

# Consolidating Cloud Services and Fully Leveraging Microsoft 365

A Practical 7-Step Guide for  
Cutting Collaboration Costs  
by 50% or More





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# Introduction: An Opportunity to Be Seized!

Organizations are showing a growing preference for cloud services. According to a survey by Microsoft in 2018, 75% of enterprises consider software-as-a-service cloud offerings essential to their operations.

Faster access to new services, reduced costs compared to on-premises infrastructure, and a more straightforward route to productivity tools have swept across the organizational landscape as a consequence of new cloud services with a frictionless acquisition modus operandi.

Navigate to a cloud provider's web site, flash your credit card, and you're in!

And yet, the smooth, seamless and frictionless ability to acquire new cloud services has resulted in painful realities and costly complexities for the modern organization:



The number of cloud services used across the organization has exploded beyond reason.



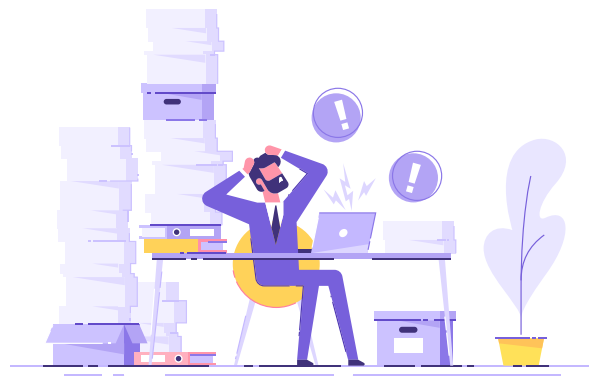
Financial costs to cover services with overlapping capabilities have increased beyond budgeted amounts.



The use of inconsistent services has compromised the user experience for employees, making work processes more difficult.



Security professionals and compliance officers face elevated concerns as employees embrace untested services to process and store confidential and sensitive corporate data without the usual security, policy and data protection controls in place.



It is beyond time for organizations to consolidate their cloud services as an antidote to this sprawl. The global health pandemic that derailed rosy expectations for 2020 has only further driven cloud sprawl and elevated the importance of cloud consolidation.

During COVID, cloud sprawl accelerated as normal decision-making processes were dropped in the face of rapid and unprecedented changes to working routines. Shelter-in-place orders from government officials, for example, forced organizations of all types to support remote working arrangements. "Do whatever you have to do to make it work" became the key phrase.

But the challenges of cloud sprawl have created a new type of pandemic. “Do whatever you have to” has become a millstone, not the enabler it was initially supposed to be. For example:





- ▶ **Slowing economic activity** has resulted in a heightened focus on cutting unnecessary expenses.
- ▶ **Reduced budgets** make it more difficult to hire additional IT staff to manage a diverse set of cloud services.
- ▶ **Training users** how to work across multiple cloud services is expensive and complicated.
- ▶ **Security protections** in newly adopted cloud services are often substandard and not ready for the enterprise.
- ▶ **Information silos** are created across multiple cloud services, making it more difficult for employees to complete work tasks.
- ▶ **Use of shadow IT** services has created compliance issues around record-keeping, for example, with work-related conversations and document sharing happening through personal email accounts and consumer-grade messaging applications that don't integrate with corporate or agency record systems.

Microsoft 365 (formerly Office 365) is the perfect destination for cloud consolidation. As a platform offering, it provides a broad collection of integrated apps that other cloud services offer as separate, standalone products.

Instead of expecting employees to coordinate work across an uncoordinated collection of services (e.g., Slack, Zoom, Dropbox for Business, Trello, etc.), similar apps in Microsoft 365 are used instead. Microsoft 365 offers the power and breadth of capability to enable cloud consolidation, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Consolidate Services to Microsoft 365**

Replace Cloud Services	With Microsoft 365
Slack	 Microsoft Teams
Zoom or WebEx	 Microsoft Teams
Desk-based IP phones	 Microsoft Teams
Dropbox, Box, etc.	 OneDrive and SharePoint
Facebook for Work	 Yammer
Custom Built Apps	 PowerPlatform
Tableau	 PowerBI
Chili Piper	 Microsoft Bookings
SurveyMonkey	 Microsoft Forms
Trello	 Microsoft Planner

Simply put, by being under the same umbrella, all the services in Microsoft 365 can easily talk to one another and are covered by Microsoft's industry-leading enterprise security features.

Cloud consolidation is a significant opportunity for you and your organization. Take a moment to look at your overall cloud collaboration spend. Now imagine your boss's face when you present him a plan for cutting that number in half.

In this eBook, we are going to explain the business case for cloud consolidation and provide a practical 7-step guide for creating your consolidation plan.

# The Proliferation of Cloud Services— What's the Problem?

The health pandemic of 2020 has further driven the sprawl of cloud services, but the migration to the cloud has been building steadily over the past decade. In this section, we look at the evidence.

## Number of Cloud Services

Many research reports highlight the fact that organizations are using multiple cloud services. Out of a sea of numbers, here's four:



- ▶ In a 2016 report, Intel Security found that companies were using an average of **43** different cloud services.
- ▶ In a 2018 report, Forcepoint said that a typical enterprise company was using more than **1,000** software-as-a-service applications.
- ▶ In another 2018 study, Microsoft said that enterprises use an average of **1,100** cloud apps.
- ▶ In its 2019 report on cloud adoption, McAfee said that most organizations believe they use only **30** cloud services, but actually use over **1,900** cloud services.

There's a big difference between Intel's 43 number in 2016 and the other data points between 1,000 and 2,000. While some of this variation will be due to the growth in usage of sanctioned services, the higher numbers are also likely to count separate instances of the same cloud service and shadow IT services.



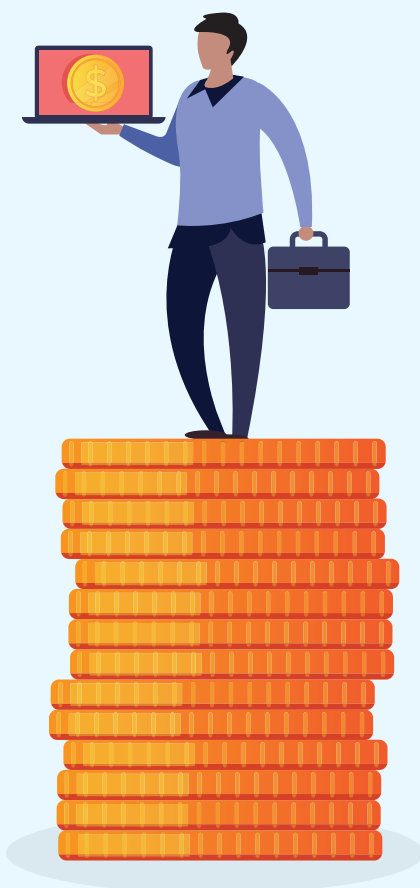
For example, if ten separate groups are using Dropbox for Business, that's counted as ten services. The higher numbers also count unsanctioned cloud services, hence quantifying the magnitude of shadow IT as a problem in modern enterprises, particularly since Forcepoint, Microsoft and McAfee each offer cloud discovery capabilities in their respective cloud security offerings.

