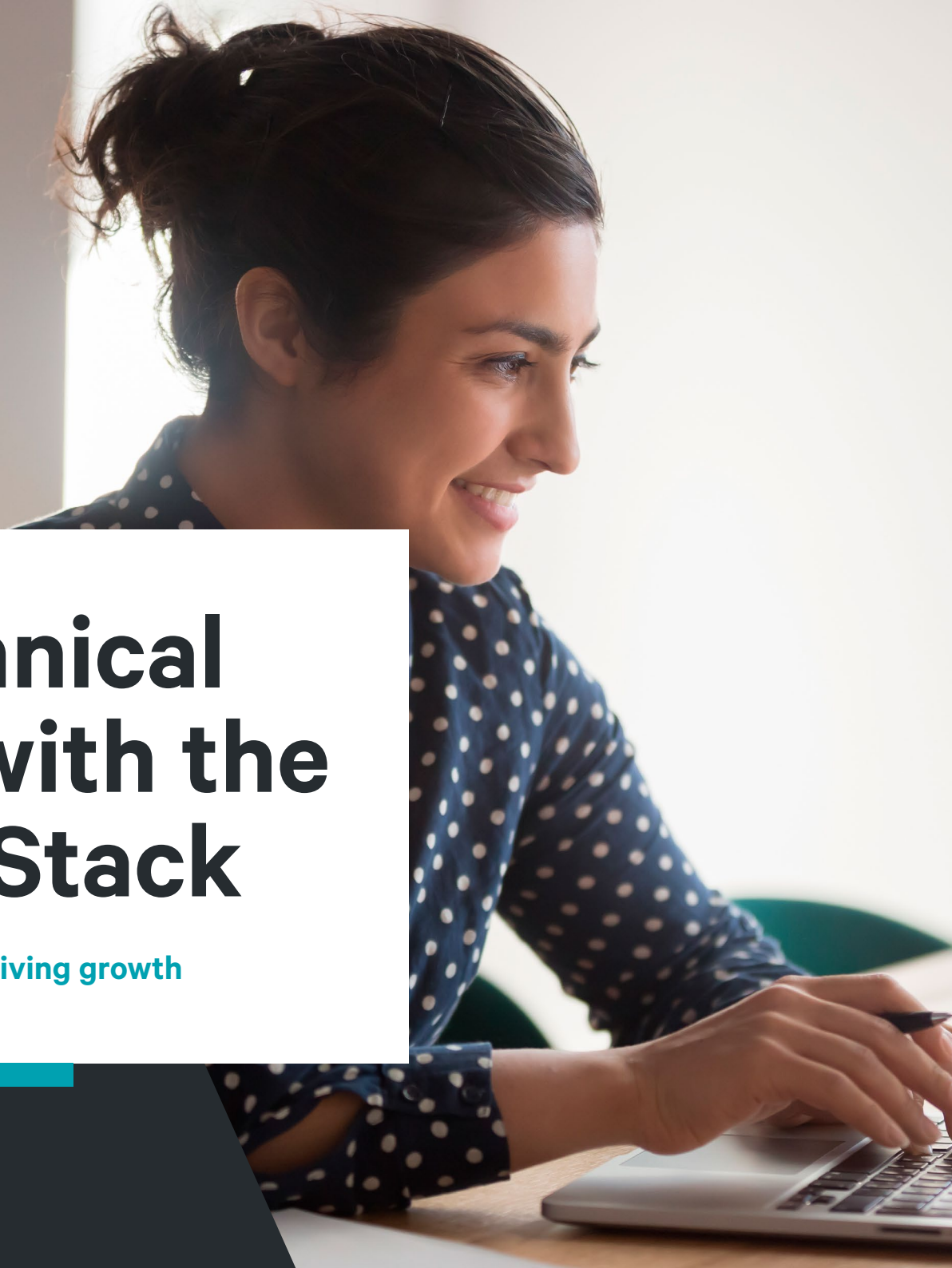


Beginning a Technical Transformation with the Microsoft Cloud Stack

Promoting productivity, enhancing innovation and driving growth



Introducing the Microsoft Cloud

As businesses have adapted to new methods of operating in recent years, the Cloud has become a major facilitator of remote and hybrid working. Offering vital benefits such as efficiency, productivity and scalability, the Cloud is now an essential solution for businesses of all sizes, not just larger enterprises.

