addition to the ‘stable’ can perform well across a range of ‘different courses’. So, what we’re really looking for is a pragmatic approach to enterprise IT that embraces the best of cloud and traditional IT in equal measure.

Does Azure Stack Hub fit the bill? Well, only you can say, but the signs look promising, especially if your forward-looking IT requirements coincide with Microsoft’s Azure strategy. And if your strategy includes multiple platforms and architectures, which undoubtedly it will, then you could find that Azure Stack Hub introduces an additional dimension of freedom and value as Microsoft’s hybrid cloud environment develops.

## Further Reading

1. **Get going with Azure Stack Hub:** Accelerating adoption of hybrid cloud
2. **Accelerate to hybrid cloud:** FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for Microsoft Azure Stack Hub brings cloud into the data center

## About Freeform Dynamics

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