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**Cloud Consulting™ -
Applying Leading IT
Practices to Human Capital**
by Marion McGovern, Founder & CEO
M Squared Consulting, Inc.



“Similar to how cloud computing has forever changed the face of IT, cloud consulting will soon become the norm for skills-based delivery.”

*- Marion McGovern
Founder & CEO
M Squared Consulting*

Introduction

Cloud computing is changing the business IT landscape through its ability to provide scalable computing resources without the traditional technology overhead. Now, the same characteristics powering this charge—virtualization, integration, and value-added management—are poised to alter the face of business consulting. This cloud consulting white paper highlights the parallels between cloud computing and cloud consulting, as pioneered by M Squared Consulting, and explains how the new model is an effective alternative to the expensive, cumbersome, and outdated traditional consulting model.

When you turn on a table lamp, chances are the electricity that lights the bulb isn't from a generator in your backyard. More likely, it's supplied through an electrical grid that serves a larger region and provides reliable power to tens of thousands of customers.

In a nutshell, that's what cloud computing does for business IT. The cloud combines virtual, integrated resources and managed oversight to make systems, including electrical and computing, more economical, reliable, and scalable.

In cloud computing, when a company flips the switch on their IT infrastructure, they get their computing power, not from an expensive and costly-to-maintain rack of servers in a back room, but from a cost-effective grid of computers serving thousands of customers. This efficiency is why, in 2008, Gartner wrote that the move toward cloud computing will forever change IT provisioning.

So what defines the “cloud” in this new model? The definitions may be as varied as the clouds they describe but the key elements remain very consistent. A cloud is built on virtual resources that are integrated, managed, and available on demand. In general, a cloud provides:

- On-demand access to a full range of resources
- No overhead infrastructure costs
- Use-driven pricing
- Reliability
- Scalability
- Flexibility
- Geographic independence

In addition to these elements, the cloud has a unique ability to accommodate shifting business demands. By its very nature, the cloud is changeable, adapting to meet the needs of the business. By staying in step with business changes, the cloud provides greater agility and a competitive edge.

The Cloud—Remaking the Face of Consulting

Cloud consulting, as pioneered by San Francisco-based M Squared Consulting, applies these core cloud concepts to professional services by integrating and managing virtual human capital to deliver an on-demand, cost-effective, reliable, and scalable resource system. By reflecting how human capital and intelligence resources are really employed, the consulting cloud is able to support business processes and resource demands at a cost that more closely reflects their true utilization.

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It is important to note that how resources are linked and delivered defines the cloud more so than the resources themselves. For instance, in cloud computing, the resources are more commodity-like. But in cloud consulting, the resources are more specialized. In each case, it is the virtualization, integration, and management of the resources that makes the cloud a “cloud.”

Let’s take a closer look at the characteristics that make cloud consulting a more cost-effective and productive business model that serves the customer and the consultant better.

Cost-Effective—Only Pay for the Resources You Use

With cloud consulting, you have access to a full range of skills and industry expertise—in teams or as individual contributors. You contract the exact mix of human capital you need and only pay for the skills you use when you use them. Say you need a team to overhaul your supply chain. Cloud consulting lets you build a team with the exact IT, change management, and operations expertise you need for a company-wide implementation. Or, if you only need a little creative help for a year-end executive financial presentation, you can contract a PowerPoint professional for that single project and nothing more.

Whatever the extent of your project, you only pay for the exact resources you use. You don’t pay for expensive overhead, idle downtime, or unwarranted mark-ups. And, unlike many traditional consultants, you aren’t charged the senior consultant premium for work performed by junior consultants.

Reliable—Experts and Expert Processes

Cloud consulting is reliable for two reasons. First, the industry experts provided through the model ensure the highest caliber of output and productivity. These experts have typically worked for years in an industry, often for industry leaders, so they come up to speed quickly, perform at a higher level, and contribute immediate value.

Second, cloud consulting experts such as M Squared Consulting maintain quality and mitigate risk through rigorous processes that ensure consistency, access, and legal compliance – which is particularly important given the complex employment laws that govern the flexible workforce. This is the value-add that makes the cloud more than a virtual connection. For instance,

all M Squared consultants are classified and paid in full regulatory compliance using repeatable processes that have been proven to deliver consistent and dependable results.

