



# What do IT Professionals need to think about when moving to a Managed Hosting provider?

A Wanstor Guide

**wanstor**

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# Introduction

At Wanstor we understand there has been a sizeable mind shift in IT Managers from keeping everything “in house” to outsourcing certain tasks to specialist managed hosting providers. The main reasons for this shift in mindset are cost, ease of management and fewer staff required to manage data.

In particular many business and not for profit organisations are outsourcing administration/people heavy tasks such as application management from their data centre to a third-party managed service or cloud service.

Whether the IT Manager wants to move significant IT tasks like email, or provision more storage or processing for a small team, well-executed outsourcing to the right managed hosting provider can deliver several business and IT benefits notably:

- Moving budgetary costs around storage and compute from CAPEX to OPEX
- Eliminating heavy administrative IT tasks
- The opportunity to reallocate IT staff to more strategic projects
- Preserving similar measures of control to keep major IT tasks in-house

At Wanstor, we are pragmatic in our approach to IT. We understand that not all IT outsourcing to a managed hosting provider are successful.

With over 15+ years’ experience of providing a range of business and not for profit organisations with the right managed hosting solutions, Wanstor know what managed hosting success from a third party provider looks like.

This document investigates and recommends several critical success factors to consider when outsourcing IT to managed hosting or the cloud.

It is based on Wanstor’s 15+ years experience in managed hosting solutions and the advice our experts would give to customers who are interested in managed hosting solutions for the first time.

# Wanstor's Managed Hosting Success Factors for IT Managers

- + Clear definition of the problem or issue managed hosting can help you resolve
- + Define your managed hosting success criteria
- + Have the right management structure in place
- + Get a project management professional on board
- + Communicate at all levels
- + Identify project phases
- + Have clear milestones / measures of success for each stage
- + Think clearly
- + Metrics aligned to the organisational outcomes
- + Develop the right documentation
- + Mark your supplier
- + Review, review, review

# Clear definition of the problem which managed hosting can help you resolve

Before outsourcing any enterprise IT, business leaders must articulate what problem they're trying to solve and define where the problem is.

For example, do they have a problem with:

- High IT costs, especially for CAPEX?
- Slow response to user requests for new apps or workloads?
- Data centres running close to capacity and in danger of breaching particular compliance standards?
- Administration heavy IT tasks distracting the core IT team from delivering strategic projects?

The statement of the problem should be specific, quantifiable, and properly scoped to meet the needs of your business or not for profit organisation.

Depending on the size of the organisation, this may require multiple meetings with departmental and executive stakeholders whose budgets will be affected by the effort.

Once identified, it may transpire that the problem is something people have decided to live with as it is not mission critical.

You may be able to solve it with a simple workaround, or an extra measure of documentation or training - without the complexity of going all the way to outsourcing.

Whatever the scope, a clear statement of the problem you hope to solve by outsourcing to a Managed Hosting provider will significantly increase your chances of outsourcing success.

# Define your managed hosting success criteria

When managing a large IT project with many different parts, it's easy for IT Managers to become caught up in the details and lose sight of the end goal they had in mind when they started.

We believe it is fundamentally important that IT Managers spend time with their teams to keep them focused on the end results their company or not for profit organisation hopes to achieve from outsourcing certain IT tasks to a Managed Hosting provider.



*Many IT leaders are comfortable without doing much performance measurement of any outsourced workloads. But the most successful managers set quantifiable goals and then use these to measure their results.*

*If you set quantifiable goals and review them at regular intervals, your chances of outsourcing success will grow.*

At Wanstor, we believe that at the beginning of any Managed Hosting project, IT Managers should define quantifiable goals and Measures of success, such as:

- **Increased revenues:** How much extra revenue do you want to generate, and in what timeframe?
- **Cost savings:** How much can you save on infrastructure by turning in-house IT functions over to an outsourced provider? How long will this take to achieve?
- **Reduced time-to-market:** How long will it take to put your outsourced IT into production, compared with today?

# Have the right management structure in place

At Wanstor we usually find that IT projects with strong and well placed executive sponsors have better chances of success. Conversely, those without the right executive sponsor can appear doomed from the beginning.

An engaged executive sponsor with a business interest in the project from the beginning to close can mean the difference between success and failure.

