11 TIPS *for* MICROSOFT AZURE VIRTUAL DESKTOP DEPLOYMENT

Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop
Deployment Guide

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11 Tips for Microsoft Azure
Virtual Desktop Deployment

Today's organizations know how vital it is to support innovation, antifragility, and flexibility. However, with challenges like legacy infrastructure, security risks, hybrid and remote work, and compliance regulations, it can be challenging to balance everything while continuing to thrive despite disruption and change.

Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) has revolutionized how businesses operate by allowing users to work from anywhere in a secure and optimized virtual desktop environment. From enabling organizations to move to the cloud to offering scalability and flexibility, AVD provides businesses with capabilities that can help them overcome roadblocks and embrace modern work environments. However, while the solution offers powerful benefits, ensuring a seamless deployment of AVD requires careful planning, execution, and ongoing support—especially in today's continuously evolving business landscape.

As the modern workspace continues to evolve, here are 11 tips to ensure the success of your Azure Virtual Desktop project and maximize your results.

Set Clear Business Objectives

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Clear objectives are crucial to a successful deployment, as they provide a sense of purpose, define a basis for measuring progress, and empower your leaders to mitigate risks and manage change.

Understanding your business objectives involves more than just setting goals. It requires you to consider the specific use cases that Azure Virtual Desktop will address in your organization. From remote work and **BYOD policies** to reducing IT management costs and enhancing security, it's crucial to align these objectives with your organization's strategic goals and ensure stakeholder buy-in.

Of course, the main objective of an AVD deployment is unique to your business. However, some of the common reasons we see organizations move to AVD include the following:

→ Updating on-premises VDI that is outdated or reaching its end of life

→ Facilitating secure remote work

→ Ensuring data is protected to meet compliance requirements

→ Improving IT management

Define your objectives. Start by answering the who, what, when, where, why, and how. These questions will help you clearly identify your goals, as you can see in this example:

Who

The IT department of XYZ Corporation, in collaboration with key stakeholders across multiple business units such as sales, operations, and finance, is leading this project. The users of this system will be employees of XYZ Corporation.

What

The main objective is implementing AVD across the organization to facilitate remote work and improve IT management. The project includes migrating desktop applications to the Azure platform, ensuring the compatibility and security of these applications, and training staff to use the new system.

When

The project is planned to start in July 2023, with a pilot phase involving selected users from each department commencing in September 2023. Full implementation and rollout to the entire organization are expected by the end of Q1 2024.

Where

The project will be carried out by the IT department at the corporate headquarters of XYZ Corporation. However, given the nature of AVD, the result will enable employees to securely access their work desktops from anywhere with internet access.
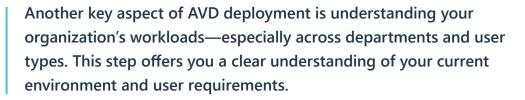
Why

The primary motivation for this project is to facilitate secure remote-work options for employees, which is increasingly important given recent shifts in workplace dynamics. Additionally, the project aims to simplify IT management, improve company data security, and enable the scalability and flexibility of IT resources.

How

The project will be completed in several phases. The first phase will involve in-depth planning and a detailed feasibility study. The subsequent phases will include testing and pilot implementation, user training, and full deployment. The project team will leverage Azure's tools and support external consultants as needed throughout the process. The project management team will hold regular meetings, briefings, and updates to keep everyone on the same page.

As you define these characteristics, your organization's unique needs and objectives will become clear, enabling you to successfully manage your AVD deployment from the beginning.

Inventory Workloads and User Types

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Another key aspect of AVD deployment is understanding your organization's workloads—especially across departments and user types. This step offers you a clear understanding of your current environment and user requirements.

When it comes to cataloging workloads, it isn't just about listing the applications and processes your business uses: It's also about understanding users, how workloads interact, infrastructure resource needs, application dependencies, and compatibility with a virtual environment. Tools like Microsoft Assessment and Planning Toolkit (MAP), Azure Migrate, and Lansweeper can help automate this process, providing detailed reports on hardware, software, and infrastructure configurations.

At ProArch, we thoroughly analyze an organization's existing environment and create an infrastructure profile, along with user types that align workloads to applications. This allows for proper design and architecture of the environment and a more accurate projection of cloud spending.

