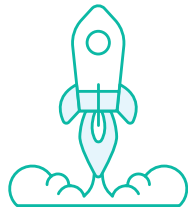


# Choosing a Cloud-Based Demo & PoC Solution

Custom product demos and Proofs of Concept that mirror real-world application environments are the best way to showcase your products, and the cloud is the ideal way to deliver them. Choosing a cloud-based demo solution can be a challenge.





## Why choose cloud-based demos and PoCs?

Cloud-based product demos and Proofs of Concept (PoCs) let you provision and customize even the most complex demo environments and make them accessible from anywhere. But building them requires resources and infrastructure many sales teams don't have, slowing sales cycles and impacting revenues.

Letting prospective customers test drive your products when and where it's convenient for them accelerates sales opportunities and builds strong relationships, and PoCs that mirror customer environments can close sales. However, the pandemic has put a halt to most in-person demos and PoCs, forcing companies to look at how to conduct them virtually.

Your sales teams know how hard it can be to quickly put together a custom demo for a sales opportunity, especially for complex applications or comprehensive suites of products. To be effective, demos and PoCs need to match real-world scenarios, which can be difficult if applications require complicated networking configurations or multiple virtual machines (VMs) due to solution dependencies.

Hardware-based demos carry cost and resource burdens and make it harder for customers to try your products as soon as they are ready. Shared hardware demos can perform poorly, contain extraneous data, and be out of sync with current production environments. The resulting unpredictable demo experiences lead to missed opportunities to promote value propositions, longer sales cycles — and worse, lost deals.

Using a cloud-based solution means you can deliver high-performance hands-on demos that are easy to set up, administer, and customize without needing IT support. Sales teams and customers can access production-equivalent hands-on product experiences from anywhere without impacting production systems. And, the cloud provides scalable capacity to support sales teams of any size that may be running anywhere from tens to thousands of concurrent demos.

## Improving complex demos and PoCs with Course Manager

OpenText, a provider of Enterprise Content Management software for the world's largest companies, needed to improve the delivery of its complex software demos and PoCs. More than 300 sales consultants relied on laptops and in-person meetings for demos, and as the company added suites of products, the simultaneous use of multiple products on multiple machines created performance problems during demos.

Sales consultants also struggled with quickly addressing customer questions and providing follow-up demos or PoCs without traveling back to the customer's site. Demos were provided on DVDs, which quickly became outdated and didn't accurately represent current offerings.

Using Course Manager by Skytap, sales consultants can quickly spin up demos and PoCs with self-service access to virtual IT environments, showcasing the latest solutions, immediately resolving customer concerns, and giving customers hands-on experience. OpenText has shortened sales cycles and increased new business.

Read the full  
[OpenText](#)  
case study.