Additionally, the sponsor must be comfortable delegating day-to-day authority to the project manager (PM). From that point onwards, the sponsor must be available when needed, but not interested in micro-managing the project or second-guessing the PM's decisions.

Making the right choice in terms of the mix of between on-premise or managed hosting can help IT teams to deliver faster and more effective outcomes. Additionally the IT team in many cases can start to concentrate on more strategic projects / programmes of work once the right Managed Hosting and business sponsorship partner has been selected.

Top management support is essential in securing the needed resources for any Managed Hosting initiative.

We believe an appropriate executive sponsor must have:

- Enough authority to see the project through from start to finish
- A real interest in achieving the stated goals of the project set out at the beginning
- Control of resources required for the project
- A willingness to be actively involved

# Get a project management professional on board

More than anyone else, the success of any IT outsourcing depends on the project manager. Like any effective leader, they require good skills with people and the ability to motivate others.

A seasoned project management professional can be worth their weight in gold if they manage to make a managed hosting solution work for your organisation, especially if they help you deliver the cost and productivity savings the business or organisation was striving for.

Additionally, the project managers working conditions must be right. It's not good enough to pile another project onto an overburdened employee, and let them figure out how to cope; the only way to cope is to let something else slide.

Allow for the new project in the project managers workload. Then, make them accountable for the overall success of the project.

Make sure the project manager has authority as the final decision maker. They must be a single point of contact for your partner and any internal resources, and they must have the power to make day-to-day decisions without constant approval from the executive sponsor.

We believe the lines are drawn as the executive sponsor authorises and supports the project, the project manager executes it. Each has their own role, but both are responsible for delivering results.

# Communicate at all levels

Over the course of your project, business and IT professionals expect at least a few of the details to change.

An escalation process, should be put in place so there is a systematic way for any changes to be delivered to the project manager. This will depend on developing open channels of communication between everyone involved in the Managed Hosting project.

At Wanstor, we believe nothing should be off-limits when you talk about your project with your service provider. Schedule time for frank, open discussions about everything - including the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Open communication is a fundamental success factor for both parties. To maintain a healthy relationship with your service provider, your communications should be clear, systematic, and unhindered.

It makes sense to open your communication channels with your service provider long before the project kicks off. And keep your channels open for the duration of the project.



# Identify project phases

Most major projects seem overwhelming when viewed as a whole, but by breaking up large projects into clearly defined areas that are meaningful building blocks towards a goal, you will achieve more throughout the project in quicker timeframes.

The best way to break your project into more manageable parts is to set up clear phases. These phases help organize the effort required during each stage. For example, six phases could be set up like this:

- Planning the details
- Running tests and models with your managed hosting provider
- Doing data extraction or conversion
- Going live with your managed hosting partner
- Evaluating and tweaking the implementation
- Validating the results

The important thing isn't the names or tasks you assign to each phase. The important thing is that you create them, and use them to guide your journey to Managed Hosting success.



# Have clear milestones/measures of success for each stage

Another essential is a set of project milestones, with a timeline for their delivery. Milestones are more than just a project management tool. These give a chart for evaluating progress, and making sure your business or not for profit organisation gets all the functionality you pay for.

These milestones flow naturally from your project phases. Your milestones should be agreed with your Managed Hosting partner and made clearly visible to all, either posted on an intranet, or e-mailed to all interested parties.

At Wanstor we suggest you meet weekly with your Managed Hosting provider to evaluate progress toward these milestones and discuss any potential threats to timely delivery.

This helps eliminate confusion and keep all parties accountable for their commitments. However, remember to balance accountability with flexibility. Like objects on a faraway horizon that gradually come into focus, milestones can sometimes look different as you move closer to them.

Whatever form these milestones take, stay engaged with your service provider throughout.

Wanstor's Operations Director Manmit Rai offers the following advice:

*"It is important to develop trust, transparency and flexibility with your managed hosting supplier. These are best developed by working together rather than simply handing the project across to your managed hosting supplier and hoping they guess correctly about the needs of your organisation."*

*You can outsource tasks but never accountability for the outcome of a significant programme of work like outsourcing to a Managed Hosting provider."*

# Think clearly

Unless you have several successful outsourcing projects on your resume, it is highly likely that you will find yourself venturing into uncharted territory. At this point it is important to stay open-minded to your outsourcing partner's ideas.

