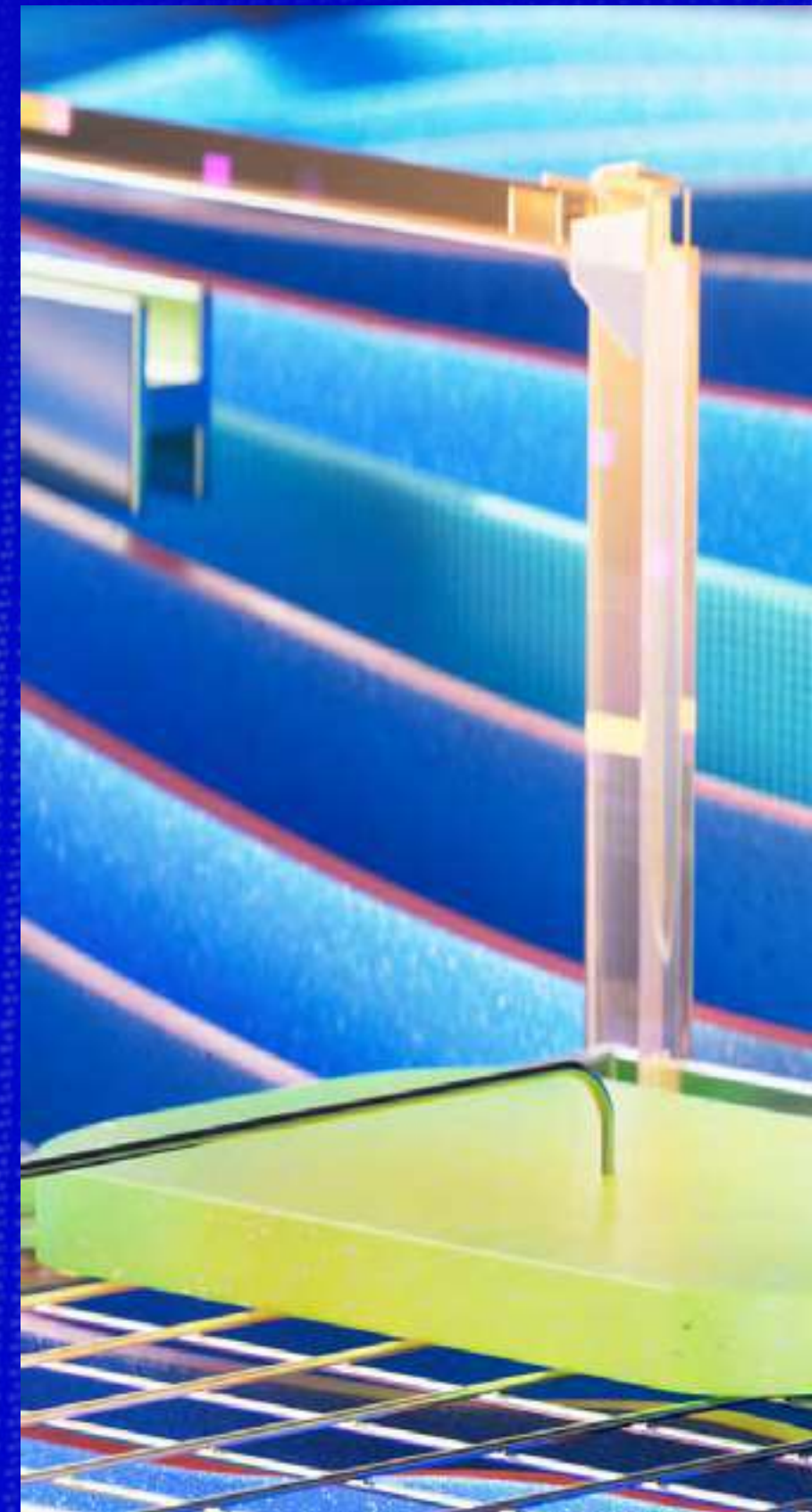


Cloud Modernisation for Growing Businesses

Reduce costs, simplify IT and prepare for AI



Contents

Abstract geometric shapes in light blue and white, including a large cube, a smaller cube, and a hexagonal prism, set against a dark blue background.

03

Why modernisation matters now

04

Modernise what matters most

05

Simplify IT with a modern infrastructure

06

Reduce database costs and prepare for AI

07

Build your way and get to market faster

08

Power your growth with connected data

09

Strengthen security and simplify compliance

11

Migrate, modernise and move on your terms

13

Next steps

Why modernisation matters now



Growing businesses are moving beyond AI experimentation and focusing on practical use cases that deliver competitive advantage today. Many are using AI assistants and agents to improve productivity, support customer service and help employees find information faster.

New opportunities are emerging all the time, but expanding beyond the isolated use case often depends on having the right foundation in place. Too often, ageing infrastructure, disconnected applications, siloed data and time-consuming manual processes make it harder to scale AI projects. Security concerns can create additional barriers. Modernisation helps address these challenges by creating a stronger foundation for AI and future growth.

AI needs clean data, connected systems and reliable infrastructure to deliver the most useful results. For growing businesses, modernisation is the path to reducing technical debt and improving operational efficiency.

Bringing data together across systems is a prerequisite to making better decisions, automating routine work and creating AI solutions that address specific business needs.