## Challenges of demos and PoCs in the cloud

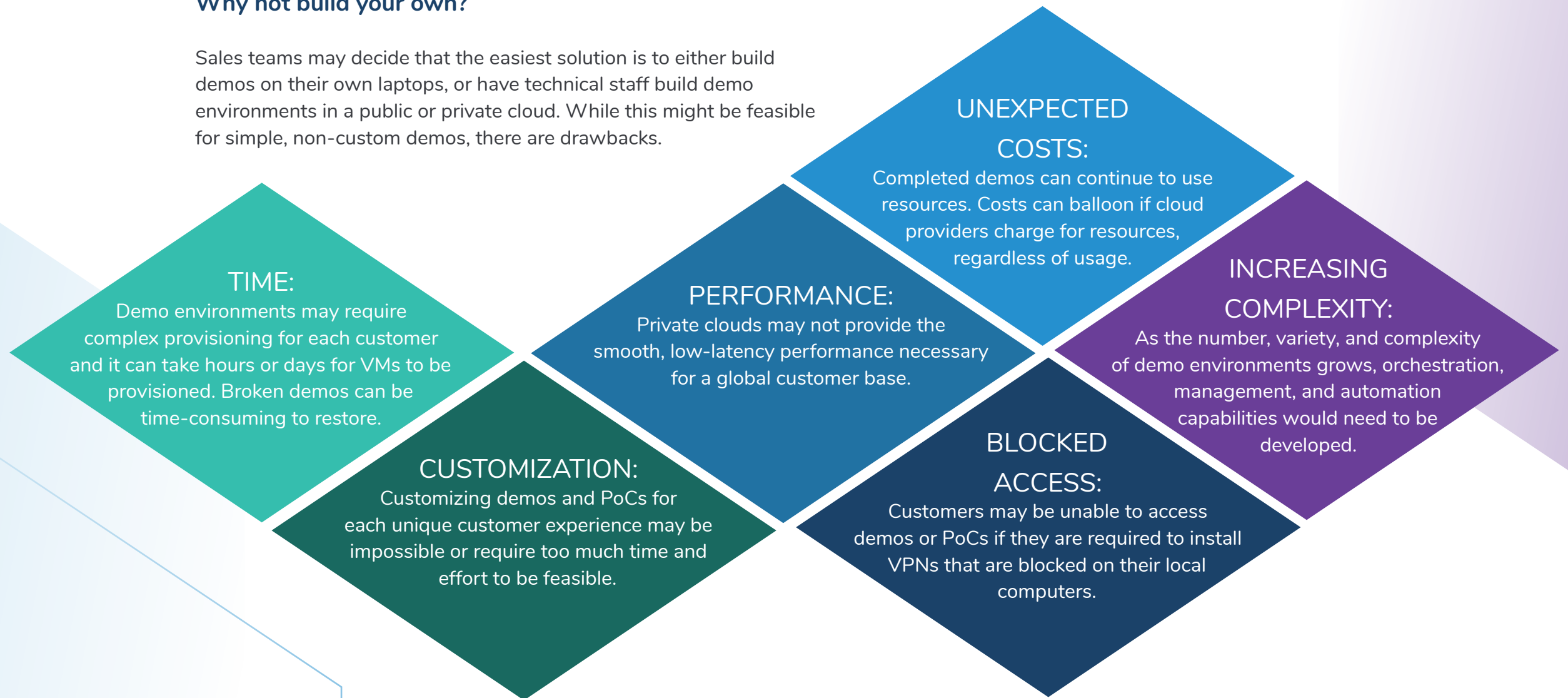
For simple, non-custom demo environments, there are several choices for setting up cloud-based demos from solution or cloud providers. However, customization and complex environments can require significant time and expertise with some cloud solutions, and the resulting demos can be difficult to use.

Areas that can increase complexity are:

- » Demo environments with two or more VMs due to solution dependencies and prerequisites
- » Multiple network configurations such as connections to external or on-premises resources through private network connections or VPNs
- » Applications that change often or have frequent updates
- » Broad portfolios of product offerings that require orchestration of multiple demo environments
- » Traditional data center-based applications running on AIX, IBM i, or Linux on IBM Power Systems
- » Global users that require low latency for optimal demo performance
- » Fluctuations in demand from one to many concurrent demos
- » Integration with existing customer relationship management (CRM) systems such as Salesforce

## Why not build your own?

Sales teams may decide that the easiest solution is to either build demos on their own laptops, or have technical staff build demo environments in a public or private cloud. While this might be feasible for simple, non-custom demos, there are drawbacks.



## Choosing a cloud-based demo and PoC solution



If your organization needs to deliver custom demos and PoCs on a global scale for frequently changing, complex applications or extensive product portfolios, there are several factors to consider when choosing a cloud-based demo solution provider:

### **Speed and ease of use**

Demos should be simple to build, use, and retire and be available within minutes. Demo environments should replicate production application environments and be in sync with releases and updates.

### **Orchestration and integration**

Every demo should be ready when needed and shut down when not, and integrate with existing CRMs. The solution should support single sign-on (SSO) integration to streamline and automate user account provisioning.

### **Customization**

The solution should allow each demo to be created from a known, clean state and tailored to the customer's specific use case for maximum impact.

### **Self-service**

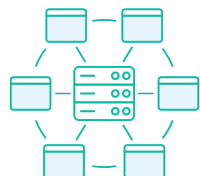
Sales people should be able to easily set up demos that customers can access on-demand at their convenience.

### **Scalability and cost-effectiveness**

The solution should offer flexible capacity, pay-as-you-go pricing, and access from anywhere. Unused demos should be automatically suspended or deleted to limit spending.

### **Performance and global reach**

Demos should be quick to start up and provide a smooth, responsive experience without latency or dropped connections. The solution should offer multiple global regions that can provide low-latency connectivity for all users, wherever their location.



