

How public does your IoT implementation really need to be?

Deploy your Internet of Things (IoT) solution like you would your cloud solution: private, public and even hybrid, says Netshield.

Technologies deployed in a private environment can add as much value but cost less to run as they would in a public domain, says Inus Dreckmeyr, CEO of Netshield, a Westcon-Comstor company.

Although business leaders take time to strategise around whether their cloud solution should be public, private or hybrid, they often blindly assume their IoT solution should be public, he says.

“Companies fall for the hype that everything should be connected to the Internet immediately to deliver business value. But that is simply not true,” Dreckmeyr says.

He cites the example of meteorological sensors deployed by weather bureaux that offer online weather forecasts. The actual sensors that are dotted around the countryside do not have to be connected to the Internet to deliver the online forecasts, he says. “The sensors do, however, have to connect to a centralised hub that collects, categorises, processes and distributes the consolidated data from many sensors to the Internet.”

In much the same way, he says, companies do not have to connect every individual sensor to the Internet, but can, instead, connect them to a local hub that collates the data into a usable stream.

“The IoT hype says everything should be accessing or reporting to the Internet. But in a police station, for instance, it would be in contravention of regulations to connect every sensor to the Internet.”

If, for instance, all service firearms had a passive sensor that pinged a reader and “told” the station commander which firearms were in the station, this would not be information that SAPS could legally put into the cloud. However, the station commander could still have a dashboard on her PC to track where service pistols were inside the building, Dreckmeyr says.

He cautions against deploying IoT for the sake of IoT, and says technologists and management teams should go back to the basics of how to deploy any technology: “Think about what is needed to solve a particular problem, and implement the solution in a cost-effective manner. If it makes sense to connect sensors, go ahead. But don’t allow the IoT equivalent of scope-creep to scupper what could be a solution that solves a real-world business problem.”