



A Harbor series

Maximizing value in law firm cloud migrations

One of the most pressing questions for technology leaders considering moving applications to the cloud is how to mitigate the potentially elevated costs associated with the change in environment, applications and pricing models.

Over the course of hundreds of cloud migrations, Harbor has developed techniques that can be employed to control the elevation of these costs. Below is a summary of some of these techniques that we have pulled together for you to consider as you develop your cloud strategy.

Understand the complexity of cloud migrations

The enterprise technologies that power business operations and legal service delivery form a deeply integrated ecosystem. Migrating a single on-premises application to an external environment may have far-reaching implications, affecting mission-critical processes, user experience, and requiring IT teams to adapt to new expertise and operational demands.

✓ **Think about the processes that are being migrated.** Consider each end of the process – what are the inputs; what are the outputs and where do they go, and how are they used?

✓ **Recognize that cloud migrations** involve more than just moving technology and data; it often requires reconfiguration, redesigning of processes and in some cases new implementation. Understanding and planning for these ahead of time can mitigate unexpected costs and delays during a migration.

✓ **Be aware that moving from on-premises to cloud** can introduce complexities, particularly with integrations and changes in requirements. Proactively decide if you want to change the processes as part of the migration. This adds complexity and cost. Be sure to carefully outline your requirements, even if you are planning for a relatively straightforward migration to reduce the need to rescope and increase costs.

Develop realistic timeline and budget estimates

Beyond the complexities of interconnectivity, transitioning to a cloud environment—while implementing early-stage cloud versions of applications and potentially refining or redesigning critical business processes to maximize their value—requires a client-centric scoping approach. Traditional methods that rely on high-level requirements and generic level-of-effort estimates fall short in addressing the unique intricacies of each firm’s technology ecosystem.

✓ **Conduct thorough scoping sessions** to fully understand the extent of the migration, including reporting strategy, integration strategy, data strategy, data cleanup, and customization needs. Each of these elements will impact project scope and associated costs. Start with a high-level roadmap and refine and test initial estimates and plans as the project progresses. An experienced guide is particularly useful for this purpose.

✓ **Consider the state** of your current systems and processes, and whether they need to be re-implemented or if they can simply be migrated as is into the new system.

✓ **Engage with experienced service providers** early in the process to map out a realistic plan and timeline. This helps avoid surprises – including additional costs - and ensures a smoother transition. Take advantage of their breadth of experience to predict any potential pitfalls and help avoid unrealistic timelines.

✓ **Collaborate with both** your implementation partner and the software vendors to develop your plan to ensure the desired timeline you’ve established is reasonable and can be accommodated. Retain control over the timeline and ensure there is enough time allocated to prepare for the migration. Extra time can mean extra costs.

✓ **Be cautious of overly optimistic timelines.** Ensure that the proposed timeline is realistic and accounts for all necessary steps, including data migration and process reconfiguration. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions during the timeline and budget discussions.

✓ **Projects with significant process changes** may require longer timelines and more resources.

Expect and plan for the unexpected

Complex technology migrations and re-implementations are often hindered by disruptions, leading to delays. Conducting a thorough assessment of key processes, data mapping, data integrity and reporting and functionality reconciliation during the scoping stage helps mitigate risks and paves the way for a smoother, more seamless migration.

✓ **Factor in potential disruption costs**, such as re-keying data, delays in invoicing, and client satisfaction issues. These can significantly impact the overall cost and timeline of the project.

✓ **Recognize that manipulating and cleansing data** in integrated systems is harder in the cloud than on-premises. Start getting your data organized well before planning any migrations.

✓ **Plan for a non-disruptive migration** by ensuring that processes continue to function smoothly during the transition.

Negotiate for near- and long-term success




The elements that constitute the total cost of ownership at implementation and into the future have changed in the context of the cloud. The shift in fee models, different packaging of functionality of cloud-based applications along with varying approaches to integrations adds new variables that materially impact the total cost of ownership.

✓ **Negotiate contracts that allow for sufficient implementation time** and dual access rights to avoid paying for services before they are fully utilized.

✓ **Ensure that commercial terms are aligned** with the project scope and timeline to avoid unexpected costs.



✓ **Seek help negotiating vendor agreements** with industry best practices if you are unsure of where to start to minimize impact.

Develop strong Information Governance (IG) practices to mitigate cloud costs

-  **Firms should reduce their DMS storage volume** before migrating to the cloud. Many vendors have a consumption pricing model, which can increase based on exceeding baseline storage allocations per user.
-  **Purging legacy data while the application is on-premises** is much easier. Purging data after the application is in the cloud is more onerous.
-  **Consistent disposition of content per IG policies** is critical to maintaining storage allotments, and defining the testing and QA team you will need to manage the frequent releases and upgrades in the cloud.

Plan for continuous improvement and evolution

Commit now to a process of regular updating and QA, to build the capabilities necessary to minimize disruptions in the cloud.

-  **Regularly update and improve existing applications** to ensure they remain aligned with current business needs and regulatory requirements. This can make future migrations smoother, less complex and less costly.
-  **Get your organization “cloud fit” early by taking regular upgrades on-premises**, and defining the testing and QA team you will need to manage the frequent releases and upgrades in the cloud.

By following these recommendations, law firm technology leaders can better navigate the complexities of the journey to the cloud and achieve a successful transition with minimal disruption. In particular, by developing a cloud roadmap, organizations gain control over many of the cost drivers, maximize value, and future-proof their IT infrastructure.



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

Harbor Cloud Migration Team

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