It can be difficult to manage a business while juggling a range of technical solutions from different providers. As most of your hybrid business operates within the Cloud, adopting a single Cloud stack will make your working environment more cohesive. The Microsoft stack includes solutions such as Azure, Microsoft 365 (including productivity applications Microsoft Teams and SharePoint), and the Microsoft Power Platform. The different solutions that make up Microsoft Cloud stack integrate seamlessly with each other, allowing you to drive innovation and growth without monitoring and managing a range of solutions from different vendors. For the business just starting out in the Cloud, the consistency, stability and reliability of the Microsoft stack is ideal.

In this eBook we will explore:

- The benefits of the Microsoft Cloud for your growing business
- The capabilities of the different Microsoft Cloud solutions
- The advantages of implementing a cohesive Cloud stack





Microsoft Azure

Azure, Microsoft's public Cloud, is an expansive, ever-evolving solution. With over two hundred available products and services within its comprehensive offering, Azure is capable of handling any technical requirement you may have.

While other Cloud solutions on the market typically function either as Software as a Service (SaaS), Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) or Platform as a Service (PaaS), the Azure ecosystem encompasses all three. Whether you need a Cloud platform that will support your business growth, provide premium security, facilitate DevOps capabilities or offer scalable storage, Azure is the solution for you.

Azure's flexible hybrid infrastructure is ideal for growing businesses. Azure eliminates the need for on-premises hardware, as well as the associated maintenance costs, but allows you to keep storing data on private servers if you wish.

Unpacking the Core Capabilities of Azure

While the technical capabilities of Azure are so expansive that they could not possibly all be listed here, Azure has a range of core services that advantage various areas of your business. These include:

Computing

Azure delivers high-intensity computing capabilities by virtualising hardware within the Cloud. This minimises hardware investments while allowing you to scale your required computing power as needed. You can easily accommodate high service loads or periods of increased demand.

Azure Computing allows you to:

- Increase flexibility and productivity with expanded access provided by Azure Virtual Desktop
- Achieve high availability by harnessing autoscaling capabilities
- Develop web and mobile applications by using Azure as a development platform

Networking

With Azure Virtual Network you can create a hybrid computing framework based on private and public Cloud infrastructures. Connect internet endpoints, virtualised machines and on-premises devices in one network; and use the scalability of Azure to enhance the capabilities of your own data centres.

Azure Networking allows you to:

- Connect your Azure solutions to your on-premises data centres with virtual networks
- Protect your applications, virtual networks and workloads with a zero-trust security approach
- Secure your digital assets with Cloud-native firewall capabilities, requiring no maintenance

Storage

Harness Azure's large-scale, agile and flexible storage with premium security capabilities. Store data, applications and virtual machines in Azure, and feel confident that your business assets are protected from common cyber threats.

Azure Storage allows you to:

- Backup on premises and virtual devices, disks, shared files and data bases
- Benefit from the protection of Azure data centres, which includes encryption, two-tier authentication, proxy card access readers and biometric scanners
- Retain and secure bulk legacy data that doesn't require regular access

Migration

Assess and migrate applications, infrastructure and data from your on-premises environment to Azure, seamlessly, swiftly and simply with Azure Migrate.

Azure Migrate allows you to:

- Transition from an on-premises to a Cloud environment securely
- Retain full business continuity with Azure's built-in disaster recovery service
- Undergo a cost-efficient Cloud migration with Azure cost optimisation features and tools

Security

Azure has a comprehensive, multi-layered protective model, supported by Microsoft's annual cyber security investment of over \$1 billion. Data stored in the Azure Cloud benefits from a range of integrated security tools and policies, providing a robust defence.

