Insight

Down-To-Earth Guide:
Getting Started on Azure

From its ability to meet the demands of growing customer experiences to its proficiency in protecting against security threats, Microsoft Azure is a clear answer to many of today's business challenges.

Whether you've already got Azure or your organisation is looking to make the move to it, this guide sets out how to maximise an investment with Azure and establish the potential of this feature-rich platform.

Not 'If' but 'When'

Cloud is no longer a debate, with organisations across the globe recognising such benefits as:

- More modern IT – develop and release new services faster. Instead you get to use pay-as-you-go services, improving your business processes and enhancing the customer experience
- Efficient IT – switch services on and off as you need them – forget a capital spend
- A better connection with customers and prospects from a global perspective
- Increased protection, with more efficient backups and disaster recovery services

But there are considerations to take, largely:

- Which apps and software will run best in the cloud?
- What should be kept on premise?
- Will it support your business strategy? (Our Executive Briefing on Digital Transformation could help you answer that question.)
- Will it save you money?
- Do you really want to manage infrastructure?

Azure: Everything You Need

Microsoft Azure is a growing collection of integrated cloud services – analytics, computing, database, mobile, networking, storage, machine learning and web – for moving faster, achieving more, and saving money. Azure is among the fastest growing and largest public cloud platforms in the world. With 36 datacentre regions[1], 120,000 new customer subscriptions per month[2] and more than $1 billion spent on cyber security research and development annually[3], it's not surprising that 90% of Fortune 500 companies are using Azure[2].

Where could your business be in six months?

Or 12 months, or three years? With services ranging from secure, reliable data storage at your fingertips to rapidly emerging technologies such as mixed reality and quantum computing, the answer is... wherever you want it to be.

Hybrid Cloud

Most roads lead here – combining public cloud for those services that are suitable – and private, on-premise solutions for those that need more flexibility, security or bandwidth.

With the introduction of Azure Stack, Microsoft Azure offers a true hybrid cloud environment and includes service options spanning on premise, Infrastructure-as-a-Service, Platform-as-a-Service and Software-as-a-Service. The result? Dramatically simplified development, management and billing.

With so many considerations required to scope the right cloud for your business, and with so many capabilities available across Azure, simply not knowing what to do next can hamper your cloud journey.

1 fortune.com/2017/09/22/microsoft-cloud-data-center-expansion/
2 azure.microsoft.com/en-gb/
3 www.reuters.com/article/us-tech-cyber-microsoft/microsoft-to-continue-to-invest-over-1-billion-a-year-on-cyber-security-idUSKBN15A1GA
4 G, Niblock. Interview with Garth Niblock, Azure UK Practice Lead, Insight.

How we can help

By engaging with an Insight expert from the start, you can make sure you lay the right foundation for your needs and ensure the operational excellence of your cloud infrastructure.

Insight's team has a combined 100 years' experience in working with Microsoft Azure.[4] Our experts can scope and asses your environment to determine the best next steps, helping you to fully realise the benefits of the cloud.
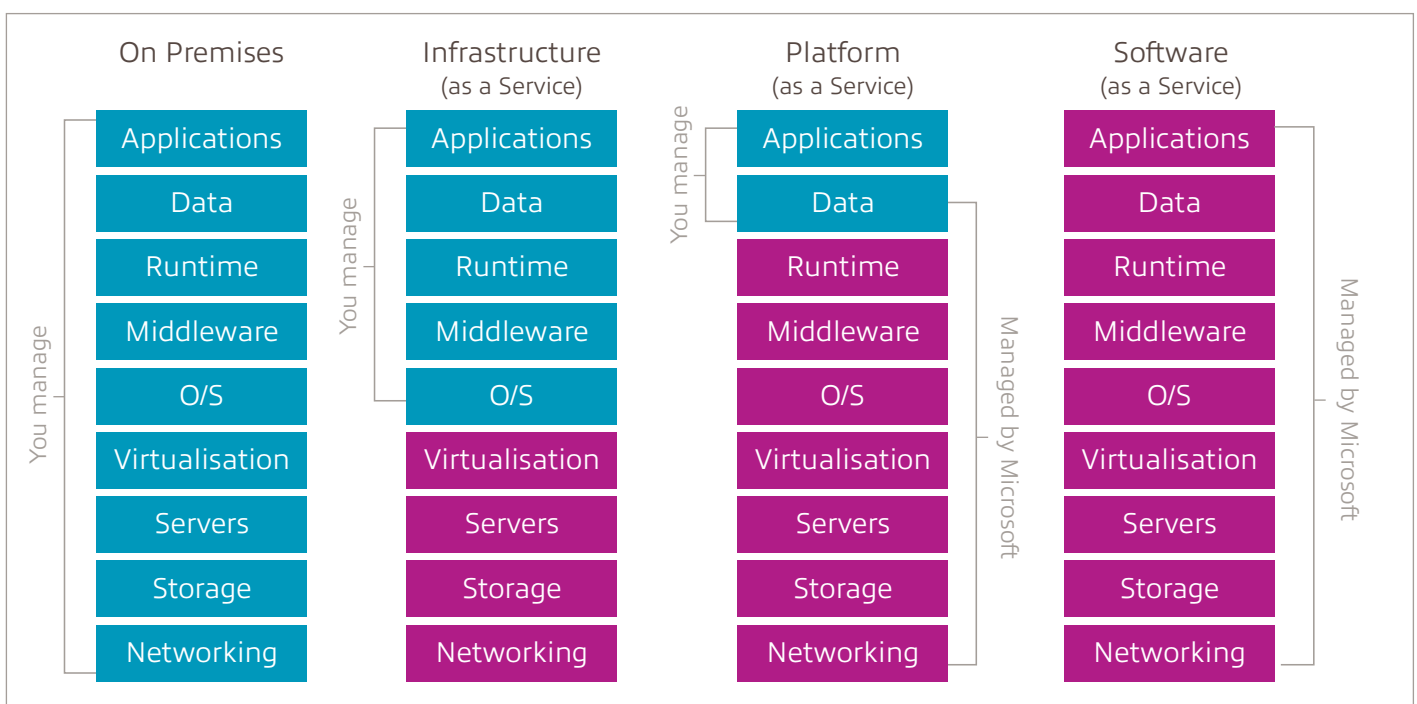
Cloud computing is broken down into three distinct service models:

Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) – providing virtual machines, storage and networking that can be consumed in a similar fashion to traditional IT – but providing agility and control

Platform as a Service (PaaS) – providing an operating platform that allows you to run your applications without worrying about managing and maintaining the underlying platform

Software as a Service (SaaS) – providing a complete environment where you can consume an application or piece of software as you need it, without worrying about the underlying resources

The lines between these models is blurring. With Azure's cloud portfolio, you can take advantage of all the service models.

On Premises	Infrastructure (as a Service)	Platform (as a Service)	Software (as a Service)
Applications	Applications	Applications	Applications
Data	Data	Data	Data
Runtime	Runtime	Runtime	Runtime
Middleware	Middleware	Middleware	Middleware
O/S	O/S	O/S	O/S
Virtualisation	Virtualisation	Virtualisation	Virtualisation
Servers	Servers	Servers	Servers
Storage	Storage	Storage	Storage
Networking	Networking	Networking	Networking

On Premises: You manage (all)
Infrastructure (as a Service): You manage Applications–O/S; Managed by Microsoft Virtualisation–Networking
Platform (as a Service): You manage Applications–Data; Managed by Microsoft Runtime–Networking
Software (as a Service): Managed by Microsoft (all)

Defining your journey with Azure

When you engage with Insight we will start by establishing where you are in your cloud journey and where you would like to be, beginning with an Azure Discovery Workshop.

Azure Discovery Workshop

This informative session typically comprises a free half-day of consultancy where Insight experts visit you on-site to discuss your situation, understand and scope where you are and help you understand how Azure works.

You'll be taken through the Azure 'scaffolding' – i.e. how networking is configured. We'll show you some of the capabilities of Azure – how it looks from a datacentre perspective right through to a VM perspective. And we'll help you understand some of the potential that it can bring to your business – including AI and machine learning. We'll advise on potential workloads that could be transitioned to the cloud to

start your journey. With this framework in place, you a point of reference for any new service which means you can always ask: 'could this run better in the cloud'?

Following the Workshop, there are three routes we can take:

1. Hybrid Cloud Assessment Standard Service

This takes you on your first steps into Azure. Here, we work with you to understand how networking, storage and security all work within your business. We'll take you through monitoring workloads, or handling change management in the cloud. We'll identify those common systems that you can easily access using SaaS (i.e. HR systems) and move through the stack to include services that require PaaS, or IaaS, and lastly on premise.

From this engagement, we'll compile and share with you a 'Risks and Issues' report, flagging any potential technical issues, such as network, personnel, training requirements, etc. We'll also take into account any security and governance considerations – who can spin up what, and who has access where?

4 G, Niblock. Interview with Garth Niblock, Azure UK Practice Lead, Insight.

At this stage, we'll supply a Proof of Concept, and support you in starting to build the scaffolding for your Azure deployment.

2. Hybrid Cloud Assessment Advanced Service

If your plans are in place and your scaffolding up, then this stage is where we start to build your house. We lay the foundations, and give you an architecture blueprint. We assess the environment in scope for moving to the cloud, taking into account any considerations or dependencies i.e. if we move a finance system, what else is connected to it? We develop Azure toolset packages for you, helping you to understand what features sit within the platform. At this stage, we'll also present services for those areas of your business that can't be moved into the cloud from our complete portfolio of server, storage, and networking solutions.

3. Tailored Response

Some customers are keen to start on their Azure journey, but have specific issues that need to be resolved that don't fit into either a Hybrid Cloud Assessment Standard or Advanced services. Once we have scoped your requirements from the Azure Discovery Workshop, if you fall into this category we will provide a personalised proposal for the best next steps.

Everything starts with an Azure Discovery Workshop, offering you a full half day of expert consultancy – absolutely free of charge and without obligation. Get in touch to arrange yours today, and let's lay the foundations for your individual cloud journey. It's your cloud, your way.

The shape of your cloud

Ultimately the cloud gives you a lot of choices, and a lot of possibilities.

With PaaS, you can quickly spin up servers for app testing, and take them offline again as soon as you are finished. And you only pay for the few hours or days you needed them for.

You can build entire new service areas or even new business models in the cloud – just look at Uber.

Cloud makes anything possible, from reducing the time to run database processes from days to hours, to enabling machine learning, AI, and general purpose quantum computing.

Some advanced Azure toolkits

Ask us about the **Azure IoT Suite**, which provides pre-built recipes of management for the world of Internet of Things.

And with **Azure Cognitive Services**, part of Cortana Intelligence, you get a collection of interfaces which enable developers to include advanced features of language, speech, search, vision and recommendation into enterprise or commercial applications.

You can even save money with **VM Reserved Instances** – allowing you to purchase VM capacity in advance at a great discount. When combined with Azure Hybrid Benefit – the ability to apply unused on-premise licenses to Azure – total savings can stack up to an incredible 82%.

Transform your business: start today with these next steps:
1. Talk to your account manager to book your Hybrid Cloud Assessment
2. Inform your thinking on digital transformation strategy

0844 472 3249

www.uk.insight.com/solve/hybrid-cloud/hybrid-cloud-assessment