Scalable—Stay Apace of Your Needs

The flip side of only paying for what you use is always having access to what you need. This is essential as your needs change due to increased demand or shifting objectives. During periods of growth, cloud consulting helps you closely match consultants to your needs, letting you grow your work force as demand increases. Between spikes in demand, you can scale your workforce to match the workload.

For instance, in the run-up to year-end financial reports, you may find a need for an expert with extensive Sarbanes-Oxley compliance expertise. The cloud lets you meet that seasonal need quickly and effectively, then immediately scale back after the books close.

Flexibility—Talent on Demand

As technologies and business landscapes change so do the types of talents required to meet those shifts. The cloud enables you to quickly acquire new skills as market swings demand different talents. And, you add exactly the talents you need, where you need them, and only for as long as you need them. By accessing this talent on demand, you have the flexibility to quickly adapt to new markets, new technologies, and new products.

Let's assume you've made the decision to implement a cloud computing infrastructure for your multinational organization. With cloud consulting, you can bring in a senior systems architect to guide and quickly build out the plan faster than you could grow those skills with your internal resources.

Geography Independent—Talent Wherever It Is

While computing resources can be located anywhere, such is not the reality for consulting expertise. One type of skill may be plentiful in one location but a rarity in another.

Cloud consulting makes this geographic isolation disappear because experts are not restricted to available local resources. You get the right talent in the right place. At headquarters or at a remote branch. Wherever you have the need, cloud consulting can provide the expert. And because the human capital is evaluated, dispersed and managed from a single, central cloud consulting entity such as M Squared Consulting, you are ensured the same level of quality and consistency regardless of your geographic location.

For instance, a telecom start-up in rural Wyoming might find it difficult to staff for a CRM system implementation locally. But, through cloud consulting, their

reach is expanded and they can select the right talent to build the optimal team rather than settle for the available talent.

Collaborative—Working Together for Mutual Success

Because cloud consulting doesn't saddle you with overhead or infrastructure costs, the consultancy only succeeds if they truly understand and meet your needs and processes. Experienced consultants work alongside company management, provide immediate impact, and focus exclusively on completing the engagement successfully. This methodology significantly reduces "scope-creep" and also fosters a co-dependency that ensures a higher level of collaboration and concentration on achieving results.



Cloud Consulting—More Than a Virtual Agency

Cloud computing is more than loosely connected computing resources. The power of the topology comes from the added-value expertise that makes the "cloud" resources function as a single, integrated, and seamless system.

The same is true for cloud consulting. Virtual consulting can be as simplistic as an online forum where consultants independently bid on jobs. There's no oversight, no quality filter, and no assurance of integration. This isn't cloud consulting.

To rise above simple virtualization, cloud consulting includes the same value-add expertise and oversight that makes the cloud resources function as a cohesive, quality-assured system. M Squared performs this function by setting quality standards and hiring only qualified industry experts. Then they provide dedicated teams that understand the client's specific needs. And, finally, they manage the entire skill delivery with proven tools and processes that ensure reliability, quality, consistency, and full compliance with complex employment regulations.

Who is M Squared?

M Squared Consulting has been a market leader for more than 20 years. As a continuing innovator, M Squared has developed consulting models and processes such as cloud consulting to better serve its clients in nearly every key industry. M Squared provides:

- A full suite of professional services and human capital management solutions
- Dedicated industry practices
- Tight engagement oversight
- Immediate client impact
- Innovative cloud consulting model
- Team-based and individual contributor engagements
- Exceptional price performance

Clouds on the Horizon

Today's economic climate has forced companies to find ways to operate more cost-effectively. With fiscal pressures showing no signs of retreat, these cost concerns will continue to grow in all areas of business. And, because of its cost efficiency, so will the cloud concept.

By applying the cloud principles of virtualization, integration, and managed oversight, cloud consulting can help companies make their human capital and consulting budgets work harder and more productively.



About the Author

Marion McGovern co-founded M Squared Consulting in 1988 and serves as its CEO and on its board of directors. Before starting M Squared, McGovern had consulting positions with Booz Allen & Hamilton and Arthur D. Little. She earned her bachelor's degree from Boston University and her master of business administration degree from University of California, Berkeley. McGovern is an adjunct professor at McLaren School of Business at the University of San Francisco, and is currently a director for CPP Inc. and Interplast.

[For more information](#)

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