Azure Security allows you to:

- Protect your Azure resources from denial-of-service threats with Azure DDoS Protection
- Defend on-premises data, virtual machines and other Cloud services with Azure Defender
- Unify security management across servers, storage and networks and enable advanced threat protection with Azure Security Centre



Azure Business Benefits

Azure facilitates a variety of financial, infrastructural and operational benefits for businesses of all sizes, supporting the development of a range of organisations, from start-ups to enterprises. The Cloud platform has several crucial features that make starting out with Azure simpler, and support business growth.

Seamless scalability

Azure is designed to scale alongside your business, supporting your inevitable growth. With manual and auto-scaling capabilities, Azure adapts in line with your application usage. In the Azure Cloud, it is extremely efficient to add new machines according to demand, minimising delays while ensuring you never have to purchase unnecessary machines.

Cost saving capabilities

As Azure has a consumption-based pricing model, users only ever have to pay for the features they require. Azure has a variety of ways to maximise long and short-term savings: the per-user pricing significantly decreases infrastructure, maintenance and management costs, while there are also a range of innovative savings options to benefit from.

Expert support

Microsoft has an SLA that ensures 99.95% availability, or less than 4.5 hours of downtime annually. However, if you do encounter an issue, Microsoft has a range of support options and consulting services, so you can receive expert assistance at any time you require it. For a business just starting out with Azure, this is a major advantage.

Microsoft 365

Microsoft 365 is a productivity suite that offers access to all the tools and applications hosted on Microsoft servers, including online versions of Microsoft Office. Being based in the Cloud, Microsoft 365 allows users the flexibility to access these applications online, without physically downloading them to their device. Additionally, subscribers are always delivered the latest version of services as Microsoft are continually updating and upgrading the Cloud platform.

By investing in a monthly or annual Microsoft 365 subscription, your business will open the door to collaboration, communication and organisation.

So, what exactly is included in a Microsoft 365 subscription?

Teams - A communication and video-conferencing platform that allows you to communicate and collaborate via chat, audio and video.

SharePoint - A vast, versatile Cloud platform that facilitates content sharing, workflow management, custom webpage deployment and endless collaboration.

OneDrive - Microsoft's dedicated file hosting service that allows you to store, synchronise, share and secure files and data.

Outlook - The ultimate application for communication and organisation: combining email, calendar, contacts and tasks.

Office - Access your favourite Office software online, including Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Optimise content creation with Office applications.

Your Microsoft 365 solution is perfect for:

- **Remote working** – store key files in the Cloud, allowing you to access information anytime, anywhere, on any device, either at home or in the office.
- **Business continuity** – with files regularly backed up in the Cloud, built-in file recovery, and one-click restoration capabilities, your business can operate as normal in case of a disaster.
- **Integration** - Microsoft 365 applications integrate seamlessly with each other and the rest of the Microsoft Cloud environment, helping to make your workflow more efficient and effective.

Microsoft 365 for Business

Microsoft 365 has three subscription plans for small and medium sized businesses to choose from. While they all offer undeniable productivity and collaboration benefits, they vary in the levels of flexibility, scalability and security they offer you. If you intend to expand your use of Microsoft 365 rapidly, or grow your business more quickly, it might be wise to invest in the Standard or Premium plans.

Microsoft 365 Business Basic

Suitable for small businesses starting out with Microsoft 365, facilitating efficient access to effective productivity applications.

This plan includes:

- Web and mobile versions of Office apps
- Teamwork and communication tools
- Cloud-based file storing and sharing capabilities
- Security and compliance

Microsoft 365 Business Standard

The ideal plan for businesses looking to expand their use of Microsoft 365 and support more users.

This plan includes:

- Microsoft 365 Business Basic features
- Desktop versions of Office 365 for PC and Mac
- Advanced scheduling capabilities with Microsoft Booking

Microsoft 365 Business Premium

If your business requires advanced security solutions and effective device management as part of your Microsoft 365 subscription, this plan is most appropriate.