The provider you chose for your project is likely to have successfully navigated many projects for business and not for profit organisations similar to yours. After all, experience is likely to be one of the key reasons why you chose them.

They are likely to be intimately familiar with the issues that can threaten a project, and how to avoid them. They can also suggest corrections that can save time or effort. While it's important the IT Manager of the organisation undertaking the outsourcing remains in charge, it is also wise to listen to the voice of experience.

This doesn't mean doing everything your provider recommends. But if they tell you they foresee problems/issues in the near future, listen to them.

A good outsourcing partner will guide you through the rough patches of a project to make sure your project is delivered in a timely, relevant manner that has business/organisational outcomes at the heart of it.



# Metrics aligned to organisational outcomes

*You can't manage what you can't measure*, says the old business adage. This attitude has its limits, since many human factors are not easy to measure. But it does have a place in managing IT outsourcing.

*"Defining a proper set of metrics is often a good place to start to make sure your outsourced managed hosting solution will actually work for your organisation. Once you've determined what the metrics should be, the IT Manager can use them as a roadmap for measurement, analysis and improvement."* says Manmit Rai, Operations Director, Wanstor.



*Discussing these metrics may call for monthly meetings with line of business managers, executive sponsors and outsourcing partners. We believe these meetings are important to make sure everyone connected with the project is aligned on achieving the same outcomes.*

Your SLA with your managed hosting service provider will likely include the following metrics:

- Network uptime
- Incident response time
- Hardware replacement response time

Make sure you understand what each of these means, and how your managed hosting partner calculates it. In addition to the above basic metrics, IT Managers will also require a monthly reading of:

- Business unit satisfaction levels
- Results against criteria set up

# Develop the right documentation

It would be wrong of Wanstor to suggest that IT Manager's should document everything to do with their Managed Hosting project.

If they did, they would not have enough hours in the week to undertake even their most basic of tasks.

Therefore what the IT Manager decides to document has be the right choice. It will serve as a record of the work the provider has completed (or is set to complete) and any issues encountered during the implementation.

Some key pieces of documentation that should always be recorded will include:

**Transitions:** when control of functionality and data to the managed hosting partner takes place is some of the most critical stages of the project, these require the most stringent documentation.

**When it's time for the internal IT team to back away and let the outsourcer assume control, everyone must be synchronized**

Some of the most notable transitional issues that are most likely to cause disputes based on Wanstor's 15+ year IT outsourcing experience includes:

- Asset ownership or transfer
- Data protection and retention
- Rights for departments or new contractors (e.g. gaining access to information, accounts, physical locations, etc)
- Labour termination and compensation

Documentation can seem a bit overwhelming for many IT Managers on their first complex outsourcing project. With experience, however they will get a better feel for the areas that require the most details.

One top tip Wanstor does provide IT Managers with is to develop company templates which can be applied to any IT outsourcing or infrastructure project.

This in turn will save time doing documentation for future outsourcing projects.

# Mark your supplier

Organisations with high project success rates tend to use balanced scorecards as part of their vendor performance and selection.

Naturally, the most important parts of any scorecard are the criteria used to measure vendors.

It is highly likely your outsourcing partners will be more motivated to over-deliver on their promises when they understand what performance targets the customer will be measuring them against.

At Wanstor we suggest the following as a starting point:

**System outages:** the acceptable number of outages over a period of several months (“no more than two monthly outages in any given six-month timeframe”)

**System interruptions:** how long an interruption lasts (“no more than two interruptions of service lasting longer than 10 minutes each between the hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM weekdays”)

**Time to resolution:** how long it takes to fix any issues that require a skilled technician or developer (“95% of priority #1 escalations will be fixed and deployed in no longer than 72 hours”)

Vendor scorecards should focus on the needs of a customer, not on a provider’s capabilities.

Implemented properly, scorecards help IT Managers to make sure that their company or not for profit organisation receives the right amount of desired business value from the outsourcing project.

As Manmit Rai, Operations Director at Wanstor confirms the value of this approach. *“The right vendor scorecard will help identify issues early; measure value rather than just operational metrics; and focus discussions, energy and decisions on improvement activity in the right places.”*

Additionally since these scorecards become part of the project record, they are available to managers of any future projects.