In summary, irrespective of the actual number of cloud services currently in use in the average enterprise, these very high numbers illustrate that cloud services have been widely and broadly adopted in both sanctioned and unsanctioned modes. But more importantly, these numbers raise significant questions around governance, information risk, security, productivity and cost-effectiveness.

## Spending on Cloud Services

Moving to cloud services offers a way to transform monetary flows from capital to operational budget line items, reduce expenditure overall, and enable greater agility. And organizations are going for it. Consider:

- ▶ In 2016, an Intel Security report forecasted that **80%** of IT budgets would be directed at cloud services by 2018.
- ▶ In 2018, a Forcepoint study took the view that **70%** of IT spend would go towards cloud services by 2020.
- ▶ Forrester Research has continually increased its forecasted market spend on public cloud services for the year 2020, initially set at around **\$150 billion** in 2011, then **\$191 billion** in 2014, and **\$236 billion** in 2016. Any of those are big numbers, and they've just increased over time.
- ▶ In 2020, Flexera found that organizations are over-budget on cloud spend by **23%**, and yet its survey respondents expect cloud spend to increase by **47%** over the next 12 months.



In its research, Forcepoint also said that 40% of cloud spend goes towards unsanctioned apps (also called shadow IT services). It's not hard to see this if we consider the massive variation in the McAfee findings from 2019 above: organizations are using "about 30" sanctioned apps and "about 1,905" unsanctioned ones. An earlier study in 2017 by McAfee found the following concerning the use of overlapping services:



- ▶ The average employee is actively using **36** cloud services at work. Nine of these are collaboration services, six are file-sharing services, and five are for content sharing.
- ▶ The average enterprise has **210** different cloud-based collaboration services in use across its employees.
- ▶ The average enterprise has **76** different cloud-based file-sharing services in use.

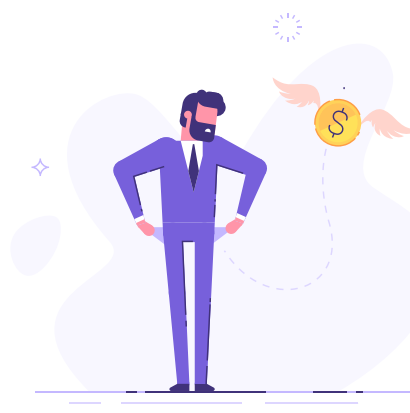
Earlier in 2020, analysis by Flexera found that organizations are wasting at least 35% of their cloud spend. It is no surprise, therefore, that optimizing the use of existing cloud services is the highest cloud-related priority across Flexera's survey base.

## Summary: Cloud Spend and Usage

It would not be inappropriate to use the findings above to make this conservative assertion: at least 40% of cloud spend is overlap, which therefore gives us a ballpark for the magnitude of cost savings available from cloud consolidation. A less conservative estimate would be in the 70-80% range.

Cloud is an increasingly dominant factor in IT budgets—and in business group budgets too, once unsanctioned app expenditures are counted. As an overall entity, each organization has the responsibility to ensure their IT spend is optimized and delivers effective outcomes.

The use of cloud services is not going away. Cloud services have become a strategic approach for how IT services are delivered across the organization, and as such, a better strategy for cloud service selection and adoption is essential.





# Benefits of Cloud Consolidation— Why Does Cloud Consolidation Make Sense?

All organizations, even the most rigorously governed, can benefit from a review and consolidation of cloud services.

Consolidating cloud services makes sense across many dimensions. Reducing cost is the easiest benefit to cite, so let's start with cost savings before moving onto a wider exploration of benefits with even greater importance than cost.

## Cost Savings

Consolidating cloud services can often slash costs in half. For example, organizations using Dropbox for Business in parallel with Microsoft 365 pay \$20 per user per month for the file sync and share capabilities in Dropbox, and also \$35 per user per month for an Office 365 E5 license. Eliminating Dropbox by moving file sync and share to OneDrive and SharePoint represents a saving of 51% per user migrated.

See Figure 2 for an example with Slack, Dropbox for Business and Office 365 E5.

**Figure 2. Cost Savings from Cloud Consolidation**

Before Consolidation		After Consolidation	
Slack	\$6	Office 365 E5	\$35
Dropbox for Business	\$20		
Office 365 E5	\$35		
Total Monthly	\$61 per user	Total Monthly	\$35 per user
		Savings	\$26 per user
		Cost Reduction	43% reduction

As a home example, when we (AvePoint) looked into the fees we were paying for conference calling services in parallel to the capabilities in Microsoft 365, we found we could save \$400,000 per year by just using what Office 365 already offered. That was more than a 60% reduction in our annual cost by merely consolidating two to one.

Saving on the cost front is all about being prudent in the use of organizational resources and reducing and minimizing wasted expenditure. Cost savings can also free up expenditure that's being unnecessarily spent on duplicate services in order to fund more essential services that have previously been short-changed or out of reach.

## Address the Limitations of Free (and Paid) Services

Free is a high price to pay when the capabilities of services undermine the ability of organizations to work effectively. For example:



Slack's free version only provides access to the most recent 10,000 messages, which diminishes productivity since historical records are inaccessible. Slack's approach prevents access to potentially responsive material in eDiscovery cases, which could give rise to charges of spoliation.



Dropbox's free version has been plagued by security breaches, lacks adequate search functionality, and does not provide sufficient traceability of changes to files. Its paid version for business customers suffers from weaknesses in multi-user editing—resulting in conflicting versions being created.



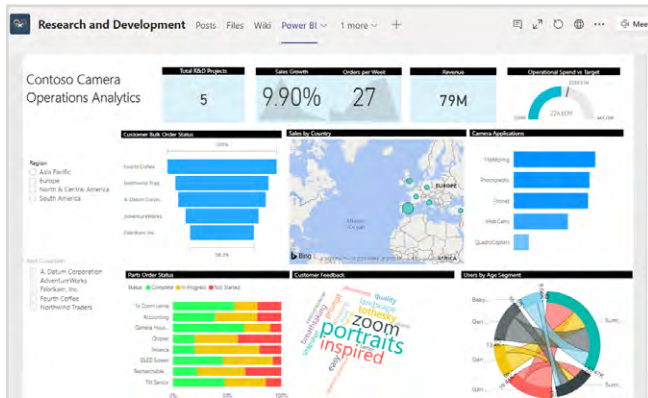
Zoom's explosive growth in 2020 has been undermined by a litany of problems with its service, including substandard encryption, unauthorized access to meeting recordings, people joining meetings they were not invited to (so called "zoombombing"), among others.

