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Accelerating IT Infrastructure Transformation

EBOOK

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AN EBOOK BY MEET THE BOSS AND RIVERBED:
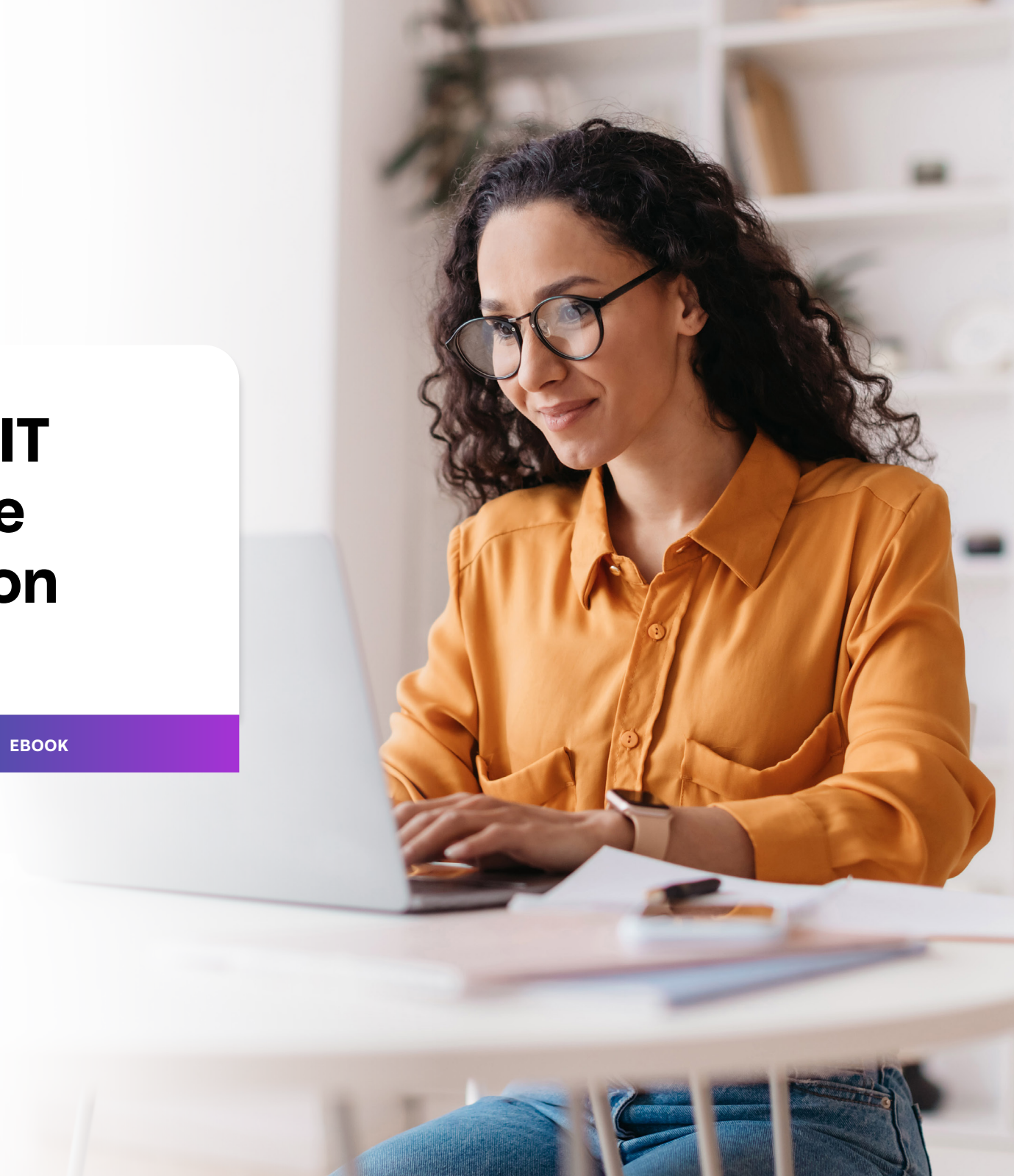
The cloud migration challenge

In this edition of Meet the Boss, IT and security experts from companies including Amazon, Dell Technologies, Cognizant, Global Payments, Oracle and PWC joined Riverbed to discuss how migrating to cloud can accelerate the transformation of IT infrastructure.

This is no mean feat amid the growing complexity of the modern IT environment. Remote working, hybrid networks, and distributed, multi-cloud applications are making it increasingly difficult for teams to maintain accessible, secure services. And, from the outside, economic turbulence and regulatory pressures are disrupting even the most high-performing organizations.