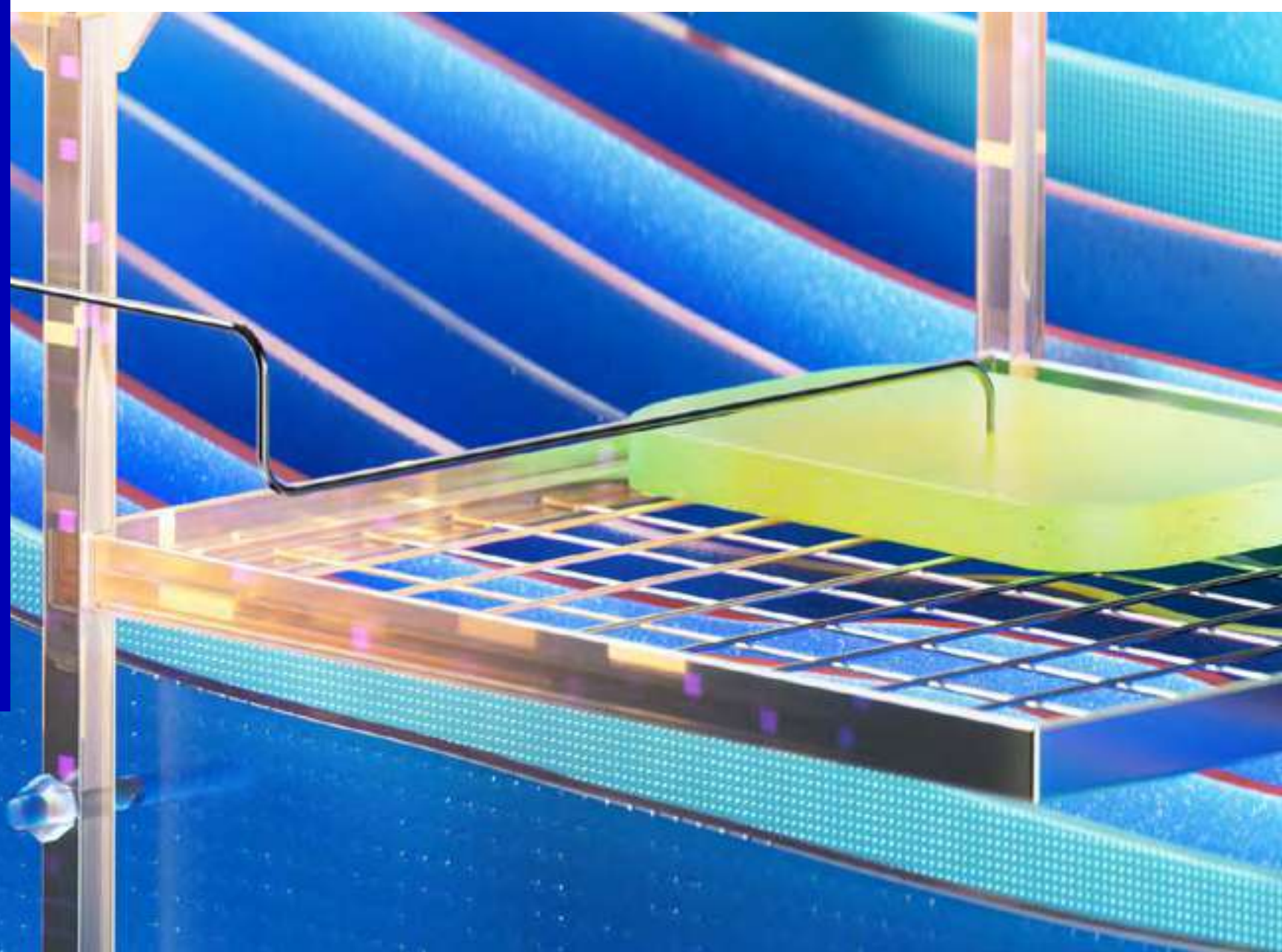
You can start by moving legacy infrastructure, applications and data to Azure. It's the first step toward better reporting, AI that solves specific problems and a stronger foundation for future growth. As you modernise, fully managed services can take on more of the routine work involved in running databases and applications. Azure provides built-in security along with the performance, scalability and AI capabilities needed to support growing workloads.

Modernisation no longer requires the level of time, effort and specialised expertise it once did. AI-assisted assessment and migration tools can help identify dependencies, evaluate workloads and automate parts of the modernisation process, making it easier for lean IT teams to move forward with confidence. Azure helps connect these efforts through a trusted, scalable platform.

What you'll get from this guide

Practical guidance to modernise efficiently and create a data foundation for business growth.

- ✓ Retire technical debt and optimise costs on Azure.
- ✓ Apply proven approaches to cloud migration and workload modernisation.
- ✓ Strengthen security and simplify management for hybrid and multicloud environments.
- ✓ Find tools, services and experts to help you move forward.



Modernise what matters most

Businesses already on the modernisation path report stronger growth and measurably better efficiency. The path often starts with the infrastructure, applications and databases that support day-to-day operations.ⁱ As these systems become easier to manage, your business can spend less time maintaining technology and more time supporting growth. You can pivot as needs change, building AI when you're ready on a secure and connected foundation.