Consolidating cloud services enables organizations to address the limitations of free (and paid) services through cloud offerings that are fit-for-the-enterprise.

## Improved User Experience and Reduced Complexity

Cloud consolidation into Microsoft 365 provides an improved user experience by reducing complexity in the array of tools employees work with. Services in Microsoft 365 are designed to work together from the get-go, with Teams being the premier example of how Microsoft enables the aggregation of SharePoint, OneDrive, Planner, calling and chat capabilities (and much more) in a single integrated service.

Services that are built to work together enable integrations such as linking Outlook and OneNote, moving an email thread from Outlook to Microsoft Teams for wider conversation and discussion, and a unified search experience using the new Microsoft Search.



***For example, PowerBI can seamlessly integrate in Teams.***

Employees don't have to find yet another app to unify multiple, disparate services, and adoption is simpler because learning acquired about one tool in Microsoft 365 carries across to other tools in the wider platform. Cross-team experiences are improved as well, since different teams use common tools—e.g., Microsoft Teams, Yammer—rather than a wide disparity that embrace different interfaces, approaches and architectures.

## Reduced Information Risk

Information risk is reduced with cloud consolidation, because consistent approaches can be used for identifying sensitive data, classifying content, and blocking inappropriate sharing or distribution attempts. With fewer cloud services in use, there are fewer data repositories to manage and secure, and fewer services that could be breached.

## CASE STUDY

### Pure SEO Moves 120 GB Slack to Teams Migration Using FLY

Following the COVID-19 lockdown, Pure SEO operations and systems manager, Joel Madden,



determined a Slack to Teams migration would result in cost savings and improved operations.

"We were paying \$6,000 a year for Slack as well as the Microsoft licensing fee for the Microsoft suite of products," said Madden. "However, Slack also had a limitation to the number of people who can be in a call, which especially for calls within the company, didn't work....We looked at Zoom but the free version had limitations and we didn't want to pay for another version."

"We also wanted to trim the fat with the programs, passwords, maintenance of systems and incorporate that into one core product, which was Microsoft 365," he added.

Pure SEO had about 120 GB and 820 channels, each aligned to a specific client, in Slack that needed to be moved. Migrating conversation history proved to be a challenge as other providers were either inexperienced, costly or would only export the conversations as an HTML file.

"We approached other vendors that quoted us [a large amount] for the project and secondly they could only guarantee they would extract the conversations from Slack to an HTML and upload it to the appropriate channel in Teams," he said.

That's when Madden came across AvePoint's FLY solution and began to consider doing the migration himself.

"FLY was the more cost effective option, the documentation was clear and being able to not have the history as an HTML attachment, but to populate the destination Teams with the record of the conversation...was huge."

## Reduced Attack Surface

Cloud consolidation reduces the attack surface available to malicious internal and external actors. Fewer services, fewer apps and fewer vendors means fewer vectors for attack. Common attack types include compromised accounts (often via phishing attempts or brute-force password attacks), distributed denial of service attacks, the exploitation of vulnerabilities in security settings and application code, and misconfigured access rights.

At the end of the day, if your organization doesn't store data in a particular cloud service, it can't be breached or compromised there. Gartner's view, stated in 2015, is that 95% of cloud security failures are the customer's fault, and reducing cloud services in use is a strong approach for mitigating fault.

## Reduced Complexity for IT Management and System Administration

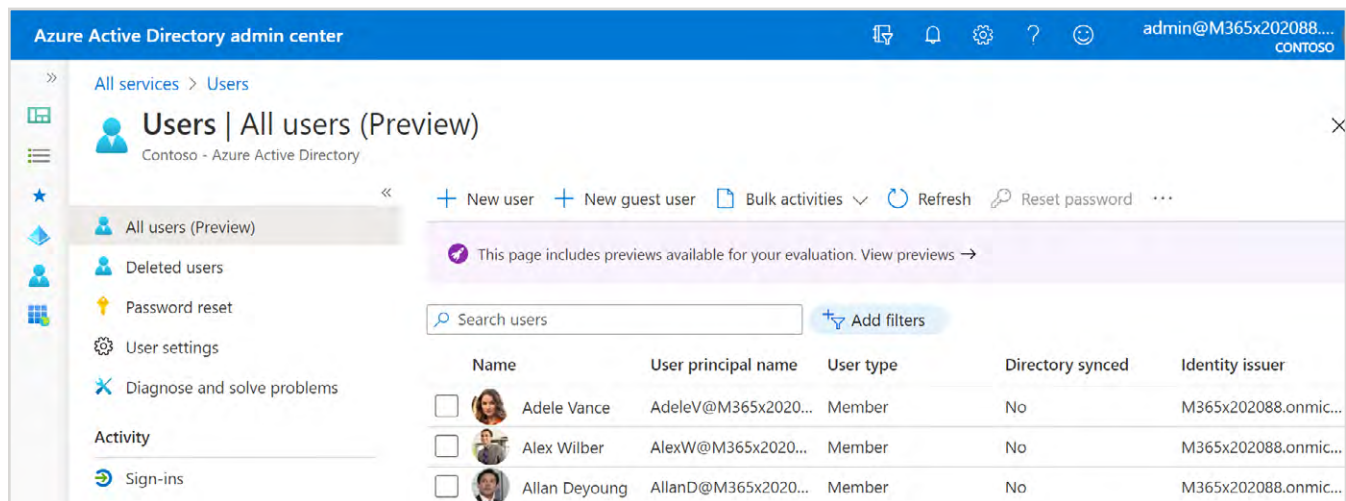
As more and more cloud services are used, someone has to manage and administer access rights, ensure appropriate data protection, configure security requirements, and meet compliance demands.

Consolidating cloud services to Microsoft 365 reduces the disparity, complexity, and deviations across services. Fewer services need to be tracked via audit logs, alerting mechanisms, and notification engines.

It is also much easier for an organization to hire cloud professionals with expertise in Microsoft 365 as compared to finding professionals with competence and skill across multiple cloud services.

## Improved Security Posture

Using multiple, disparate cloud services—each with different and non-integrated identity and access mechanisms—creates an environment ripe for malicious and negligent insider security threats.



Name	User principal name	User type	Directory synced	Identity issuer
Adele Vance	AdeleV@M365x2020...	Member	No	M365x202088.onmic...
Alex Wilber	AlexW@M365x2020...	Member	No	M365x202088.onmic...
Allan Deyoung	AllanD@M365x2020...	Member	No	M365x202088.onmic...

***All M365 services are linked to a single Azure AD account, which helps when identity is the new perimeter.***

Employees departing the organization can retain access to confidential data and gain access to new intellectual property stored in various cloud services, since their access rights are not revoked on departure. Consolidating cloud services into Microsoft 365 improves the security posture for an organization, because all services are linked to a single Azure AD account for each employee. The account can be enhanced through multi-factor authentication in general, and even configured to enforce differing conditions based on the attributes of a login attempt.

