

MULTI-CLOUD DEFINED: WHAT IS MULTI-CLOUD, EXACTLY?



We've been talking about multi-cloud a lot lately here at BMC, and for good reason: managing the complexity of today's evolving IT environments is what we do. But while the concept of multi-cloud feels intuitive – anyone in IT knows that there certainly isn't just one cloud out there – the term "multi-cloud" still feels slippery. In an industry plagued by buzzwords, acronyms, and flat-out made-up names for things, is "multi-cloud" a new name for an old concept, overly complicated analyst-speak, or an honest-to-goodness trend in IT?

We submit that it's the latter. Multi-cloud is, in fact, a real thing. It just needs to be more clearly defined. Perhaps more importantly, going a little further we believe that definition also should take into consideration the context of the complete IT environment in which these cloud services are being utilized.

So what is multi-cloud?

Let's start with some definitions from the wild. [Technopedia defines multi-cloud deployment](#) as *"the use of two or more cloud computing systems at the same time. The deployment might use public clouds, private clouds, or some combination of the two. Multi-cloud deployments aim to offer redundancy in case of hardware/software failures and avoid vendor lock-in."*

[Cloud Tech offers a similar explanation](#), with additional details on why organizations adopt a multi-cloud approach. *"Multi-cloud is about mixing and matching the best-of-breed solutions and services from different cloud providers to create the most suitable solution for a business. It minimizes the*

amount of vendor lock-in and gives organizations more flexibility with their cloud solution over different price-points and by leveraging relative strengths, advantages, and geographic locations."

In our recent white paper, [Why Discovery Is Critical to Multi-Cloud Success](#), we tried to simplify it even more and clarify the context: **"Multi-cloud is a deployment model that involves using multiple cloud services from multiple public cloud hosting providers, often in combination with on-premises physical, virtual, and private cloud infrastructure."** Few companies are cloud only today, so if your business has a multi-cloud strategy, you need to consider how this is managed in combination with your on-premises infrastructure. IT needs to manage the entire IT infrastructure, especially with respect to security, monitoring, and cost control.

While the first two definitions highlight the strategic advantages of a multi-cloud approach (and there are plenty), most organizations find themselves managing a multi-cloud environment organically. *"One team might be using Microsoft products and Microsoft's Azure platform would be a natural, while at the same time another team prefers Amazon Web Services,"* [Technopedia](#) continues. [InformationWeek](#) agrees: *"In most enterprises multi-cloud infrastructure emerges as a result of organic adoption. One business unit, department or team uses AWS and another uses Azure and there you go, a multi-cloud organization."*

Benefits of a multi-cloud approach

Now that you can define multi-cloud and hopefully understand that the total ecosystem context is important, why should you care? First, it appears that multi-cloud is here to stay. According to a [recent study by Microsoft and 451 Research](#), almost one third of organizations already work with four or more cloud vendors. [Another study from Dimensional Research](#) found that 77% of businesses are planning to implement multi-cloud architectures in the near future.

Why? A multi-cloud deployment delivers a variety of benefits. Some of the key ones include:

- **Prevents vendor lock-in.** As mentioned above, operating with multiple clouds lets you avoid "putting all of your eggs in one basket" to optimize cost, agility, and flexibility and mitigate risk across cloud providers.
- **Provides more options.** With multi-cloud, you can choose the cloud provider that is best suited to support the services, applications, and workloads of individual teams and departments without compromising on a one-size-fits-all solution.
- **Minimizes risk.** Spreading out your cloud footprint minimizes potential downtime, outages, and bandwidth problems while strengthening disaster recovery.
- **Improves geo-presence.** Using multiple cloud vendors gives you more options for geographic targeting to manage latency issues, address data sovereignty, and more.
- **Reduces cost.** Multiple contracts with multiple vendors increases complexity, but can also significantly reduce cost. Multi-cloud delivers on cloud computing's general promise to only pay for what you need, and adds the ability to negotiate and find the best possible price.

While it may be relatively simple to define multi-cloud, managing this increasingly complex ecosystem is anything but. Learn more about multi-cloud discovery in our white paper, [Why Discovery Is Critical to Multi-Cloud Success: Best Practices for Maximizing Your Investment in a Multi-Cloud Environment](#)