You continue to build value from the long-term investment in creating a secure, reliable foundation that grows with your business. The shift ripples out to your operations, culture and business models as reactive processes, rigid systems and strapped resources become proactive measures, agile systems and financial efficiency.

Modernisation outcomes for small and medium businessesⁱⁱ

21%
more profit

26%
faster growth

Ways to save as you modernise

- ✓ Make costs transparent with free recommendations for your Azure usage from Microsoft Cost Management that help you analyse usage patterns and forecast expenses.
- ✓ Review solutions from Azure Hybrid Benefit that can apply different Azure rights to your on-premises SQL Server, Windows Server and Linux licences for reduced rates.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ✓ Make spending predictable by reserving Azure capacity in advance – typically one or three years – in return for significant discounts.^{iv}
- ✓ Consider flexible [Azure savings plans](#) to help reduce compute and database costs for select services.
- ✓ Right-size workloads with autoscaling compute, storage and networking resources. Azure Advisor can identify opportunities to improve utilisation and reduce costs.



Simplify IT with a modern infrastructure

The simple, fast approach to modernisation moves ready workloads from on-premises infrastructure to the cloud. Just doing this can reduce datacentre costs and boost availability with minimal effort. Many businesses begin by migrating Windows Server, SQL Server, Linux and VMware-based workloads to Azure Virtual Machines or Azure VMware Solution before modernising additional services over time.

With this move, you can leave behind many of the challenges that come with ageing infrastructure and disconnected systems while reducing day-to-day operational demands. You can spend less time managing hardware and patches and more time serving customers and growing your business. Instead of investing in excess capacity, you can pay only for the resources you use. Coupled with more effective security management, modernisation can lower your infrastructure’s total cost of ownership, with an average return on investment within three years of 344%.^v

Azure maximises business agility^{vi}

78%
faster time to respond to
and execute business changes

43%
faster time to build and
deploy new features

69%
more time back to focus
on innovation



Quick win: Consider [Frontier Accelerate for Azure](#) to reduce cloud migration costs, speed up deployment and modernise infrastructure with expert support and funding.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Clockworks Analytics modernises its data platform for AI and growth

With 40% annual growth, Clockworks Analytics needed the database scalability and flexibility of Azure SQL Database Hyperscale to keep pace and accelerate analytics.

92% reduction
in scaling and start-up time

40% more
analytics processed

“With Microsoft, we can scale up, scale down, switch technologies and migrate from one technology to another. Microsoft continues to build new services and features that solve problems. It’s an important collaboration for our mission.”

Nicholas Gayeski
Co-founder and Co-CEO, Clockworks Analytics

[Read the full story](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE

DATABASES

Reduce database costs and prepare for AI

For growing businesses with limited IT resources, everyday database decisions become part of the cost of moving the business forward. Most businesses don't think about their databases until something slows down or breaks. If you run a mix – maybe SQL Server for core workloads, and PostgreSQL, MySQL or NoSQL for web and customer-facing apps – you're patching, running backups, monitoring, troubleshooting and securing access control for each one to keep systems healthy and secure.

Moving to fully managed databases makes it easier to modernise apps with fewer code changes. It's one of the most cost-effective ways to modernise legacy workloads and make it easier to add AI features like natural language search as your needs change. Azure supports the databases you already run with AI-enabled, fully managed services for open-source, NoSQL, SQL and other workloads. With built-in AI capabilities, you can prepare your data so employees can find answers faster, run better reports and use AI tools that actually understand your business.

UP TO

60%

fewer administrator hours and 55% better application performance with managed databases.^{vii}

58%

lower TCO and 65% performance improvement with managed PostgreSQL vs. on-premises deployments.^{viii}



Quick win: Help reduce infrastructure overhead while preparing for AI by moving SQL Server workloads to Azure, a step that can help improve performance and lower costs.^{ix}

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Multitude expands financial cloud platform

The new cloud-native architecture on Azure creates an AI-ready foundation that standardises operations, strengthens compliance and cuts maintenance work in half.

25% faster
data processing

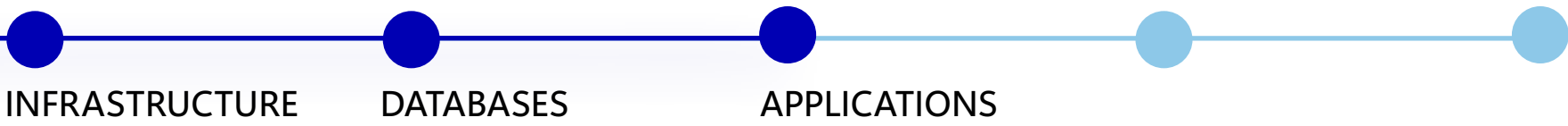
75% fewer
production incidents

"Azure gave us the security and compliance maturity we needed. It lets us grow faster without taking on new operational risks."

Kornel Kabele
Chief Technology Officer, Multitude

[Read the full story](#)





Build your way and get to market faster

Modernising applications helps you deliver new capabilities faster and adapt more easily to changing business needs. You can quickly build and customise copilots, chatbots, recommendations and agents using familiar tools such as GitHub, Visual Studio and Microsoft Copilot Studio.