Using fewer services makes it easier to identify suspicious behavior since all access signals can be correlated and compared with a security baseline. And when it's time for an employee to depart the organization—either by their choice or for other reasons—a single deactivation of their Azure AD account prevents future access to any of the connected services in Microsoft 365.

## Improved Ability to Leverage Wider Platform Investments

Consolidating cloud services into Microsoft 365 offers benefits beyond mere reduction in service variability.

### Data loss prevention

Policies Alerts Endpoint DLP settings (preview)

Use data loss prevention (DLP) policies to help identify and protect your organization's sensitive data. [Learn more about DLP](#)

Create policy (preview)

Edit policy (preview)

Delete policy

Export

Name	
U.S. Financial Data	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	

### General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

**Status**  
Enabled

**Description**  
**Locations to apply the policy**  
Exchange email  
SharePoint sites  
OneDrive accounts  
Teams chat and channel messages

**Policy settings**  
High volume of EU Sensitive content found  
Low volume EU Sensitive content found

***Users can set a DLP policy to protect GDPR regulated data across services as seen above.***

Microsoft 365 also offers a complementary series of wider capabilities that span individual user- and team-focused services across the platform, including Microsoft Threat Protection (security), Microsoft 365 Data Loss Protection (cross-workload data protection), Workplace Analytics (productivity behavioral analysis to inform work design improvements), and the new Project Cortex (for automatic generation, curation and maintenance of knowledge expressed in artefacts, chat streams, and SharePoint sites).

Cloud services not integrated with Microsoft 365 are excluded from the signal collection and curation that underlie these wider platform services.

## Simplified Digital Workplace

For organizations that are intentionally developing a digital workplace, consolidating cloud services into Microsoft 365 offers greater consistency in process and service delivery across locations.

All employees reference and work with a common set of applications and information, which benefits internal process improvements and consistent service delivery to customers.

A simplified digital workplace also streamlines the process of onboarding new employees, as they have a consistent set of apps to work with, clearer lines of demarcation between when to use specific apps, and broader access to existing knowledge networks and experts.

### Summary: Benefits of Cloud Consolidation

Cost savings is an obvious benefit, but many of the other benefits offer significantly greater strategic value to organizations and should be included in any business justification documents.



# Process for Cloud Consolidation— 7 Steps to Make It Happen

We've talked about the beauty of the cloud, and how cloud services have revolutionized what's possible for organizations across the world. But we face a pandemic of cloud proliferation that has to be dealt with before it destroys the many gains that are possible through cloud services.

To this end, we've dived into concept of cloud consolidation, enumerating the benefits available from making strategic choices about cloud services, with cost savings being only one of the benefits (and in many ways, the least important).

So let's get down to practical next steps in this section. How do we actually go about consolidating the number of cloud services in use, with Microsoft 365 as the strategic destination platform?

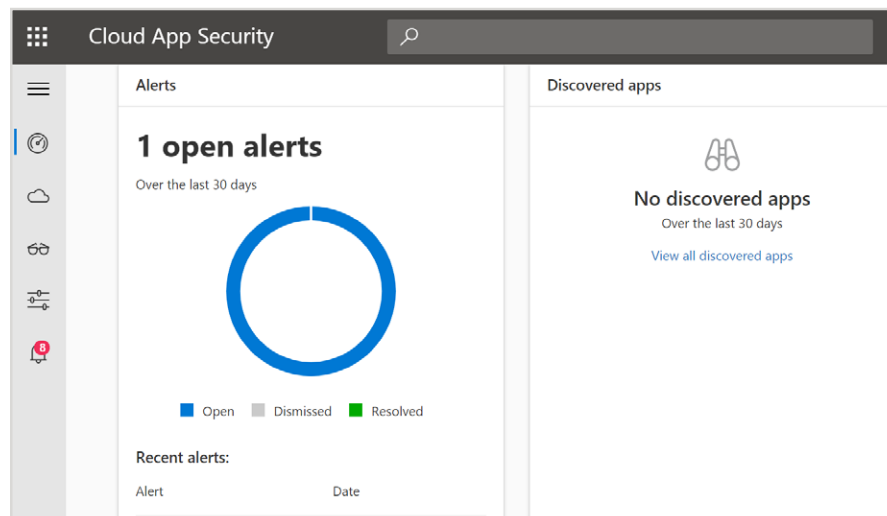
## Step 1

### Discover the Scope of the Opportunity for Cloud Consolidation

Getting your arms around the scope of cloud services in use is the first step.

While most organizations have embraced a multi-cloud strategy in terms of sanctioned cloud services, what is often hidden is the extent of shadow IT in use. Sanctioned services will number in the tens, but unsanctioned services can number in the hundreds or thousands.

Use automated discovery tools to create a first-pass inventory of what is currently being used. CASBs like Microsoft Cloud App Security will help in this endeavor, as well as endpoint auditing tools.



If your organization has access to specific software asset inventory capabilities, see what you can find out with these. You will want to be on the lookout for popular solutions that have overlapping capabilities with Microsoft 365—many of which were listed earlier in this eBook—for example, Slack, Box, DropBox, and WebEx.

***Find shadow IT by using the Microsoft Cloud App Security feature***



## CASE STUDY

### Miken Technologies Migrates a Client from Slack to Microsoft Teams While Retaining Conversation History

Miken's client, a financial services organization, had been leveraging Slack for over a year in conjunction with G Suite before considering Office 365.



"When Microsoft revealed Teams, our client's interest in Office 365 peaked. Why would you continue using Slack if you can have all of that real-time collaboration tied into the pure integration and immersion of Office 365?" said Chief Technology Architect Jason Robison, Miken Technologies.

Natively migrating a G Suite to Office 365 requires an app password to be created for each individual account and a 2-step verification to be turned on, making a native migration very time intensive.

In order to make Office 365 a viable option, Miken would need to not only migrate 220GB of their client's G Suite content, but also their Slack environment to Microsoft Teams while maintaining all prior conversation records.

During Miken's research and evaluation of multiple third-party solutions, they came across AvePoint's FLY capabilities.

Using FLY, the time devoted to the entire project was reduced by approximately 40 hours.

Robison explains, "We did look at a few other providers. However, they did not cover both the full G Suite and Slack to Teams migrations. Only AvePoint could complete both."

The most critical piece of the puzzle was ensuring that their Slack conversation history stayed intact.

"Our client really needed to be able to see their Teams conversations just as they were in Slack. AvePoint really stepped up to the plate and was able to make that happen. This was the overall deciding factor," said Robison.

Automated discovery will usually need to be complemented with manual efforts, however, which involves interviewing (or surveying) business groups and teams on the cloud services (and on-premises apps too) they are using to perform their work.