Use Tools like Nerdio and Rimo3 for Automation

WEBINAR ON-DEMAND:
Why CIOs are adopting AVD

> Automation capabilities help streamline the deployment process and control costs. Nerdio accelerates AVD deployment by automating the management of the virtual desktop environments in Azure. The tool automatically creates the necessary network connections, images, and provisioning for an AVD configuration, providing a unified platform for managing users, applications, and desktops.

With Nerdio, organizations can maximize the use of cost-saving features, a simplified user experience, application support, and VDI system management. With AVD, organizations pay for all aspects of maintenance: storage, memory, computing, and more. Nerdio ensures that they get the most use out of these native capabilities they can.

> In addition to Nerdio, Rimo3 modernizes desktop applications and streamlines application-management processes.

Rimo3 facilitates a faster process for moving clients to modern MSIX app packages, application testing, the validation of Windows and security updates, and impact results. When combined with Nerdio, this empowers organizations and their clients to automatically export applications to the AVD environment through native integration.

Plan for Security and Compliance

All organizations must consider security and compliance while implementing AVD—or any other technology—to protect their business. When it comes to Azure Virtual Desktop, planning for security and compliance involves understanding the specific regulations that apply to your industry and ensuring that your deployment complies with these rules. This can involve implementing specific security controls, data-handling procedures, and audit processes.

ProArch's **Managed Detection and Response (MDR) Services** can provide additional protection by continuously monitoring for threats and providing timely alerts. If you are unhappy with your current security or feel it is not up to par, a migration to the cloud is the perfect time to implement new measures to help you secure and protect your users' data.

Perform a Proof of Concept (PoC)

> **A proof of concept is essential to implementing Azure Virtual Desktop, as it allows organizations to validate the feasibility, functionality, and benefits of AVD before committing to the full-scale deployment.**

To carry out a PoC, select a subset of users and workloads and test them in the AVD environment. Collect feedback from these users and monitor the performance of the workloads during the PoC before full deployment. This data will provide valuable insights into potential issues and help validate your deployment strategy. Similarly, don't forget to have a rollback plan in place: This plan is crucial in case of unforeseen issues.

Execute the AVD Migration in Phases

A phased approach to AVD deployment provides a structured and manageable way to not only implement the solution but also mitigate risk, enhance adoption, optimize resource allocation, and deliver value to your organization.

Adopting a phased approach means breaking down the implementation process into digestible stages. This can help minimize disruption and address any issues before moving on to the next stage. Each phase should have clear objectives, a defined scope, and success criteria. For example, ProArch uses the following waves, usually including an additional four or more stages depending on an organization's goals.

WAVE 1
Rallying the Champions

WAVE 2
Engaging a Nimble Department

WAVE 3
Scaling Up to Larger Departments for App Users

WAVE 4
Embracing Mass Adoption

In addition to these waves, regular reviews should be conducted at the end of each phase to evaluate performance and make any necessary adjustments. ProArch's approach includes planning, pilot testing, implementation, and managed services, providing a structured framework for this process.

Wave 1 | Rallying the Champions

The first wave in our AVD migration journey involves rallying the champions. These individuals are typically early adopters and tech-savvy team members who are enthusiastic about embracing new technologies. They can help provide valuable firsthand feedback and troubleshoot initial issues that may arise during the migration.

Moreover, these champions play a crucial role in fostering a positive perception of the migration process within the organization. Their experiences and insights can be used to create training materials and inform the project team of best practices for subsequent migration phases.

Wave 2 | Engaging a Nimble Department

For the second wave, the focus shifts to a smaller-scope department—ideally, one that can handle changes efficiently and provide constructive feedback. This could be a team that is already somewhat technologically inclined or one that is small enough to manage effectively during this transition.

The intention here is to take the lessons learned from the champions and apply them on a slightly larger scale while still maintaining a manageable scope. The feedback from this wave is critical in refining the migration strategy before it is rolled out to larger departments.

Wave 3 | Scaling Up to Larger Departments or Application Users

The third wave is where the migration begins to scale up. At this stage, the project team applies a refined strategy to a larger department or group of application users. This phase tests the migration process at a larger scale and allows the team to identify and address any new challenges that might arise when dealing with a more extensive user base.

Again, feedback is crucial in this phase, so don't forget to poll your migration users. The more comprehensive insights gathered can guide the final adjustments to the migration strategy, setting the stage for the final wave: mass adoption.

Wave 4 | Embracing Mass Adoption

The fourth and final wave marks the beginning of mass adoption. At this stage, the migration strategy has been tested and refined through the previous waves. Now, it's time to roll out AVD across the rest of the organization.