Managed platform services let you focus on improving applications and user experiences instead of maintaining the technology that supports them. Cloud-native services such as Azure Kubernetes Service and Azure Container Apps simplify deployment and scaling and support your preferred languages and frameworks. Integrated monitoring, diagnostics and DevOps tools help improve application performance over time.

The latest AI-assisted tools support the end-to-end application life cycle and ongoing operations. GitHub Copilot and Azure Copilot help automate routine tasks, generate code and content and support emerging agentic workflows.

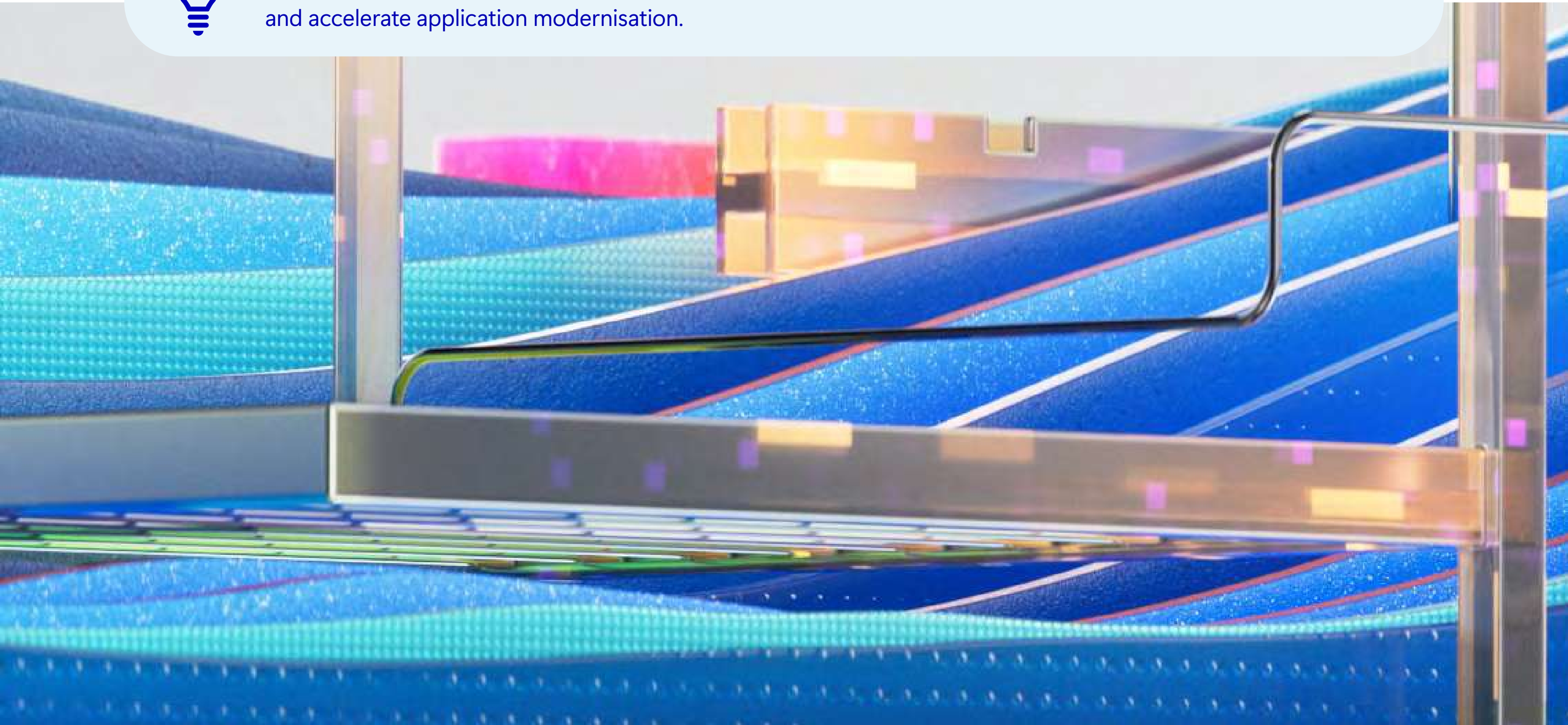
Developer benefits on Azure^x

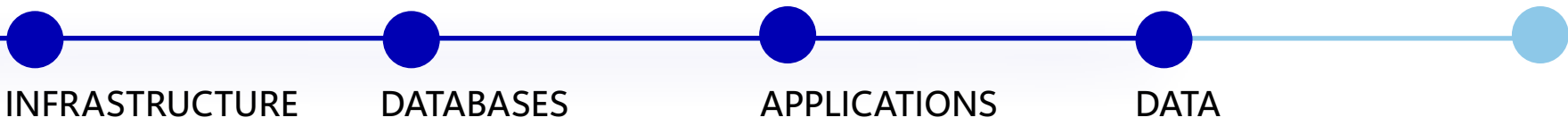
39%
higher developer
productivity

43%
faster to market new
products and solutions



Quick win: Use AI-assisted development tools like GitHub Copilot agents to automate routine coding tasks and accelerate application modernisation.





Power your growth with connected data



Many organisations discover that disconnected data is one of the biggest obstacles to realising value from AI. The extra time and effort it takes to make different platforms and databases work together is integration overhead, a hidden tax that costs your business in missed opportunities and inefficiency. Unified data creates a foundation for AI-ready applications, APIs and workflows.