Remember, you aren't only on the hunt for cloud collaboration software, but process and functionality overlap. For example, AvePoint's phone bill didn't show up as a cloud service line item, but ditching it for Microsoft Teams resulted in significant cost savings. Likewise, your custom mobile app development process won't appear as a recurring cloud services cost, but you may be able to realize significant savings with PowerPlatform.

## Step 2

### Develop Your Reference IT Architecture for Cloud Services

Informed by the discovery analysis from Step 1, which services currently being used are strategic to your organization and why? It is possible that you may discover a collection of subpar cloud services that all need to be eliminated in preference for a new strategic play.

Strategic value encompasses benefits on offer, integration with complementary services (for enhancing the employee experience), and the maturity of the security and compliance capabilities available.

AvePoint is a strategic advisor to organizations on cloud consolidation, and we highly recommend that the development of this architecture includes representation from business units beyond just IT. There's great value to be gained from this collaboration.

While business managers are likely to require education to see the possibilities in Microsoft 365 beyond just email and calendaring in the cloud, IT, for its part, will require education from

business units on business scenarios (use cases), requirements and preferences.

The output of Step 2 is a list of cloud services that will remain in use or be introduced as net-new services, along with a list of services to eliminate.

### Step 3

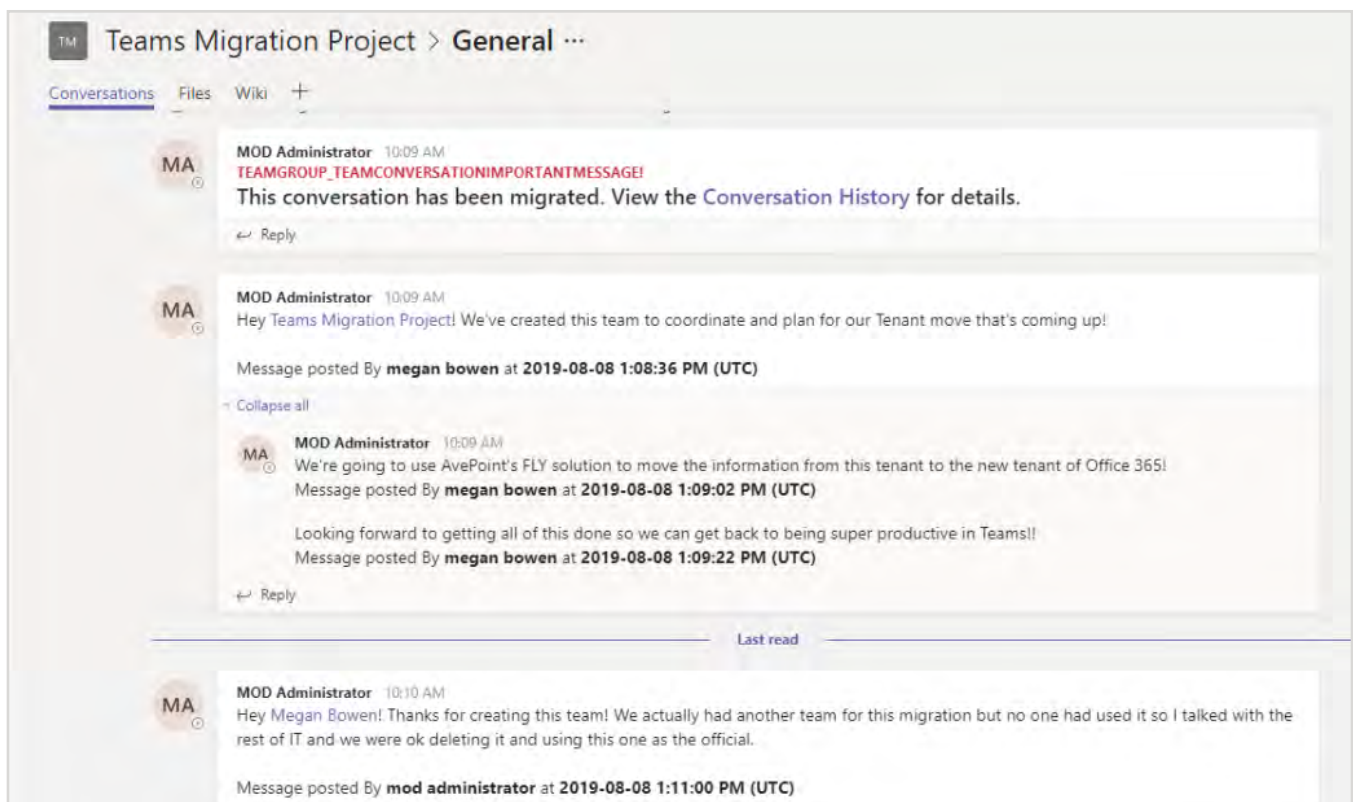
## Build the Business Case and Requirements for Consolidation

Prepare the business case for cloud consolidation, painting the picture of current state versus the ideal future state. The nature and scope of your business case will depend on the level of changes to cloud services being advocated for your organization, the investment of time and money required, and the extent of adoption support anticipated.

There are short-term and long-term benefits to be gained from cloud consolidation, and some of the ones we have explored in this eBook will resonate with your organization more than others.

Likewise, there will be costs to budget for, including cloud service fees, consulting support and migration tools to move the necessary data to your strategic destination platform. Timeframes for making changes should also be outlined in the business case, as should your plan for sustainable adoption (a topic we have lots of material on).

Many vendors—including AvePoint—offer a free migration discovery consultation to scan your environment to provide an accurate estimate of the time and cost associated with migrating data and consolidating your services. This can be invaluable to uncover hidden tripwires for data or workflows



***AvePoint FLY migration tool can migrate channel conversations from Slack or another Teams tenant***

that may be more difficult to migrate.

During this stage you will want to consider your migration requirements. The most important requirements to consider are ensuring you retain the full fidelity of the data, all associated metadata, and the ability to minimize impact on the organization.

For example, if you are migrating from Slack to Microsoft Teams, there is likely important context and business data contained within the persistent chat of channels. [AvePoint FLY](#) is one of the only vendors that can map and [migrate that data fully to Teams channel conversations](#). We have done so successfully for multiple organizations already.

If your organization is large or your migration is very complex spanning countries or tenants, you may want to consider [migration services](#) to minimize impact on the end user.



#### Step 4

### Migrate Initial Services and Data to Microsoft 365 Workloads

Don't attempt to do it all at once. Start with migrating the initial cloud services to Microsoft 365, and then keep going with migration of other services as you build momentum and success.

Current cloud services will contain corporate data, and hence a pre-migration analysis of content in those services will enable you to decide which data to migrate to Microsoft 365, and which can be archived immediately or securely deleted. It's almost certain you won't have to migrate everything, which will lower the cost of the actual migration and [save on longer term maintenance costs in the new environment](#).

