



A Harbor series

Cloud migration: Architectural interdependencies

In today's interconnected legal IT environment, migrating enterprise applications without a clear strategy can lead to costly setbacks and disruptions. A comprehensive approach allows firms to plan for integration, reduce complexity, and build architecture alongside implementation for better long-term results.

Applications in the modern legal IT environment are now more interconnected than ever at the enterprise level. Safeguarding the mission-critical capabilities of your integrated applications demands an intentional strategy.

Failure to understand architectural dependencies up front can lead to costly decisions that will come back to haunt future IT projects. If you make decisions "in the moment" while taking an application-by-application approach, you will likely miss ways in which each migration impacts the broader environment, triggering unforeseen complexities, driving budget uncertainty and disruptions to project schedules.

Taking a more comprehensive approach to cloud migration means that you can plan ahead with future applications and data integration in mind. In fact, you can build the architecture as you are advancing your implementation projects in parallel, rather than sequentially.

Key considerations in architectural design

Data strategy

While cross-platform data access has become essential for law firm management, cloud-based applications are increasingly restricting access to the underlying databases —making a strong data strategy a business imperative.

Best practice:

An effective data strategy enables development of a data layer for reliable reporting and accurate metrics, and position firms to maximize advanced analytics and AI.

Integration strategy

Designing connections for resiliency and minimal disruptions in the future necessitates moving away from point-to-point connections.

Best practice:

An effective integration strategy avoids a daisy chain of APIs and incorporates messaging and data layers for resiliency and interoperability.

Reporting strategy

Leaders need integrated insights. A typical approach in the on-premises universe is to generate siloed reports from siloed applications as the starting point. This method is untenable in the cloud, where access to backend databases is limited. An intentional reporting strategy that accounts for nuances of cloud versions is imperative to prevent loss of existing reporting capabilities.

Best practice:

A reimagined reporting strategy for the cloud enables your organization to evolve static reports from siloed applications into more dynamic reporting with actionable insights generated from integrated applications. Improved reporting is also a highly visible “win”, demonstrating the benefits of having moved to the cloud.

An upfront assessment of your existing data architecture will inform more accurate project scoping and help avoid rework and delays in the future.

Factors to assess

Consider the following:

Your existing technology environment and how data flows.

To what extent your data flows can be recreated in the cloud or need to be refactored.

What are the master “golden” records and associated records currently reside vs. where they should live in the cloud.

How your applications integrated together for interoperability.

While it may be tempting to regard data strategy and integrations, from a purely technical point of view, the reality is that each of these factors has significant cost and user satisfaction implications over the long term.

The decisions you make prior to cloud migration are also critical to avoiding the risk of vendor “lock-in” in the future. A point-to-point approach to APIs will make it difficult to pluck one application out and replace it with another solution in the future. Instead, by adopting a messaging layer approach, you can simplify the technical requirements: APIs are simply written to the messaging layer and then writing what the messaging layer does with the data that comes out of that.

The daisy chain approach to APIs also substantially increases the risk of lengthy downtimes in the future. When one application goes down, if it is reliant on a daisy chain of APIs, it will take the entire business process down with it.

By looking at the big picture across all business applications that will eventually need to integrate, you will be better positioned to deliver easier and cleaner integration, better visibility, faster responsiveness, cross-platform reporting and lower costs over time.

“Cloud migrations require the **reworking of integrations**. There are **significant advantages** to using this fact to take a fresh holistic look at your approach to integrations. Introducing a messaging layer, rather than point-to-point connections, to enable communication among cloud-based apps dramatically increases **resilience and flexibility** and will, if done in the right way, **improve user experience**.”

Christopher Young, Senior Director – Legal Technology and Operations, Harbor



Connect with a Harbor expert

Harbor has a framework to **help you assess your Cloud Readiness** and can **help you determine the right next steps** to take in alignment with your firm's objectives and your technology strategy.

Contact

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