Today more than 31,000 organisations rely on Microsoft Fabric to reduce silos, simplify their data architecture and surface AI capabilities. Fabric brings together multicloud and on-premises sources on Microsoft OneLake, the logical data lake that gives your business access to fresh, trusted data. With a single governed, secure environment powered by cloud-native platforms, your applications, analytics and AI can all work from consistent, high-quality data.



Quick win: Use Fabric to bring data from multiple systems together so teams can work from the same information, using low-code tools and AI assistance to speed analysis and reporting.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Subsalt helps turn data into discoveries

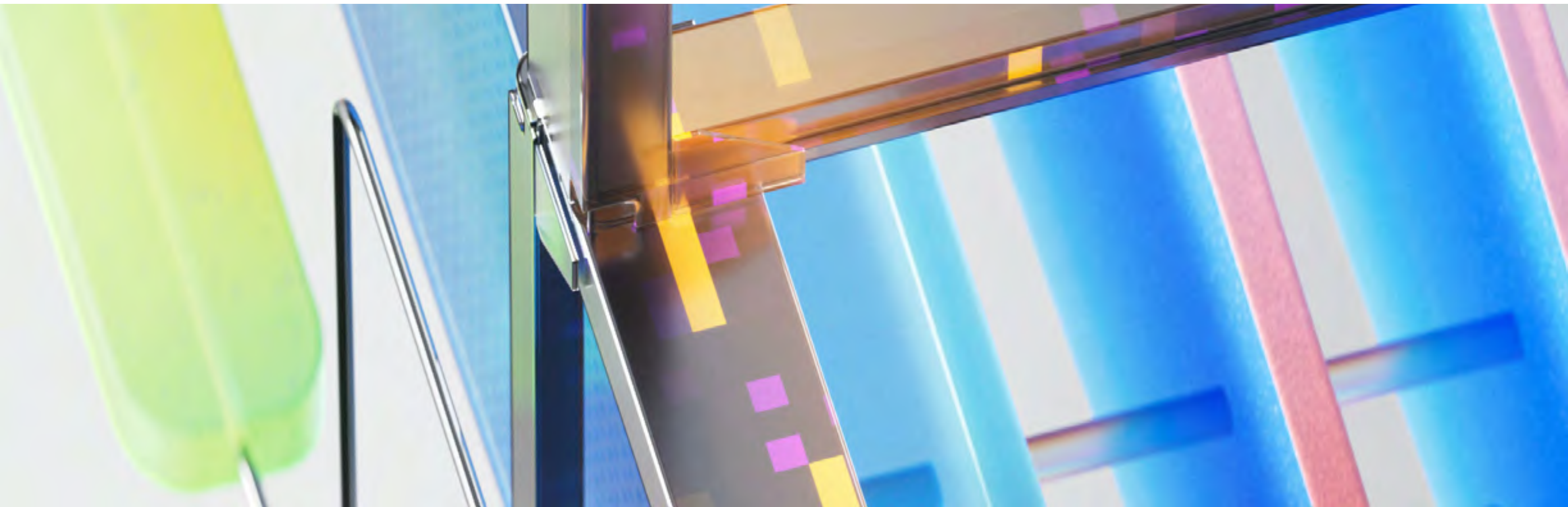
Subsalt is helping healthcare organisations rapidly accelerate research with its secure, compliant AI data sandbox built on Azure that includes Microsoft Fabric, cutting data access time from months to days.

50× acceleration
in clinical research outcomes

“We’re building a partnership that drives innovation, scales impact and delivers meaningful value to the healthcare industry.”

Ben Winokur
Co-Founder and CEO, Subsalt

[Read the full story](#)



INFRASTRUCTURE

DATABASES

APPLICATIONS

DATA

SECURITY

Strengthen security and simplify compliance



Modernisation is an opportunity to strengthen and simplify protection across your IT environment. By modernising on Microsoft technologies, you gain the advantage of security insights drawn from one of the world's largest security ecosystems. Microsoft analyses more than 100 trillion security signals daily,^{xi} helping businesses stay ahead of evolving threats.

Built-in security protection helps safeguard applications, data and infrastructure with multiple layers of protection across physical datacentres, infrastructure, identities and operations. Solutions like Microsoft Defender for Cloud add further protection and simplify security management across cloud, on-premises and multicloud resources. New tools such as Infrastructure Resiliency Manager and Azure SRE Agent can help IT teams investigate issues and accelerate recovery.

Built-in benefits

- ✓ Stay ahead of regulatory requirements and simplify audits with more than 100 compliance certifications and consistent policy management.
- ✓ Protect critical workloads with built-in backup, recovery and high-availability services that support business continuity during planned and unplanned disruptions.
- ✓ Retain control over where and how data is stored, accessed and governed while meeting national, regional and industry-specific requirements.
- ✓ Use automation, policy-based controls and centralised management tools to help reduce manual effort and maintain consistent security practices.
- ✓ Add AI with confidence using built-in governance, monitoring and protection capabilities that help keep it secure, compliant and under your control.



Quick win: Modernise identity management with Microsoft Entra ID and multifactor authentication to protect users and resources.



CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

August AI enriches patient care with AI health companion

Since migrating to Azure, August AI has gone from 500,000 users to 3.5 million users in more than 160 countries on a new IT infrastructure with 99.99% uptime.

Three months

migration to Azure

0

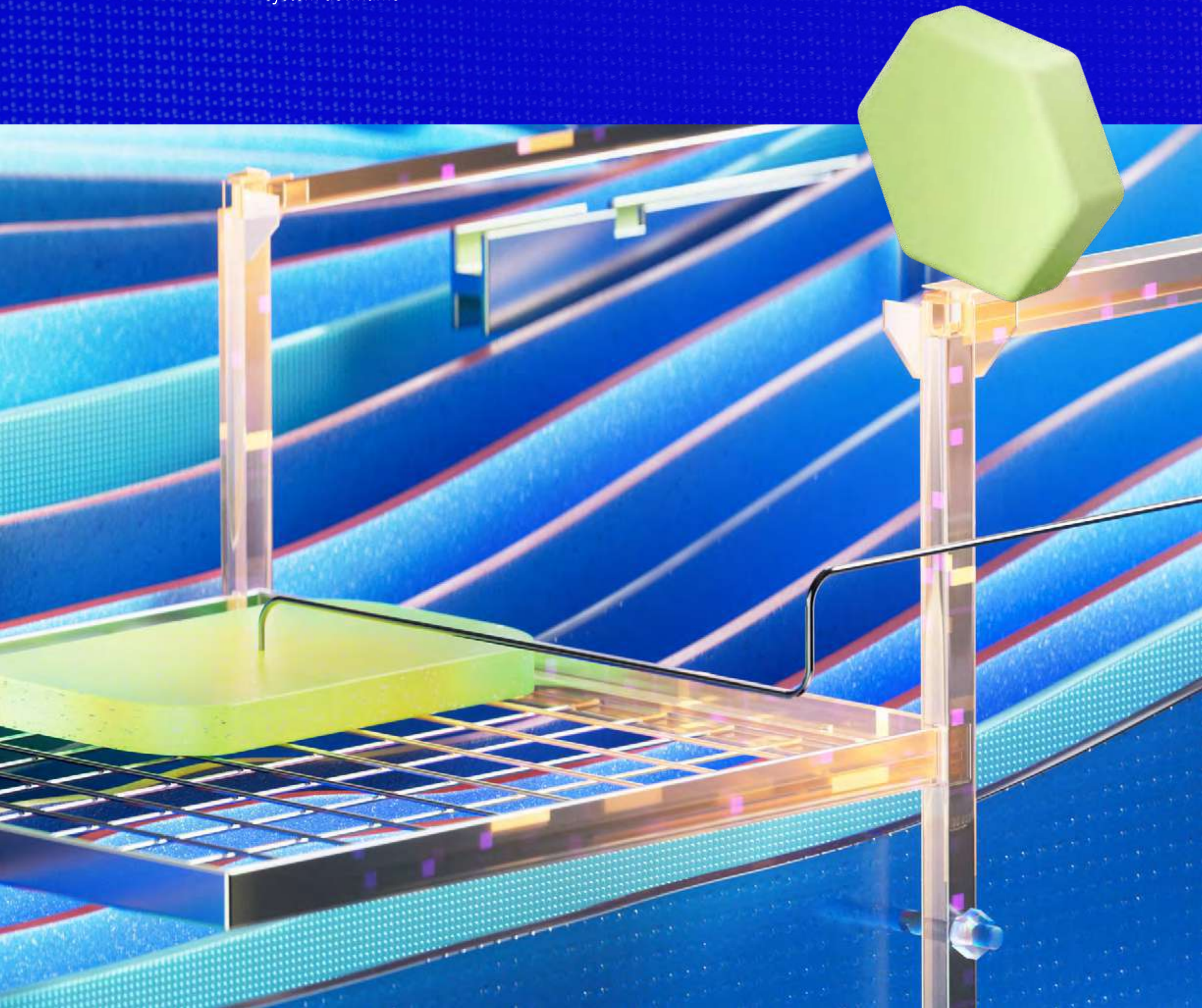
system downtime

"Azure is the most compliant cloud available when it comes to healthcare. That gave us comfort that we were moving to a safe, secure infrastructure that we could build our own security compliance on top of."

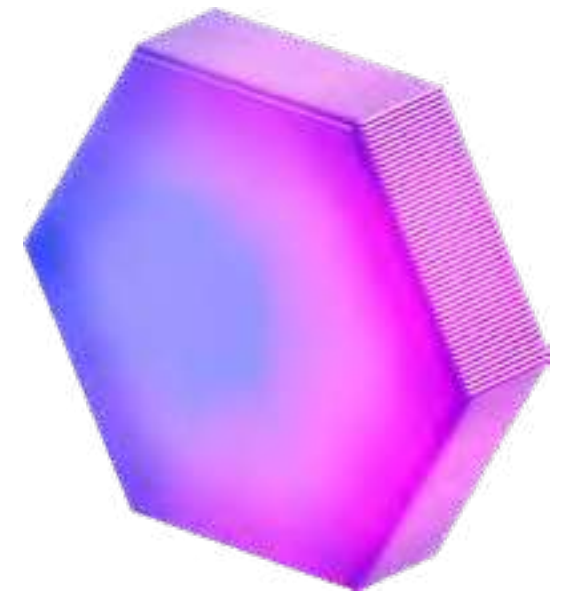
Anuruddh Mishra

Founder and CEO, August AI

[Read the full story](#)



Migrate, modernise and move on your terms



Your path to modernisation depends on many factors, including your existing applications, processes, data management methods and skills. You can begin as many businesses do by moving existing workloads to Azure infrastructure with minimal changes. For greater long-term benefits, you can modernise workloads using fully managed Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) options and unified data.

