

Solution Brief

Public Clouds Go Mainstream

Barracuda Networks has a robust cloud security practice, offering solutions for Microsoft Azure, Amazon Web Services, and VMware vCloud Air. From our experience, we're seeing more and more companies moving workloads to the cloud. By doing so, SMBs are leveraging the cloud, thereby receiving a quicker return on investment. In other words, the public cloud has gone mainstream.

We commissioned TechValidate to perform a blind survey about cloud usage to validate the patterns we are seeing. The survey results also helps answer the question: "What should I be doing in the cloud?" Below are the key survey results.

Our Survey Methodology

The survey provider asked a range of 140-160 respondents ten questions about what companies were doing, who was doing it, what kinds of returns were they seeing, and what kinds of issues concerned them. The results presented below support our belief that the public cloud has become mainstream, and that companies should look to accelerate their cloud adoptions to gain the many benefits it offers.

Which is the Most Popular Cloud Platform?

We found numerous respondents who had deployments in more than one public cloud. As a straight ranking, we found that Google led the list; however, the Azure adoption was just a few percentage points behind, with AWS rounding out the list of the top three.

What Are People Doing in the Cloud?

For this question, we mainly wanted to know what companies would consider first. Hosted email was the big winner, as many companies used email as their first "test" for cloud deployments. There are also stable, ready platforms for hosted email.

Second to email are web applications. Web applications have unique security concerns, often collecting confidential and proprietary information (think credit card details). However, web applications are challenging for companies to host onsite. Moving these to the cloud has numerous benefits — provided the security issues can be addressed.

What was less compelling for companies was moving legacy applications; instead, they are more likely to migrate applications using middleware (i.e., Platform-as-a-Service) first.



What Defines “Mainstream?”

The title of this paper is “Public Clouds Go Mainstream.” When the cloud first became a priority for companies, it was generally driven by the C-level, which is not a mainstream activity. Today, we see that the key individuals behind cloud migrations are IT professionals at the director level and even admin-level IT. This is a clear indication that cloud adoption has become mainstream.

We also looked for management through specialty resources, such as “cloud-specific IT specialists,” which is something you’d expect in a “leading edge” initiative. We found no such respondents.

The final aspect of mainstream adoption is the consistency of what’s driving adoption. Drivers for cloud adoption are clustered very evenly around three things: cost savings, scalability, and simplifying IT. Those drivers are also relatively in-balance — another indicator of mainstream adoption. The cloud is here, and the cloud is mainstream.

Costs and Returns on Investment (ROI)

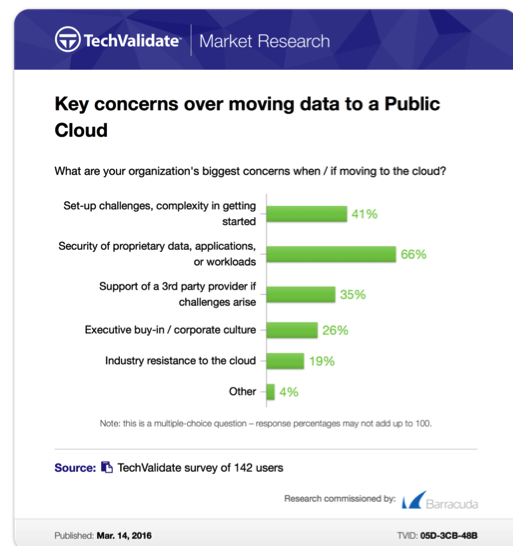
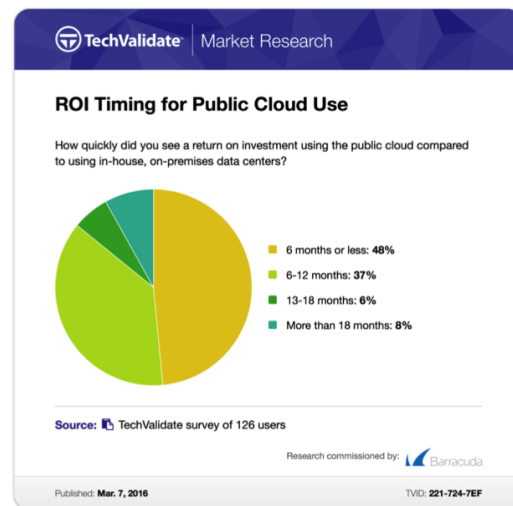
We dug deeper into the factors driving adoption to gain insights on costs. We found that companies were evenly spread when asked about ROI. The majority saw a return within six months and the rest saw a return within the first year, with a few claiming an immediate return on their investment.

When migrating to the cloud, a key cost savings is eliminating infrastructure. So we asked what percentage of IT resources were running in the cloud. The largest number of respondents calculated between 40-80% of their IT resources had been deployed. Diving deeper into these statistics, it became clear that companies also included licensed SaaS solutions – like Office 365 or Salesforce.com – in their calculation of “resources.” This obscured some of what people defined as “benefits,” but this illustrated that companies are rapidly deploying more than just hosted email to the cloud.

How Secure is the Public Cloud?

Top of mind in all things internet is security, and the public cloud is no exception. Security was by far the biggest concern when moving data to a public cloud. Companies were also concerned about the potential complexity of setting up workloads in the cloud — partly driven by the concern over security. Because the third most cited issue was support from a third-party provider, we inferred (from both this study and our own field experience) that companies already understand they will need to work with third-party providers to secure their workloads and potentially help migrate them to the cloud.

Companies were fairly confident about the security in the cloud platforms themselves: Roughly one third of companies were at least comfortable with their current cloud provider, and the top third were extremely comfortable. We think this statistic reflects positively on the stability/security of PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service), and again serves to reinforce companies’ strategies to move data or workloads to the cloud.



The final question we asked summed up the conundrum of cloud security: Were companies familiar with the “shared security responsibility” model? In the shared security responsibility model, the public cloud provider manages security of the cloud, whereas security in the cloud is the responsibility of the customer. Nearly three-fourths of respondents understood the shared responsibility model — that they were responsible for securing workloads they were running in the cloud. Companies clearly understand their responsibility for security and understand what they will (and won’t) get from cloud providers.

Public Clouds are Mainstream – How Does This Impact Companies?

The data outlined above doesn’t describe a new technology or paradigm; it describes one that is mainstream. The market is quickly evolving beyond moving things like email servers to the cloud. Companies are comfortable with the ROI for cloud-based workflows and are designing their future IT roadmaps around public clouds. They are taking advantage of cost savings, scalability, and simplifying their IT infrastructures.

The key challenge that companies face in moving workloads and applications to the cloud is that intersection between on-premises and hosted. This is where they look to third-party providers like Barracuda to provide security and cloud solutions that enable them to leverage public clouds and benefit from lower costs, more rapid deployments, and simplified management.