**IT Managers can also use past scorecards to help motivate partners to continuously improve their performance when required**

# Review, review, review

At Wanstor we understand that it is always tempting to avoid holding a post-mortem. Even successful projects sometimes do not run as smoothly as they could.

So when the project ends, some team members may urge the IT Manager to put the venture behind them without any final reflective discussion.

Resist that temptation. Whatever the project's outcome, everyone can learn from a post-mortem. It's an opportunity to make sure positives are repeated and take action to remedy the negatives.

Manmit Rail, Operations Director, Wanstor comments:

*"People can place blame anywhere. But it doesn't have to be this way, When it comes down to it, team members want the projects they take part in to be successful. Changing... how a post-mortem is perceived is crucial to future IT project success."*

Wanstor Project Management experts believe an effective post-mortem covers issues such as:

- What worked well?
- What didn't work as well as it could have (or perhaps not at all)?
- What painful processes could have been avoided?
- What did you learn about working with this particular vendor?
- What opportunities do you see to implement the successful points in future projects?

Post-mortem meetings ensure that learning is a natural part of every project. You owe it to your team to schedule it, prepare for it, and most of all, keep it positive.

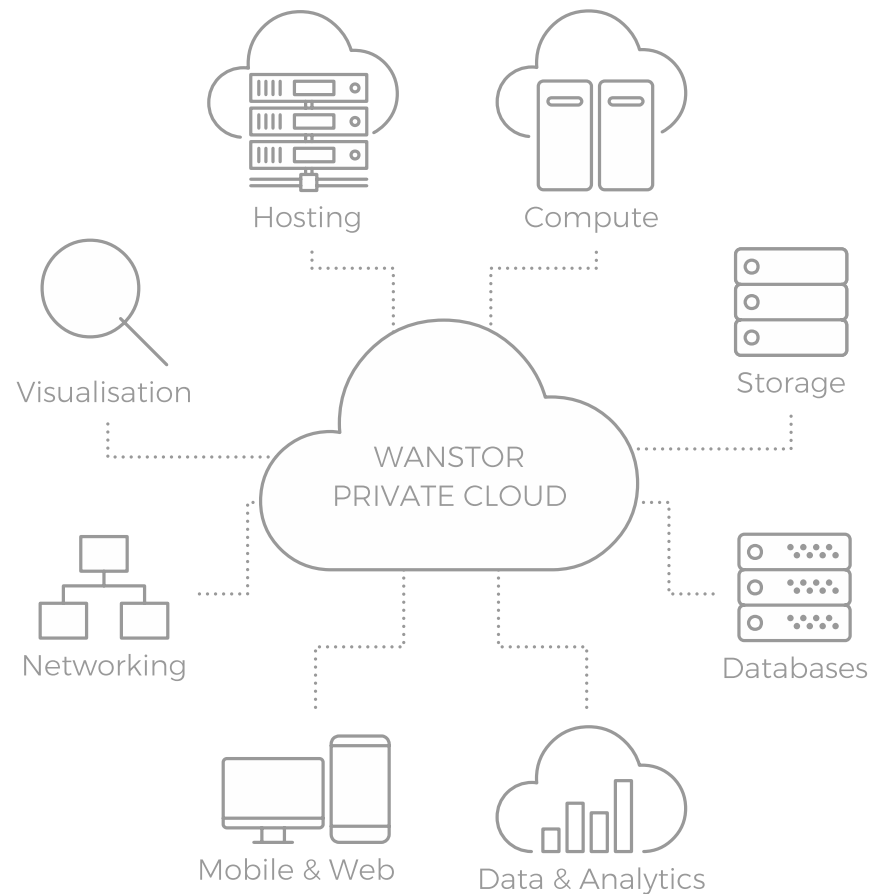
# Wanstor Cloud Hosting with true network integration

Wanstor's hosting platform provides IT Managers with greater freedom and security when configuring applications in the cloud. MPLS network integration allows you to migrate applications to a Wanstor UK data centre, but still integrate those applications with existing services and networking.