Whatever the goal, automated tools help you choose the right path to AI adoption, agents, modern analytics and data-driven decision making.

Move with minimal change

Rehost to move workloads as-is to the cloud.

- ✓ Fastest path.
- ✓ Minimal disruption.
- ✓ Reduce infrastructure costs.
- ✓ Ideal when speed is the priority.

Get practical guidance at the [Azure IaaS resource centre](#).

Simplify operations

Replatform to adopt fully managed services, making minimal code changes as needed.

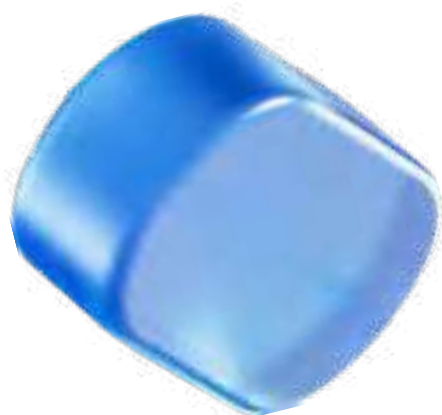
- ✓ Reduce maintenance and free up IT resources.
- ✓ Simplify reliability and disaster recovery.
- ✓ Reduce licensing overhead.
- ✓ Ideal when you want modernisation benefits with minimal app changes.

Build for future growth

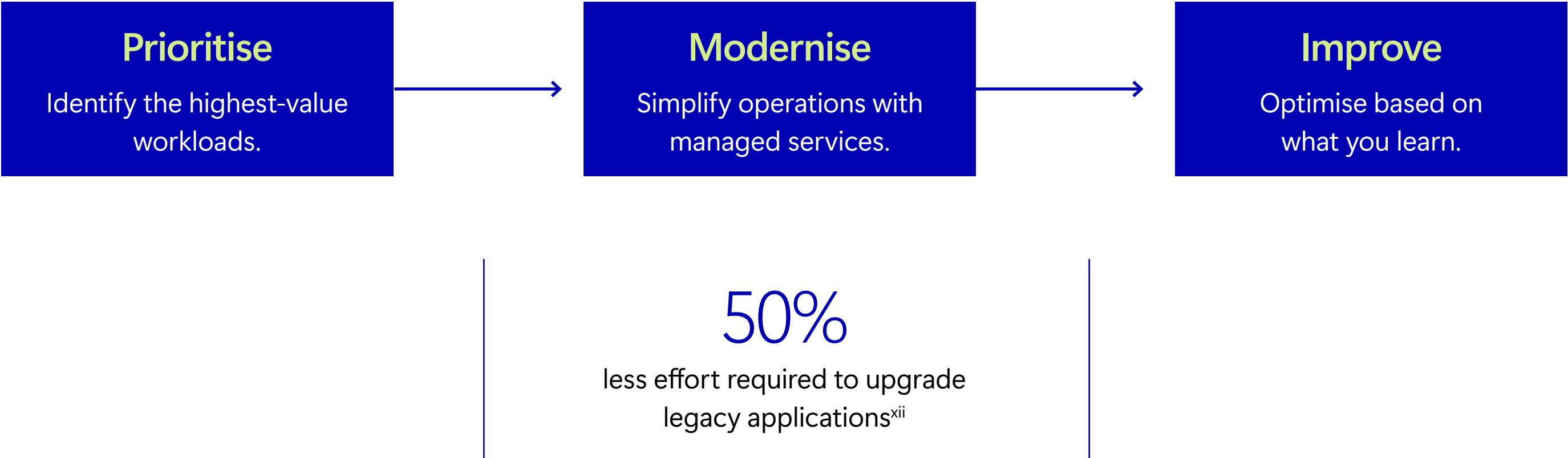
Refactor to make new architectural choices for maximum impact.

- ✓ Highest long-term impact.
- ✓ More effort and planning.
- ✓ Reduce technical debt and improve agility.
- ✓ Ideal for taking advantage of cloud-native capabilities including AI.





These paths show that modernisation can be a series of incremental, practical improvements. You can focus on the highest-value opportunities first, use AI-powered tools to accelerate progress and follow a simple cycle: prioritise, modernise, improve. Then repeat as business needs evolve.