Our customers have found that having high fidelity migration tools available makes all the difference to cloud consolidation, and we offer a comprehensive set to support migration between cloud services and away from on-premises infrastructure. Our migration tools—FLY and DocAve Migrator—enable pre-migration data analysis, secure data movement between services, and data mapping between legacy cloud services and new data structures in the relevant Microsoft 365 workload.

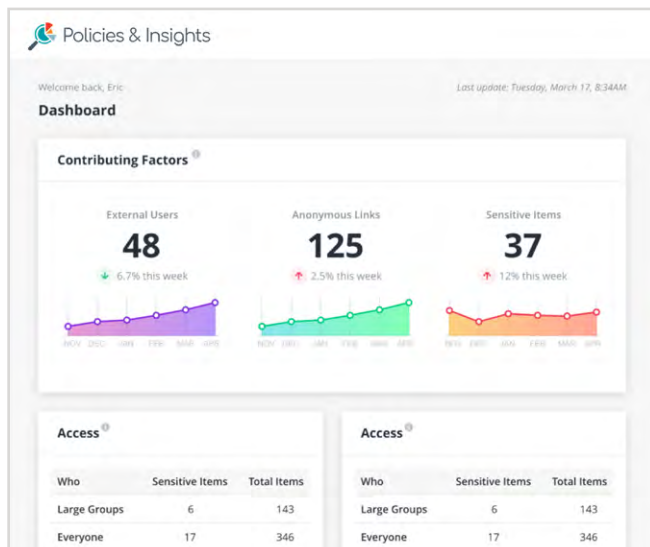
Without such tools, you are stuck with legacy decisions, expanding risk, and a growing complexity of applications. As services and data are migrated to Microsoft 365, execute your sustainable adoption plan to shift behaviors and make the new place the right place to get work done.

#### Step 5

### Address Security and Compliance Requirements

Ensure security is built into your approach to consolidating cloud services into Microsoft 365. This means deciding how you are going to secure your sensitive data, govern your workspaces and retain data in accordance with relevant regulations or internal SLAs. It also means cleaning up the old environment.

Content classification is essential for locating sensitive and confidential data that requires added protection (e.g., encryption, limitations on sharing, etc.). Data Loss Protection (DLP) rules help assure



that sensitive content is not negligently or maliciously shared beyond its proper boundaries.

AvePoint's [Policies and Insights \(PI\)](#) leverages these Microsoft features and combs through the unconnected reports containing tens of thousands of line items to prioritize permissions or content that may be over-exposed and require immediate attention. It is also the only Microsoft 365 data governance access tool that moves beyond alerts and tagging to the deployment of contextual enforcement actions to mitigate dangerous oversharing in near real time.

It is also important to have regular security reviews for existing workspaces—where a workspace owner has to confirm which individuals and groups should continue to have access to a given workspace and check for configuration drift. This can be automated to decrease the likelihood of inappropriate access rights or settings remaining in place (or happening in the first place) with [Cloud Governance](#).

You will also want to use this time to review any data retention laws to which your organization is subject, along with your organization's desired [recovery point objective \(RPO\) and recovery time objective \(RTO\)](#). This will help you identify if you have a need for a third-party backup solution—such as AvePoint [Cloud Backup](#)—that can cover workloads across Microsoft 365

## CASE STUDY

### MMSD Ensures Modern Workplace Communications Are Fully Compliant With 30-Year Data Retention Regulations

MMSD must meet Wisconsin state standards for electronic records management said Michael Benedict, Application



Development Supervisor at MMSD. However, prior to implementing AvePoint Cloud Backup, the organization had the occasional compliance challenge.

"In the past, we didn't have a good way to capture things like email, so project managers had to take items from their inboxes and save them somewhere else. Some PMs were good about it and others weren't," said Benedict. "Now we have everything and can tie it to an individual user or library, and have it backed up. The native backup only went so far, and this was an area that needed to be covered, it was our insurance policy."

MMSD's IT team evaluated Veeam, Metalogix (now Quest) and other providers before selecting AvePoint Cloud Backup.

"We knew Office 365 and Teams are how we will be collaborating and we wanted a top notch backup and recovery solution that is reliable, consistent and easy to use. We didn't want to pay someone to do it, or take three days to restore get something to get up and running again," added Benedict. "AvePoint allows us to be way more collaborative, use Teams and be sure it is backed up."

The MMSD also appreciates Cloud Backup's ability to delegate administration and set different policies for different departments.

"AvePoint Cloud Backup allows you to do some specific containerization of Groups so if you have departments like Legal who have specific retention policies and other departments that don't have those needs it works," advised Villegas.

(especially Microsoft Teams).

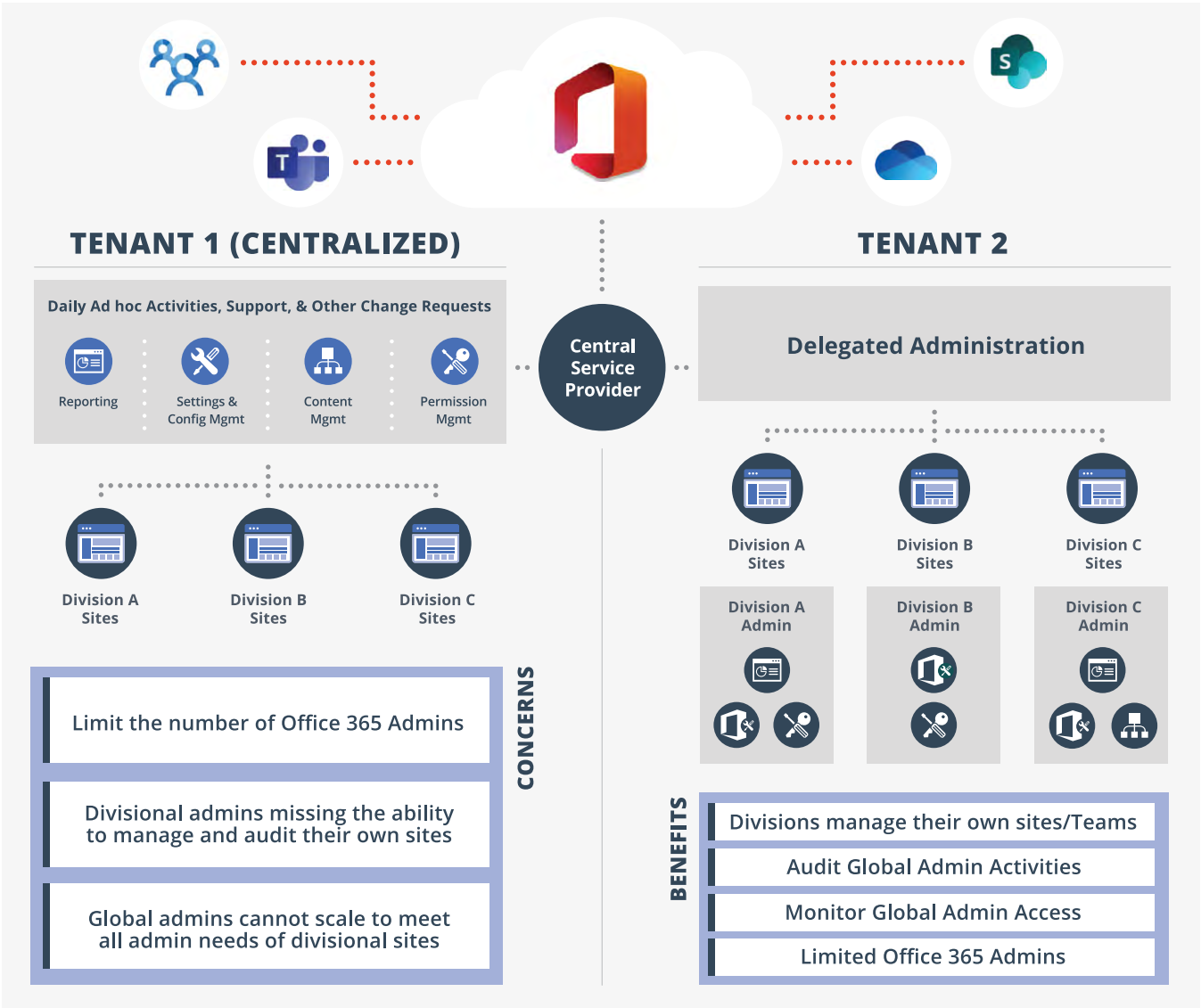
Cancelling legacy cloud services as soon as practical is an essential part of addressing security and compliance requirements. As soon as usage has moved across to the new service in Microsoft 365 and any data in the deprecated cloud service has been moved or archived, cancel the service and ensure that all data has been securely erased by the cloud provider.

