Category

Digital Transformation

Legacy to Cloud Modernization Playbook (Cloud Migration & Architecture)

A decision framework and execution sequence for migrating legacy applications to the cloud without a "lift and shift regret" bill twelve months later.

- Practitioner
- Advanced
- Template Included

- Mithun A. Sridharan

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Overview

A practical playbook for deciding which legacy systems to rehost, replatform, refactor, or retire — and how to sequence the migration so cost, risk, and downtime stay manageable.

Should we always prefer refactor over rehost since it's "more cloud-native"?

No. Refactoring every application is the single most common way cloud migrations blow their budget. Reserve refactor effort for applications that are both business-critical and currently constrained by their architecture; rehost everything else and revisit later if the economics or performance don't hold up.

How do we handle applications tied to specialized on-premises hardware?

Classify them as Retain with an explicit re-evaluation date, and document the specific constraint (compliance, hardware dependency, vendor contract) driving that decision. Don't let "retain" become a silent default for anything that looks hard.

What's a realistic timeline for a 150-200 application estate?

Assessment and landing zone build typically take 4-6 weeks in parallel. Migration factory execution at a sustainable pace (8-15 applications per wave, monthly) usually takes 12-18 months to clear the full estate, with refactor-track applications running on a separate, longer timeline alongside it.

How do we avoid the classic post-migration cost overrun?

Build cost tagging and a showback dashboard into the landing zone before the first workload moves, and validate actual spend against baseline at the end of every wave — not at the end of the whole program, when it's too late to correct course cheaply.

Do we need a dedicated migration factory team, or can application teams migrate their own systems?

For estates larger than roughly 50 applications, a dedicated factory team with a repeatable runbook is faster and more consistent than distributed application-team-led migrations, which tend to reinvent the process each time and produce inconsistent landing zone usage.

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Author

Mithun A. Sridharan

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