## Skytap: the ideal choice for cloud-based demos and PoCs

Skytap is the ideal platform for building, hosting and delivering cloud-based demos and PoCs. Each Skytap environment is a software-defined data center (SDDC) that contains everything an application needs to run, including infrastructure, OS, memory state, storage, compute, middleware, and complex Layer 2 and Layer 3 networking.

Skytap is unique in its support for both x86 workloads and AIX, IBM i, and Linux on IBM Power Systems. This allows companies to support complex application configurations and more closely simulate real-world customer experiences rather than sample scenarios that may not mirror actual production environments.

**Course Manager** is a Skytap subscription add-on that enables global end-to-end demo and PoC delivery, orchestration, and management at cloud scale and without burdening IT.

## Skytap enables thousands of demos for extensive sales and partner ecosystem

A security software company with hundreds of sales engineers and an extensive ecosystem of global partners needed to replace a legacy demo and training system with one that could accommodate varying skill sets. The solution needed to provide rapid, real-time provisioning, ease of use, global access with high performance, automatic suspension or shutdown of environments to manage costs, and the ability to tie demo activity to revenue opportunities, all with minimal administration and support.

The company selected Skytap with the Course Manager add-on and was able to service over 8,400 environment requests for more than 1,200 users within the first six months. After nearly two years, almost 30,000 labs had been launched by nearly 3,000 users.

Administrators can create demo environments and virtual hands-on training labs in just minutes and save them as templates that sales engineers and partners use to instantly self-provision demos and labs. Internal sales engineers log in using SSO, while partners enjoy customized landing pages, and Salesforce integration tracks the impact of demos on sales opportunities. Administrators set retention rules to automatically suspend or delete completed environments to optimize capacity and limit spending.

Course Manager orchestrates the company's extensive portfolio of demo and lab environments, and provides administrators with full visibility and control over user access, resource consumption, and automation of provisioning and lifecycle management.

The small administrative and support team can now easily manage the thousands of demos and labs used by the global ecosystem of sales engineers and partners, who in turn have gained much better performance from demos and labs hosted in the global region nearest them, leading to notably better user experiences.



## Benefits of Skytap



### Simple demo environment creation

Build even the most complex demo images, with as many VMs and as much storage, RAM, computing power, and networking you need, without burdening IT. Save images as templates to provision demos and PoCs, and import existing demo images to accelerate migration. Create new or updated images immediately after new product releases or updates to keep demos and PoCs current.

### Fast, easy provisioning

Create and provision demos and PoCs from templates in minutes. Create as many exact replicas as needed with a single click. Customers and salespeople can quickly reprovision environments if they break during use.

### Cost-effective and scalable

With no more infrastructure and equipment costs, you only pay for capacity you actually use with Skytap's pay-as-you-go model, while flexible cloud capacity lets you provide as many concurrent demos as you need. Set retention rules to suspend or delete unused demo environments to automatically limit spending, and track usage and insight into the business value of virtual demo investments with robust reporting.

### Tailored user experiences

Easily customize demos and PoCs to replicate customers' real-world uses for the most impactful experience. The demo portal can be customized with your organization's branding and flexible request workflows, while integration with existing sales tools provides a seamless experience for sales teams.

### Global footprint for high performance

Skytap is 100% cloud-based with multiple global regions to ensure that all demos and PoCs perform flawlessly regardless of where administrators or customers are located. Copies of demos and PoCs are hosted on the region nearest the customer's location, reducing latency and delivering positive, productive experiences.

### Integrated orchestration

Skytap's REST APIs and native Salesforce support assure integration into existing CRM systems to link demos and PoCs to sales opportunities and SSO support eliminates login management for large teams. Course Manager orchestrates environments to ensure they are available when needed and suspended or deleted when not in use.

# About Skytap

Skytap is a cloud service purpose-built to natively run traditional systems in the cloud. Our customers use Skytap for running production, disaster recovery, virtual training labs, and development workloads. We are the only cloud service to support AIX, IBM i, and Linux on IBM Power together with x86 workloads, enabling businesses to accelerate their journey to the cloud and increase innovation. To learn more about Skytap or schedule a demo, visit [www.skytap.com](http://www.skytap.com)

## Additional Resources

[Course Manager for Demos and PoCs datasheet](#)

[Get Out of the Data Center and Into the Cloud solution brief](#)

Course Manager  
provides powerful  
virtual hands-on labs  
for technical software  
training, too.

Learn more [here](#).