Within this shifting picture, IT has the mandate to transform the enterprise infrastructure to be more agile and to enable cross-domain decision-making. There is also the immense opportunity for IT leaders to apply their expert knowledge and enable continuous improvement of digital apps and services through migration from on-premises data centers to IaaS, PaaS, and SaaS-based environments.

The thought-leaders delved into their IT infrastructure journeys, how they're managing the digital experience for employees and customers and how to best support remote and hybrid workforces.

WHAT DOES CLOUD MEAN TO YOU?

'Cloud is not a destination'

'Cloud is an operating model for intelligent workload management'

'Cloud provides agility to move at the speed of innovation'

'Cloud offers optionality, flexibility and acceleration'

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Delivering a consumer-grade experience

Moving to the cloud and still maintaining an excellent experience not just for customers, but for employees, is a real challenge. Often, the applications are intersecting and the tools that are used to support customers are the same as those used by employees.

Additionally, meeting the expectations of the end-user, who wants a consumer-like experience, can seem insurmountable. But recognizing that employee and customer experience are the same can help businesses unlock success. It's important to leverage solutions in the cloud that are native to the employees and ultimately help them complete their work with ease.

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Remote working

The events of 2020 which led to a mass movement to remote working forced IT executives to deliver action plans to support the different needs of employee groups. For some, the focus was on having the physical hardware, organizing the setup, and figuring out a process, while others were prioritizing SaaS needs.

For Siva Mohanraj, Product Experience and Strategy for Amazon Devices and Services at Amazon, supporting different work groups in the transition to remote work took a lot of rethinking. "I think that the focus on SaaS applications was much, much higher. Now, a discussion that would have involved walking over to somebody's desk and talking becomes a Slack conversation, or a scheduled meeting. The sheer volume of interaction between employees on the network was a significant load that was not anticipated."

For many, getting a view of performance from the endpoint device is a priority. However, making this happen in a hybrid environment with a complex application landscape and IT ecosystem is difficult. It was broadly agreed improvements could be made in creating a comprehensive view of performance, including intelligence about collaboration tools, end-user devices, and SaaS applications to address any lags. It was suggested that a 'single pane of glass' could be achieved by gathering that information together and marrying it up with data center and cloud insights.

Mike Marks, VP Product Marketing at Riverbed says: "One of the concerns that people need to assess is: 'Will the applications perform as well, or better, after migrating to the cloud, as they did when they were running on-premise?' That's a real issue if you're working from home and using browser-based applications, and the browser goes down - the business will be impacted."

Employee and client demand for remote application access, while providing security and without overloading the VPN, is an interesting dichotomy for IT teams to manage. Cognizant's Head of Industry Solutions, Business Development, Go-to-market & Innovation, Jacqueline Morgan says:

"You're really having to think through by geography and by user group how you're enabling very specific components of the workforce to gain access and how you're monitoring and constantly evaluating it. Everybody wants access to everything, but that doesn't always make sense. You must be able to justify how you're going to put those limits on people who are used to being able to just get up in the office and have their issue solved."

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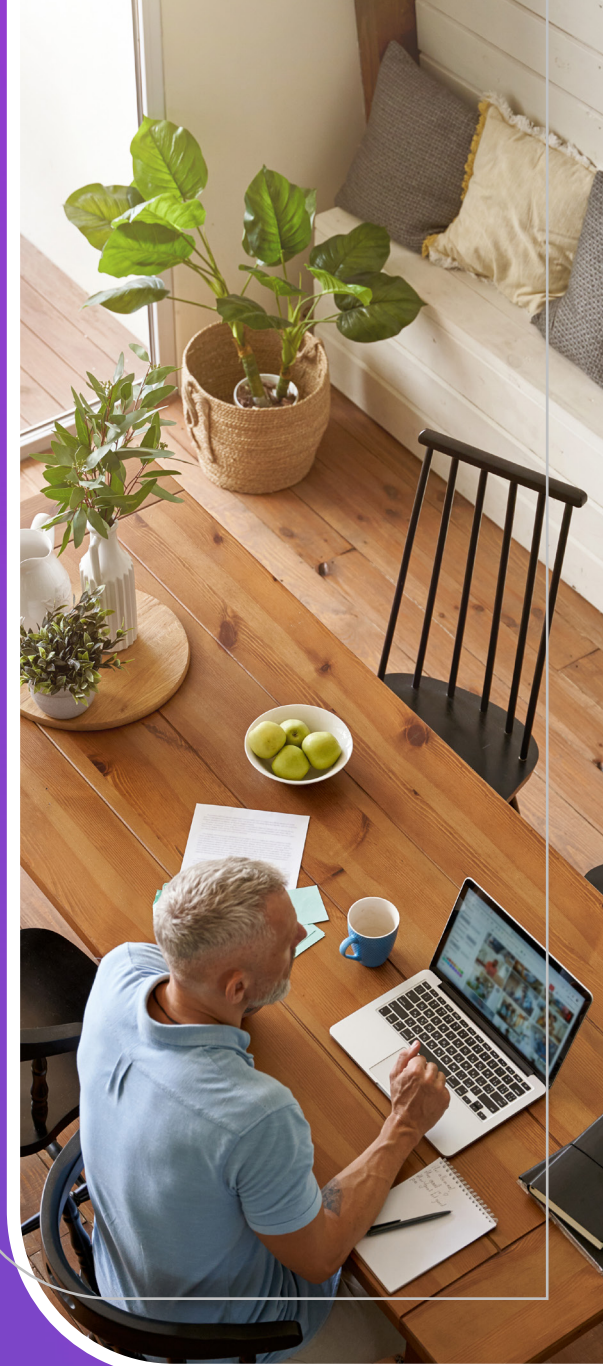
Legacy application migration

