



A Harbor series

Talent considerations for cloud operations

As law firms move more of their enterprise applications to the cloud, the roles and skill sets required on their teams change considerably.

New skills and expertise have emerged as critical for successful cloud deployments and ongoing management. For most firms, it's an opportunity to upskill, specialize, and/or transition team members to more high-level tasks. In our experience, the most successful cloud migration projects include internal or external team members in the following roles:



Project Manager

Cloud migrations are complex projects that require strong project management acumen. Project managers must have strong leadership skills, being able to lead both internal and external resources, and being able to remove barriers and have difficult conversations if needed to keep timelines and costs in check. They must be very detail-oriented and have strong communication skills. Project managers must also be able to work directly with vendors, negotiate, and manage external resources, especially if internal teams are less experienced in a cloud environment.



Product Owner/ Manager

As firms migrate to the cloud, the role of the IT product manager changes from development to managing the application, understanding new features and other changes, testing, and rollout. They need to be responsible for close vendor relationships and vetting new cloud releases. The product owner needs to take the lead in analyzing release notes and managing roll-out of updates to ensure successful adoption of new features. Many firms are adding product managers or owners per application – and in the case of Microsoft 365, for example, there may be several product owners.



Environment Support Manager

As the organization starts to maintain multiple environments – on-premises, cloud, sandbox, testing, production – the role of the environment support manager is to monitor all of them and ensure that the right content is in the right place. This is a newer role we are starting to see at firms.



Architect

Architects become critical in the cloud, as they will need to design security models, connect systems, and ensure future-proof solutions. Architects need to be subject matter experts and to have a longer-term vision for the tech stack that is aligned with reality. They should be involved at the very start of any cloud project and set the rules and overall guidelines for the project.



Data Architect

Firms have traditionally relied on data analysts to join SQL tables for reporting and other data analytics. Data architects, on the other hand, design and implement the data architecture and design; define policy and manage data governance; monitor and manage data storage; and make decisions about the right data architecture (e.g., Fabric, data warehouse, data lakes) for the firm. Firms that have not yet invested in a data architect will find themselves adrift as the gap between the skills and knowledge of data analysts are insufficient to design, implement and manage the architecture of the firm's data environment.



Governance Manager

As managing consumption models across the cloud environment becomes critical, organizations need an individual or committee with clear responsibility for monitoring, decisioning, and management related to:

- Adoption and usage
- Compliance with information governance policies
- Storage consumption and other negotiated pricing thresholds
- Testing management
- Vendor management, roadmaps, and priorities in functionality

Developing a cloud-first IT department

In addition, developing teams with the following skills and attributes is essential as you transform into a cloud-first IT department:



Cost Management

IT teams need to proactively create and manage costs controls aligned with contracted variable costs to ensure cost-efficiency.



Change Management

Strong IT change management is imperative in the cloud, both in terms of handling downtime and managing the impact of changes when control of the application resides outside the firm. There is a need for a mindset change, where teams think about managing the environment differently and “fixing issues forward” rather than relying on restoring previous versions.



Testing and Troubleshooting

With the increased frequency of application updates and loss of control over when they happen, IT teams need to ensure that they have:

- resources in place to frequently test in the short timeframe between sandbox and production deployments
- processes to communicate clearly with users when issues occur
- processes to identify workarounds or fixes that need to be deployed either themselves or getting their vendor(s) to change the application(s)
- a mindset of fixing forward, as issues may not be picked up immediately by vendors and often there are no rollback options

Even if it is the case that the application vendor is contractually obligated to resolve problems, it is the buyer’s business that is impacted by issues as they arise. Architecting things in a way which more loosely couples systems will reduce the testing requirements when one system is changed.

As a best practice, assess whether current staff can be refocused or retrained to play these new roles, or whether it is necessary to recruit or retain outside talent on a contract or permanent basis. Depending on your vision for what your department will look like in the future, Harbor is ready to assist with providing outside assistance, or seconded team members, as needed.



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

contact.request@harborglobal.com

Harbor is a globally integrated team of strategists, technologists and specialists focused on helping law firms, corporations, and their law departments achieve breakthrough outcomes. We are also helping to steer a legal industry in the midst of turbulent change. We navigate alongside our clients and partners, providing salient insights, scalable resources, and seasoned advice.