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New SAP/AWS test program aims to eliminate uncertainty from HANA cloud migrations

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Summary

Although no enterprise will be forced to migrate its core enterprise applications to the cloud, enterprises are on the cusp of facing the fork in the road that leads to the cloud. The release of a jointly developed cloud-migration test program from SAP and AWS (Amazon Web Services) will help enterprises address the uncertainty that they will face in estimating the actual time and cost of a migration of HANA to the AWS cloud.

Reducing the uncertainty of cloud ERP migration

One of the least favorite words in IT is "migration," and the last thing that IT wants to migrate is enterprise applications. It is not surprising that the brunt of innovation in recent years has focused on use cases and applications that pick up where enterprise applications leave off – namely, in domains such as analytics, customer engagement, and risk and fraud mitigation/prevention that add tangible value or remove tangible threats.

For many enterprises, the last time they did anything major to their back-end transaction systems was during the run-up to Y2K; since then, unsurprisingly, the prevailing attitude has been, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." As we noted, enterprises are not necessarily in a blind march to the cloud. But many are beginning to flesh out where the cloud fits in with their IT strategies and how it meshes with relevant internal policies and external mandates about the stewardship of data. While ERP systems might not necessarily have the same extreme need for elasticity as live operational database applications or analytics, the commodity scale-out storage of the cloud provides new, more economical approaches to mandatory housekeeping functions such as disaster recovery. And as workhorse ERP systems age out – SAP for now has stated that Business Suite support on any database other than HANA will last through 2025 – many are facing generational changes last faced during the run-up to Y2K.

That's the context for SAP to smooth the path to the cloud. It has jointly developed with AWS a new program branded "Fast Amazon SAP Transformation" (with the marketing-friendly acronym "FAST") for testing migrations. With FAST, SAP and AWS are offering a testing suite that could help customers quantify the costs, risks, and time for migrating SAP ERP applications to the Amazon cloud. Specifically, the program covers migration of SAP applications from any SAP application-supported database to SAP Business Suite, SAP Business Warehouse, SAP S/4HANA, or SAP BW/4HANA running on the HANA (or Sybase ASE) database in the Amazon cloud.

FAST involves a four-step process. First, a customer runs the SAP Database Migration Option (DMO) with System Move of the SUM (Software Update Manager) tool for extracting and converting source data to the HANA format and packaging this export into flat files, which are then sent to AWS over a secure VPN connection, or for larger systems, using a secure disk transfer mechanism such as AWS Snowball. Then, the customer runs AWS Quick Start templates for SAP in AWS to build the target environment and finish migrating the application to run on AWS. From there, customers can test how their SAP solution behaves while running on HANA. SAP and AWS have tested this process with an early set of customers and report that results for some came in under 48 hours with starting costs below $1,000.

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This program is a useful addition to the published best practices and cookbooks that providers like SAP and Oracle already publish. There is hardly a lack of ERP rollout testing consulting services already available, ranging from offerings from third parties such as Cigniti to those delivered by Oracle Consulting. The advantage of the FAST program is that it was jointly developed by SAP and AWS as a fit-for-purpose offering for migrating SAP applications to HANA (or Sybase ASE) in the Amazon cloud. While FAST won't likely replace more in-depth consulting services, it should provide an 80/20 solution that should allow enterprises seeking to move their SAP applications to HANA and AWS to eliminate unknowns; identify and double down on trouble areas; and most importantly get some idea of the time and costs for such migrations.

Appendix

Further reading

"SAP on Google Cloud? Seize the moment," IT0014-003260 (April 2017)

"Amazon's Whole Foods Market acquisition raises the stakes in retail disruption," ME0002-000780 (June 2017)

SWOT Assessment: AWS, IT0022-000940 (May 2017)

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We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum’s consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum’s consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at consulting@ovum.com.

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