

MAY 2019

SHOWCASE INSIDE:  
EYE IN THE SKY

# LPM

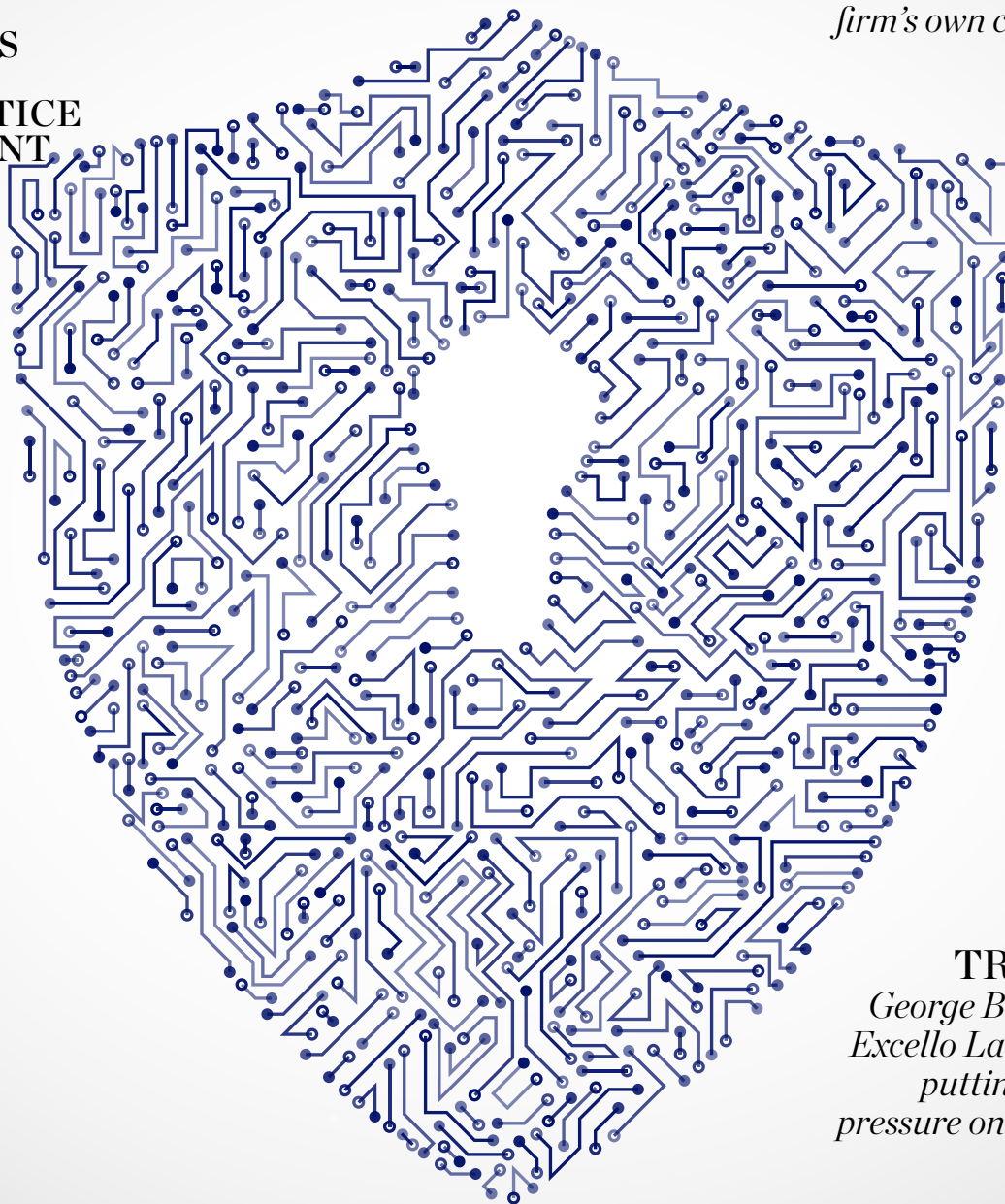
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*It can now be tough to predict costs if 'pay as you go' cloud services are being used. Bills can vary, budgets can increase and planning becomes more difficult. Ask yourselves who is in charge?*



# Cloud sprawl

NICK HAYNE, THE DATA MASTER

While on the surface many businesses remain reticent about adopting cloud services, there are a significant number who will be unaware just how much cloud usage there is within their organisation. Cloud can be invisible, locked up in individual user accounts and never registered on any asset list. In fact, now might be a good time to try to understand your organisation's true cloud usage, unless you have become blinded by cloud sprawl.

Find out who is making the purchase. The ease of purchasing cloud has contributed to increased adoption. Anyone can purchase cloud services – and we're now even witnessing employees buying their own apps (some free), because they believe it'll help them get their jobs done more efficiently. Take Mailchimp, the email sending and tracking software, which many people wouldn't think twice about using and importing contacts to, so they can distribute a company newsletter – but when that individual leaves, does the account leave too?

We often try to manage cloud the same way we managed traditional IT purchases, but the purchasing models are now fundamentally different. CFOs struggle to understand what their IT budget is, given the cloud sprawl within the business can mask the real IT spend. It can now be tough to predict costs if 'pay-as-you-go' cloud services are being used.

Bills can vary, budgets can increase and planning becomes more difficult. Ask yourselves, who is in charge? Who is responsible for cloud services across your business? Who decides what to buy and when? Is it always the IT department? Or does the marketing team buy their own apps? Does HR use its own HR tools, purchased locally?

Previously, it would have been the IT director signing off on budgets with finance. But now, reflecting cloud sprawl, it's typically down to

the finance director. Some businesses develop a joined-up approach to cloud purchases – finance signs off on the business case, IT is notified, and then everyone discusses how the new service will sit alongside current systems and how the cost will fit into the IT budget.

But I believe there are many more organisations that do not benefit from a joined-up approach. These organisations are unaware how rampant cloud is across the business, with any original cost savings expected from a cloud migration, lost owing to the number of new services added each year. Key to solving this is to bring back control. When I considered this topic, I thought about how organisations might better control cloud sprawl, but I'm not convinced they can. As managed IT service providers, we can recommend developing asset registers for cloud services, and standardising the process for purchasing them, but is that realistic in a busy commercial environment? Perhaps we have to accept that cloud will have to fully mature within organisations, before we can hope to start controlling it more thoroughly. In the meantime, some thoughts to ponder:

- Are you overprovisioning cloud services? Many times, out of fear, clients overprovision and end up paying more than they need to.
- How are you managing user logins for cloud services? You should have a central system for keeping track of user logins for the different cloud services used across the firm, just in case a vital employee leaves with that knowledge.
- Do you have a purchase code? In your accounting systems a code to track when cloud services have been purchased will make for easier reporting.

While some may argue this is not sprawl but a new period of enlightenment, I would paraphrase French philosopher Voltaire and remind everyone that, without adequate management of all cloud services, 'with great flexibility, comes great complexity'. **LPM**

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