Leaving sensitive and confidential data lying around in legacy cloud services is only asking for trouble (e.g., ongoing unauthorized access, or a data breach).

Step  
**6**

**Update IT Policies and Policy Management**

Update current IT policies and automated technical governance to align with the new direction for cloud services. With respect to IT policies, the need for all departments to use sanctioned cloud services as part of the streamlined enterprise-wide approach is a core concept to state.





Many organizations find departments adopt Microsoft 365 faster and are more productive when using AvePoint's [Cloud Governance](#) to create tailored settings that differ by business unit, department, or geography. Our approach works by dividing tenant wide settings into smaller and more specialized groupings aligned with how your organization works.

For example:

- ▶ In Microsoft Teams, making a different set of standardized templates available to different departments, divisions, or geographies. Tailored template availability ensures the right templates get to the right people and groups, without overwhelming anyone with unnecessary and irrelevant choices.
- ▶ Self-service options for creating new team workspaces (with delegated approval processes when required), closing project spaces that have reached completion, and managing settings for groups and owners, among others. These self-service options provide efficiency through automation, creating repeatable and consistent service delivery without burdening IT teams. Self-service options are trimmed so that each user only has access to the ones that make sense for their work role.
- ▶ Naming convention rules can be set differently based on the department or business unit requesting a new site. Naming conventions simplify discovery into the future, creating a well-governed information space from the get-go.

With the increased amount of collaboration and data now flowing through Microsoft 365, information lifecycle and governance become more important. Cloud Governance can also help automate the process of expiring or archiving inactive or old workspaces in accordance with

## CASE STUDY

### Swinburne Uses Cloud Governance To Rapidly Extend Microsoft Teams To Students During COVID-19

There was rapid adoption when Microsoft Teams became available to all of Swinburne's Office 365 users, but things quickly got a bit messy.



"Students started creating Teams randomly with random names and then started adding members from our staff to their teams," said Ron Argame, Senior Systems Administrator, Swinburne. "That wasn't the way we wanted it to be used, so we quickly restricted the creation of Teams."

Swinburne needed a way to set up different policies within Teams for its two distinct user bases: students and staff. Argame also wanted stronger lifecycle management policies than what was provided natively within Microsoft Teams.

"Someone creates a Team and if they left the organization that team and data is sitting there and no one knows what happened," said Argame.

In addition, Argame was seeking a solution to balance the need for external sharing with prudent security controls.

Cloud Governance's ability to automatically set different policies for different sets of users based off their attributes in Active Directory allowed Argame to quickly roll out Teams for the student body while setting different permissions for staff.

Cloud Governance's functionality to automate provisioning requests and capture additional metadata around each Team has greatly scaled the service desk as well.

"Before cleaning up the Teams being created and not used took a lot of time. We had to figure out and contact the Owners and then if the Owners aren't around anymore figure out who is going to be the next one," said Argame. "Now, I don't have to worry about any of that."

## CASE STUDY

### Dublin Airport Authority handles 38 TB of Office 365 Data, using AvePoint Cloud Backup

The Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) realised they needed a third-party backup solution as the standard Microsoft 90-day retention period for deleted content was not sufficient to meet their internal retention policies.



Following advice from external analysts like Gartner, DAA also decided to create an exit strategy from Office 365 in the highly unlikely event that they decide to move away from the platform.

“To support this strategy, we needed an independent location for our data,” stated Kevin Ryan, IT operations team lead at DAA.

After conducting extensive market research, AvePoint Cloud Backup was the only product which met all their operational and IT security requirements.

Their security requirements included encryption of data, multi-factor authentication, ISO 27001:2013 compliance, and data deletion in line with GDPR Article 17.

“The only way to have full protection from ransomware is to invest in a third-party backup solution like AvePoint Cloud Backup,” said Ryan.

Operationally, they wanted a solution that could back up multiple Office 365 workloads at a granular (item/permissions) level, while also protecting them against potential malicious insiders.

“Ease of use really stands out for this product – it just works. From an operational perspective, I am obsessed with minimising complexity,” stated Ryan. “It frees up the team to do what they want to do so they stay interested and engaged. It keeps our stakeholders happy – everybody wins!” stated Ryan.

the rules you’ve set and the content within the workspace.

You will also want to consider blocking access to deprecated cloud services at the firewall, end-point or other policy enforcement engine. Your security and compliance training materials will also need to be updated to include warnings on shadow IT, how the new approach enables business success, and how regulatory requirements are addressed when sanctioned services are used.

#### Step 7

### Ongoing Automated Discovery

If we’ve seen anything from the growing number of cloud services entering the enterprise over the past decade, it’s that new services are always coming in through the backdoor.

Ongoing automated discovery of how employees are stepping outside of the governance framework for cloud services is essential, otherwise the rethink towards Microsoft 365 will soon be a forgotten exercise.