The migration of legacy applications relies heavily on knowledge from the application owners, who must ensure the performance of the application is going to be consistent with what it had been prior to the move. Oracle's VP of Customer Success Engineering & Solution Architecture, Manil Vasantha, says maintaining this knowledge pool is the biggest challenge:

> **"Almost certainly, any organizational legacy application is probably last touch, and you have little to nobody left in the organization with that knowledge. It's a real chicken and egg situation, as legacy hardware can't be upgraded with the versions of cloud we're running on, nor can you move it into a cloud server that won't support it. We're working on the basis of how many users are using this application and collaborating with vendors to ensure we're coming up with alternative solutions."**

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Keeping up with the pace of change

Enterprises moving at the speed of digital transformation can be certain of one thing: business strategies will continually evolve. Whether it's expansion, acquisition, or structural changes, IT must be the glue that holds the business foundations together. When enterprises acquire new companies, the incoming IT ecosystems are unlikely to merge seamlessly with the existing landscape, disrupting even the best-laid cloud strategies.

Akamai Technologies' Senior Director of Security Intelligence speaks first-hand about his acquisition experience:

"You end up getting things that are in the cloud, whether or not you are migrating workloads there. You don't really get a choice anymore if you're buying a company these days and, if it's from the last five to 10 years, its guaranteed they're running in the cloud because they'd be fools not to in terms of scaling up costs to meet their revenue. The companies we've acquired are in different places and migrations are hard between them, so minimizing dependencies on cloud provider-specific features, while still getting the value of being in the cloud, has been key."

Create a 'day in the life' scenario

When it comes to cloud migration, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. To make the move from on- premises to cloud as frictionless as possible, IT leaders should consider creating a journey map from an employee or customer perspective. That journey map should start with baselining current end-user experience and performance. Once the end-to-end user experience is clear, it becomes easier to measure success post cloud migration.

Make the cloud cost viable

You need to be able to dynamically leverage cloud resources and provision / de-provision quickly while prioritizing cloud economics. Even if a business is running 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, during those hours it can manage cloud cost by reducing resources or maybe even turning them off completely. Investment in dynamic provisioning automation can have significant benefits on the journey to cloud.

Break down siloes

Cloud migration projects and applications are often siloed between business units, making it difficult to co-operate across multiple teams and deliver successful implementation in a short time frame. By viewing infrastructure updates as a business-wide initiative, the project is more likely to be successfully implemented.

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Closing thoughts

Journey to the cloud is foundational for companies transforming at speed and wanting to future-proof business agility. Cloud has the potential to deliver visibility, unified observability, resilience, improved productivity, enhanced security, support for a hybrid workforce, and offer an exceptional customer and employee experience. Employing a strategic approach to visibility will help ensure you have the data you need to be successful.

But we must be mindful that change doesn't pause for breath and making thoughtful choices for the right visibility tools are essential. The user experience landscape, the way we consume the internet, and how we interact with products and services will be very different in five to 10 years from now – a reality we must be mindful of as we modify our IT infrastructures. The core pillars: people, process and technology, must empower the organization today, as well as anticipate the needs and experience of the next generation.

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Empower the Experience

Riverbed, the leader in AI observability, helps organizations optimize their users' experiences by leveraging AI automation for the prevention, identification, and resolution of IT issues. With over 20 years of experience in data collection and AI and machine learning, Riverbed's open and AI-powered observability platform and solutions optimize digital experiences and greatly improve IT efficiency. Riverbed also offers industry-leading Acceleration solutions that provide fast, agile, secure acceleration of any app, over any network, to users anywhere. Together with our thousands of market-leading customers globally – including 95% of the FORTUNE 100 – we are empowering next-generation digital experiences. Learn more at riverbed.com.