This plan includes:

- Microsoft 365 Basic and Standard features
- Advanced security
- Threat protection
- Authorisation controls
- Device management

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams, a collaboration and video-conferencing platform, is a key solution that sits within Microsoft 365. As Windows 11 has now been released and has integrated Teams directly into its operating system, Teams has become an integral part of the Microsoft Cloud stack. This isn't without good reason: Microsoft Teams has facilitated major communication and collaboration benefits for businesses across the globe, particularly following the shift to remote and hybrid working. As well as delivering chat, voice and video calling features, Teams allows you to better organise your business using structured teams, channels and integrated applications.

Utilising Microsoft Teams will allow your business to improve:

- **Collaboration** - edit documents alongside other users in real time, and stay connected through consistent Teams groups, files and conversations.
- **Communication** - chat, voice and video conferencing features allow you to talk seamlessly, while screen sharing, VoIP integration and mobile application capabilities provide new opportunities for connection.
- **Productivity** - create unique, separate teams and channels for specific projects and departments.
- **Hybrid Working** - access Teams from anywhere, on a range of devices, on desktop and mobile apps and on the web.





Microsoft SharePoint

SharePoint is a useful tool for developing businesses, with extensive functionality and a wide range of capabilities. While it is not explicitly a website design tool, it does allow you to build webpages and intranets. Using only a web-browser, you can create dedicated sites to share, open, review and edit documents. Microsoft SharePoint is the file facilitator that your growing business needs.

Utilising SharePoint will allow your business to improve:

- **Flexibility** - create shareable libraries of files, documents and media or build internal intranets and Cloud-hosted applications.
- **Consolidation** - integrate all your work sites into a single platform to create a holistic environment for all your company data.
- **Automation** - enhance efficiency by automating company processes such as approvals and feedback, while eliminating manual workflows.
- **Management** - structure files and folders clearly and logically and use custom templates to facilitate bespoke management of SharePoint.

Welcoming Technical Transformation with the Microsoft Cloud Stack

One of the greatest advantages of using Microsoft Cloud solutions is that they are all designed to integrate with and complement each other. The productivity prowess of Microsoft 365 optimises the everyday operations of your business. For instance, it is possible to sync your Outlook and Teams calendars, so you have full visibility of the availability of both you and your team. You can also integrate SharePoint and Teams, connecting teams, channels and sites, and facilitating seamless file sharing. These are just a few brief examples of the endless integration benefits of Microsoft Teams.

If you're considering implementing Azure into your stack, your benefits become even more holistic - not to mention expansive. Azure provides the essential infrastructure needed to allow you to grow and scale your company in the Cloud. Using Microsoft 365 and Azure together offers your growing business a wide range of benefits. Just some of these include:

- Microsoft 365 data stored in OneDrive, SharePoint or Exchange can be backed up to Azure.
- Custom web applications developed on Azure can integrate seamlessly with SharePoint.
- Azure extends the hybrid Active Directory of Microsoft 365, enabling Single Sign On.
- Azure extends Microsoft 365 with custom mobile application support.
- You can continuously monitor your Microsoft 365 environment for suspicious or malicious activity using Azure Advanced Threat Protection.
- Microsoft 365 subscriptions include a free Azure Active Directory subscription, saving you money.

The benefits of implementing a complete Microsoft Cloud stack cannot be matched by combining solutions from a range of different providers. You will be sacrificing integration, cohesion and simplicity: qualities that enhance the productivity, efficiency and business continuity of your organisation.



Integrate your Cloud Environment with **Blue Saffron**

Adopting the Microsoft Cloud stack has the potential to transform your business' technical capabilities and revitalise your operations. With an expansive range of solutions and benefits, the Microsoft Cloud is the ultimate enabler for businesses looking to scale and evolve. Combining the user-friendly technologies of familiar Microsoft software like 365 with the enterprise-level power of Azure, your business is provided with the ultimate Cloud solution, no matter what stage of growth you are at.

Blue Saffron, an accredited Microsoft Cloud partner, has the specialist expertise required to transition you through your adoption of the Microsoft Cloud stack. Whether you need to fully migrate, or optimise your existing Microsoft environment, we can help you.

Get in touch with a Cloud specialist at Blue Saffron today to discover how to leverage the Microsoft Cloud for business success.

Get in touch