Continue using the discovery tools available to your organization—such Microsoft Cloud App Security and Microsoft Defender Advanced Threat Protection—for rapidly identifying changing patterns of cloud service usage. Use newly identified services as an opportunity to engage with the respective business units around the greater platform value of Microsoft 365.



## Warnings on Cloud Consolidation

Cloud consolidation offers a long list of advantages, as we have explored earlier in this eBook. But as with anything in life, there are disadvantages too.

It would be unfair and one-sided to exclusively highlight the advantages of cloud consolidation in this ebook, and hence in this section we address the three most significant weakness of consolidating cloud services into Microsoft 365.

### Vendor Lock In

A consequence of cloud consolidation is reliance on fewer vendors for service provision. As the number of vendors become fewer, the general case risk factor of vendor lock in increases, which in its worst version becomes indistinguishable from extortion.

A vendor with a captive audience can increase pricing, reduce investment in products, and allow a detrimental malaise to settle across its efforts. Its customers have no option but to pay the added costs and put up with the reducing quality.

At this point, we don't expect that to happen with Microsoft 365, but the risk remains, nonetheless. Embracing Microsoft 365 requires a prudent evaluation of pros and cons; don't just do it because everyone else is doing so.



Let's think this through.

In embracing Microsoft 365 for a greater proportion of cloud services, there are a couple of risk factors in terms of vendor lock in to consider. First, if you ever decide to stop paying for Microsoft 365 services, you lose access to both the services and your data stored in Microsoft 365. But there are mitigations for this risk. Migration and backup tools, such as those offered by AvePoint, provide a strategic option for organizations who, for whatever reason, decide to exit Microsoft 365 in the future.

The second risk is that services offered as part of a platform offering—Microsoft 365 for example—are often less feature-rich than best-of-breed offerings. A focused vendor with a single product and a single target market to go after will usually offer more than Microsoft. This risk, too, has mitigations available.

For example, Microsoft has developed integration options for incorporating can't-live-without best-of-breed offerings into Microsoft 365, with the third-party app catalog in Microsoft Teams a prime example.

Beyond Microsoft, there are specialty vendors that support service integration across multiple cloud services, and if a best-of-breed service becomes so critical to a high proportion of Microsoft 365 customers, you can be sure that high-quality integrations will be created.

And third, competition helps everyone, and Microsoft itself is not blind to changing market dynamics and product preferences. Microsoft will take inspiration from widely adopted new tools to inform its own product roadmaps.

Finally, as a general observation, Microsoft's size and market share also offers a mitigation to vendor lock in, because if Microsoft ever got to the point of decreasing investment in Microsoft 365, the potential market gain for competitors looking to offer alternative services is so large that alternatives would be quickly developed.



### **Heightened Impact of Outages**

While it doesn't happen frequently nor for an extended duration of time, any outages to Microsoft 365 results in irate customers airing their grievances on social media channels, and analysts positing that organizations will drop the service. The anger always cools fairly quickly, however.

Over the past several years, various outages have impacted Azure AD (for service-wide authentication), Exchange Online (for email), and Microsoft Teams (for collaboration and calling), but Microsoft has generally resolved the outages within 2-8 hours, and posted the findings of its own detailed investigations and mitigation plan.

The frequency and duration of outages are much less than what organizations have historically experienced with on-premises approaches.

If it happened, a complete, extended, global shutdown of Microsoft 365 would have significant detrimental effects for organizations all-in on Microsoft 365 exclusively, but the likelihood of this is minuscule.

Organizations seeking to mitigate the risk of outages in Microsoft 365 can leverage AvePoint Cloud Backup to regularly back up key Microsoft 365 workloads to a storage location of the customer's choice, and have data restoration options to local drives and other out-of-place locations.

Using AvePoint Cloud Backup enables critical work to continue even in the case of a service outage, and if the entire service was to ever fail completely and irrevocably, Cloud Backup customers would have their data available for migrating to a new on-premises or alternative cloud-based service.

### **Reduced Negotiating Power**

Fewer vendors at the table means that organizations have lower negotiating power over pricing from key vendors. At the extreme, it becomes a “take-it-or-leave-it” proposition, which never makes for a pleasant meal.

Microsoft could take this approach, but so could any other vendor, and we have already seen examples of other cloud vendors raising prices while keeping the service offering unchanged.

Microsoft’s more common approach, based on their actions over the past several years, has been to add new features only in the higher priced Microsoft 365 plans, and organizations using the lower priced plans have the option to upgrade should they want to.

But in the final analysis, pricing for Microsoft 365 should be irrelevant. Your organization’s benefits realization strategy must be sufficiently robust to deliver tremendous value that far outweighs whatever cost is incurred in procuring Microsoft 365. If that’s not happening, there are far larger issues at play.





# Time for a Rethink

Cloud services are not going away, and nor should they. Individuals and organizations the world over would be poorer if the cloud disappeared.

The value of cloud services has become pivotal and strategic to organizations of all sizes, driving innovation, new products and services, and enabling new ways of doing work.

However, to borrow a phrase, “the poison is in the portion,” and many organizations have heaped their proverbial plates with too much. The past several years, and the health pandemic of 2020 more recently, has resulted in an explosion in the number of sanctioned and unsanctioned services in use. It’s time for a rethink.

Consolidating cloud services—identifying and removing services that are not fit for purpose and standardizing on Microsoft 365 across the enterprise—offers a compelling set of benefits to organizations of all sizes.

We’d love to help you get there.





## Additional Resources



### Blogs

- ▶ [Guide: Getting Started with Office 365 Migration Reporting](#)
- ▶ [Creating an Office 365 Migration Plan: Top 5 Considerations](#)
- ▶ [The 5 Step Plan For Office 365 Tenant to Tenant Migrations](#)
- ▶ [G-Suite to Office 365 Migration: 3 Simple Ways to Help Users Adapt](#)



### ShiftHappens Podcast

- ▶ [S1 E2: Office 365 Transformation at FedEx with Jes Flesch](#)
- ▶ [S2 E6: Rapid Microsoft Teams Deployment at METC with Jeff Godderz](#)



### eBooks

- ▶ [Using and Tailoring Microsoft Teams for Your Organization](#)
- ▶ [Mitigating Collaboration Risk Workbook](#)
- ▶ [How and Why to Backup Your Office 365 Tenant](#)
- ▶ [Office 365 and SharePoint Migration Checklist](#)



### Interactive Calculators

- ▶ [Office 365 Automated Governance Value Calculator](#)
- ▶ [Office 365 Backup Capacity & Savings Calculator](#)



### Webinars

- ▶ [Move to Office 365 Fast and Accelerate Remote Work](#)
- ▶ [Beginner to Super User: Top 10 Microsoft Teams Tips](#)
- ▶ [From Take-Off to Landing: 6 Steps to a Successful Microsoft Teams Pilot](#)





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