This phase requires careful planning and coordination, as well as comprehensive training and support to ensure all users can make the transition smoothly. Remember, the goal is not only to implement AVD but also to ensure that all users are comfortable with the new system and can use it to its full potential.

Prepare for Cloud Spend

Managing costs is a critical aspect of any cloud deployment, and understanding the pricing model of Azure Virtual Desktop and how to optimize costs is crucial. For instance, you can choose different virtual machine (VM) sizes based on workload requirements or use Nerdio's autoscaling feature to adjust resources based on usage. Moreover, Azure cost management and billing tools can help you monitor and control your cloud spending.

Here are five quick tips that can help you with cost savings.

1. **Use reserved instances:** Reservations can save you up to **72 percent** on top of savings from optimizing VMs and OS disks.

2. **Utilize just-in-time provisioning:** Remove VMs that are not in use and add them when they are needed to cut down on extra costs.

3. **Leverage the power-off button:** Turn off VMs when you're not in peak hours to avoid useless spending.

4. **Optimize storage:** Use high-performing, premium disks when VMs are in use, but switch to standard disks when VMs are powered off.

5. **Employ multisession hosts:** Many-to-one VMs allow for a highly cost-effective and efficient solution.

With these suggestions, you can optimize your cloud costs and ensure your investments are aligned with your budget and business objectives.

Keep Your Sights Set on the User Experience

At the end of the day, the success of your Azure Virtual Desktop deployment depends on the end-user experience. It's essential to ensure users can access their virtual desktops and applications seamlessly from any device and location. The truth is if the performance is less than their existing environment, the value of the migration will not be realized.

That is why the proof of concept is so important: You want issues that impact the user experience to be addressed before full implementation. Additionally, Microsoft recommends using **FSLogix profile containers** as a user-profile solution for AZD. FSLogix is designed to roam profiles in remote computing environments, providing a fast and reliable user experience. With these tools, you can help ensure that your end users are realizing the full benefits of your investments.

Align with Best Practices

While your processes will vary based on your current infrastructure, goals, and needs, you don't need to reinvent the wheel. Tried-and-true best practices can help you ensure a smooth and successful implementation that offers scalability, optimized performance, and stability. For example, **Microsoft** suggests several guidelines to ensure your Azure Virtual Desktop environment follows best practices. Make sure you follow the best practices in the **Azure Well-Architected Framework.**

These best practices will also vary depending on the size of your deployment. If this is an enterprise or more extensive deployment, for example, consider using **Landing Zones.** Similarly, many organizations will want to consider **business continuity and disaster recovery** for their virtual desktop environment. Cloud services, while highly resilient, are not without their own outages, and leaving end users with no access leads to lost revenue and unhappy customers for businesses.

Leverage
DaaS Services
to Fast-Track
Your Project

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Desktop as a Service (DaaS) services can help streamline your AVD project, offering preconfigured virtual desktop environments that can be quickly deployed. Similarly, DaaS services provide the scalability and flexibility organizations need to accommodate fluctuating workloads and align with budgetary needs.

ProArch's phased approach to implementing AVD or Windows 365 as part of **Desktop as a Service** includes planning, testing, deployment, and ongoing management and can be tailored to your organization's specific needs. Regular meetings and progress updates can ensure a smooth transition and allow adjustments throughout the process. With DaaS services, teams can accelerate their project timeline and focus on project deliverables and change management rather than infrastructure management.

Maximize Value with ProArch

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Whether you're looking to deploy a single-region use of Azure Virtual Desktop, use Windows 365 for a small set of your users, or migrate your global enterprise workforce to a multiregional AVD deployment, ProArch has decades of VDI experience and has done the work. We are a Microsoft Infrastructure solution partner and have passed the rigorous Microsoft audit for Microsoft AVD specialization. We have access to Microsoft funding through its various programs, such as **AMMP (Azure Migration and Modernization Program)**, and can work with your Microsoft representative to maximize funding.

Implementing Azure Virtual Desktop is a substantial organizational change that requires strategic planning, efficient management, and continuous monitoring. You don't have to do it alone:

| **ProArch can help.**

The key to a successful deployment isn't just technology and planning: It involves comprehensive management and ongoing support. By leveraging these tips and the expertise of a trusted partner like ProArch, you can make the most out of your **Azure Virtual Desktop** deployment and unlock new levels of efficiency and flexibility for your organization.