Navigating FedRAMP with ITC

3PAO Readies Agency Enterprise Systems and Applications for Cloud

It's tempting to call a new technology "disruptive", especially when the shiny object's scale and duration can't be measured or even guessed. And mostly, people disagree about what being disruptive means or even whether it's good or bad. Or, of course, to whom it matters.

Presently, cloud computing, itself hardly precisely defined, promises or threatens to be quite disruptive -- in both good and bad senses -- for quite a lot of technology players.

The simplest and yet most inclusive cloud computing concept provides an architecture for defining, scaling, sharing, managing, securing, and charging for resources. Cloud-potential resources include data storage capacity and devices, network components, computing platforms, processing platforms, and software.

While shared IT resources have been offered for decades under different names such as timesharing and client/server, they never matched (or even promised) most potential cloud computing benefits. So the current frontier and challenge is achieving cost-effective "economies of cloud" to complement and replace legacy systems while improving all aspects of employee and customer-facing applications.

But cloud computing isn't a panacea, a simple one-for-all solution for everyone's requirements. Implemented poorly -- without adequate planning, design, implementation, and management -- it can introduce incompatibilities, worsen performance, and create vulnerabilities to data breaches.

And yet the federal government's Cloud First policy mandates that agencies take full advantage of cloud computing benefits to maximize capacity utilization, improve IT flexibility and responsiveness, and minimize cost. Federal agencies reaching for the cloud, therefore, need advice, certainties, and credibility to ensure timely and budgetary success.

To bring order out of the industry-wide clutter of vague cloud definitions and promises, the federal government introduced FedRAMP (Federal Risk Authorization and Management Program), a "government-wide program that provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services".

FedRAMP assessment -- authorization to provide cloud services to government agencies -- includes detailed evaluation of Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) security controls, software source code review, plus exhaustive vulnerability testing of system configurations, networks, databases, and applications.

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Cloud computing, as with most new technology frontiers, suffers a cacophony of voices claiming expertise and making lofty promises. To ensure predictable and reliable contract work, FedRAMP uses Third Party Assessment Organizations (3PAOs) for initial and ongoing assessment of CSPs, documenting their compliance with FedRAMP requirements and ensuring continued compliance.

This process encompasses supporting critical infrastructure cybersecurity. Growth of the Internet of Things and increasingly common "Bring Your Own Device" environments brought recognition that it's not enough to just protect traditional internal information technology resources. Presidential Executive Order 13636, "Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity" directed NIST to work with stakeholders developing a voluntary framework for reducing cyber risks to critical infrastructure.

Ensure FedRAMP Certification with Expertise, Experience, and Discipline

3PAO Information Technology Company, LLC. (ITC) has broad/deep platform experience from desktop to mountaintop -- spanning personal mainframe workstations to the largest enterprise servers -- and understands project requirements from pilot studies and proofs-of-concept to unlimited scalability: ideal for cloud adoption at any pace.

While mainframes have demonstrated a half-century of stability, compatibility, reliability, security, and scalability, cloud computing has a long way to go before matching their attributes. So for any combination of agency in-place platforms and planned cloud implementations, ITC certification brings the best IT attributes to the cloud.

In addition, ITC has a long and unique background of working with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) providing in-depth auditing/certification security experience. This yields a profound understanding of and commitment to security in the federal IT context rather than simply checking boxes on a generic industry template.

It's important to realize that FedRAMP assessment/ certification/participation isn't a point-in-time event. It's similar to cybersecurity in that it's a mindset and ongoing process maintaining compliance as standards advance. For example, governing document NIST Special Publication 800-53, "Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations," has been revised four times since initial release in 2012. Tracking this moving target requires working with a qualified 3PAO to avoid exposures, breaches, and failures.

While a long-term IBM business partner, ITC recognizes that cloud computing is and must be platform neutral. While the mainframe is a powerful potential component of public/private/ hybrid clouds, deep familiarity with the platform enables smooth cooperation with cloud computing or complete cloud migration.

ITC guides CSPs through the disciplined multi-step FedRAMP assessment process, from initial current environment inventory; through full documentation of capabilities, processes, and security; to final and ongoing documentation of satisfied requirements. This leads to a comprehensive, consistent, coordinated, and compelling certification package.

Previously created security assessments or regulatory/industry compliance packages can provide input to the FedRAMP framework, accelerating the assessment/certification process; these can include CMMI (Capability Maturity Model Integration), PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard), HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) security, and many others.

About ITC

Since its formation, Information Technology Company, LLC (ITC) has pioneered the way in solving clients' real world IT issues with quality of service and sound technology. Having been intimately involved with government and commercial large-scale enterprise computing, including IBM mainframe technology, for more than two decades, it's a one-stop provider of data processing system/process design, development, implementation, management, evaluation, and certification. Extensive research and analysis of customer environments ensures the right solutions, satisfying clients by exceeding quality expectations and delivering projects on time and budget. ITC's commitment to continuous IT research and development arena is invaluable and unparalleled. This increased value is the cornerstone of ITC's success in delivering innovative alternatives and solutions to customers.

To learn more about ITC and its services, please contact us at (**800) 994-9441** or **sales@p390.com**.