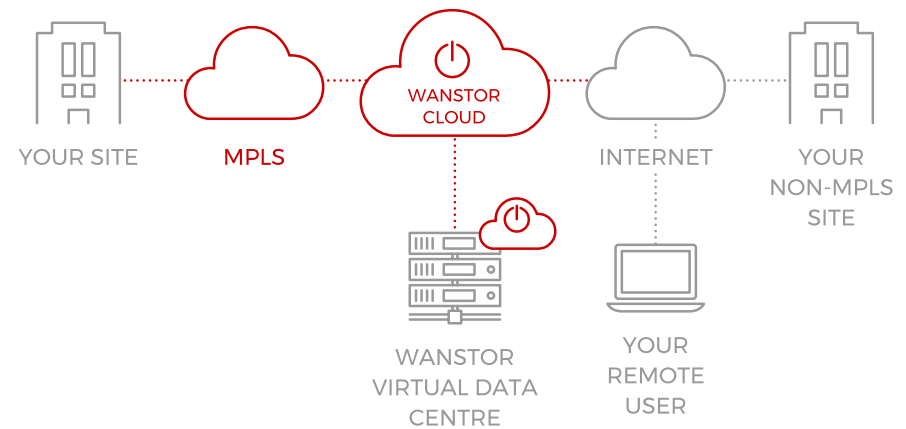
Strategy	Design	Integration	Procurement	Implementation	In-Life Management	Ongoing Maintenance
Cloud Service Model Definition	Cloud Technology Selection	Cloud Service Management Blueprints	Multi-Channel Sourcing	Logistics	Managed Infrastructure Service	Maintenance and Training Services
Cloud Sourcing Strategy	Cloud Implementation Blueprints	O365 Integration		Staging and Configuration	Managed Hybrid Cloud	
Maturity and Readiness Check		O365 Migration			Managed O365 Service	
O365 Readiness Check		Hybrid Cloud Migration Services				
		Public Cloud Integration				

# Wanstor's Private Cloud solutions to customers

The main private cloud solutions Wanstor provide to customers include:



How it works:



# Wanstor Managed Hosting Benefits

**Lower IT costs:** Matching your IT cost patterns to your computing demands, meaning you can move IT from a capital-intensive cost model to an Opex model.

**Cope with increased user demand:** As your business grows, a cloud environment should grow with you. Managed hosting can also help your business when demand for IT is unpredictable or have applications to test, giving the IT department control over capacity and paying only for what is used.

**Run your business; don't worry about your IT:** A managed cloud solution by Wanstor does this for you. In addition to monitoring your infrastructure and keeping your data safe, we provide creative and practical IT solutions matched to your organisations needs.

**Innovate and lead:** Ever-changing business requirements mean that your IT infrastructure has to be flexible. With a cloud infrastructure, you can rapidly deploy new projects and take them live quickly, keeping you at the forefront of innovation.

**Improved security and compliance:** A managed private cloud environment provided by Wanstor means security and compliance is no longer just the IT team's responsibility, it is a joint one.

At Wanstor, we build in resiliency and agility into all cloud solutions at an infrastructure-level. This limits exposure to security breaches, and can help to improve your compliance and regulatory requirements.

**Reduce your carbon footprint:** Hosting in a cloud data centre rather than onsite allows you to take advantage of energy efficient technologies provided by your cloud partner.

**Future-proof your business:** There is unprecedented demand for access to data anywhere, any time and on any device. Don't let your business fall behind.

# Why choose Wanstor?

- ⊕ Recognised as a leader in managed hosting solutions
- ⊕ UK support 24 x 7 x 365 for your critical infrastructure hosted on our premises
- ⊕ Wide range of hosting services and management options
- ⊕ Holistic service experience: hosting and networks
- ⊕ UK accountability and ease of migration give you real control
- ⊕ Self-service IaaS portal experience
- ⊕ Wanstor manage the platform up to the hypervisor
- ⊕ Library of virtual machine templates included Public cloud, Private cloud or Hybrid cloud solutions
- ⊕ Flexible *pay for what you use* billing
- ⊕ PCI DSS certified services Single portal view across your services

## Some of Wanstor's Managed Hosting Customers



# Final Thoughts

This white paper explores critical success factors for IT Managers to consider when moving an application or workload off-premises to a managed hosting service or cloud service provider.

For more information about Wanstor's managed hosting solutions please contact us on **0333 123 0360**, email us at [info@wanstor.com](mailto:info@wanstor.com) or visit us at [www.wanstor.com](http://www.wanstor.com).