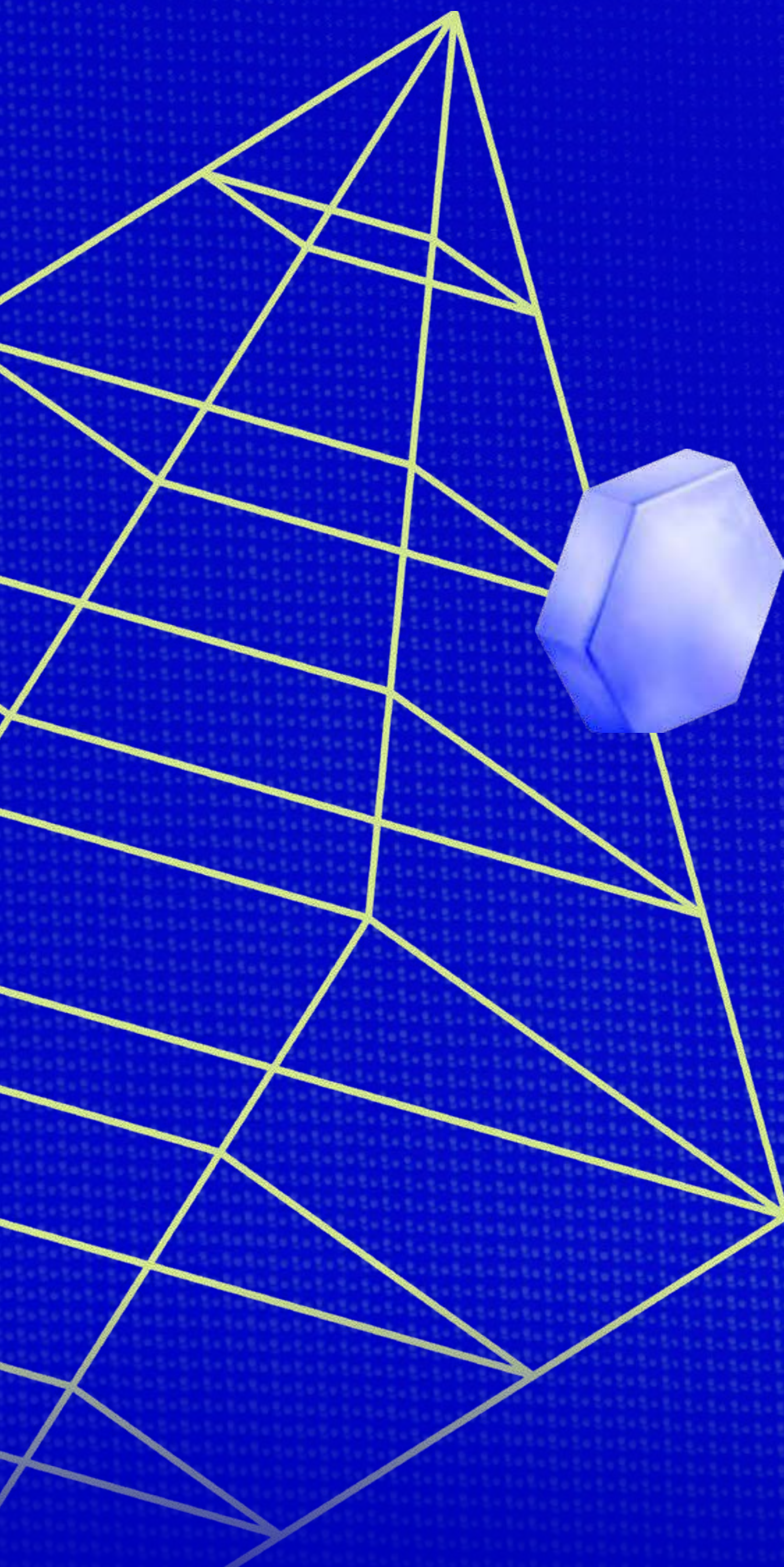
Quick win: Use AI-assisted development tools like GitHub Copilot agents to automate routine coding tasks and accelerate application modernisation.

Resources for every step of the journey

No matter where you start, there’s a proven path forward and a Microsoft partner to help you at every stage. Prefer to do it yourself? Microsoft provides tools, training and guidance to help you modernise with confidence.

Azure Migrate	Assess, discover and migrate servers, databases, web apps and more.
Azure Copilot Migration Agent (preview)	Plan the best path forward based on Azure Migrate data.
GitHub Copilot	Modernise codebases and move to new platforms or languages efficiently.
Azure Database Migration Service	Simplify, guide and automate your database migration to Azure.

Next steps



For many growing businesses, modernisation once felt too costly, complex or disruptive to tackle. Today, AI-powered tools can help you modernise faster, with less effort and fewer specialised skills. With Azure, you can move forward confidently – modernising infrastructure, applications, databases and data to create a foundation for analytics, AI and what's next.

Fuel modernisation with Microsoft experts and investments

→ [Frontier Accelerate for Azure](#)

For more help

→ [Find an expert Microsoft partner](#)

→ [Build your cloud foundation with Azure](#)

Source:

- ⁱ [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.
- ⁱⁱ [Closing the cloud strategy, technology, and innovation gap](#). Deloitte. 2025.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For requirements and program details, see [Azure Hybrid Benefit pricing](#).
- ^{iv} For details, see [Azure reservation pricing](#).
- ^v [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.
- ^{vi} [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.
- ^{vii} McAfee, Nathan. [Analyzing the Economic Benefit of Azure SQL Managed Instance](#). Enterprise Strategy Group by TechTarget. March 2025.
- ^{viii} [New ESG study validates how fully managed PostgreSQL on Azure delivers economic wins](#). Tech Community Blog. July 2, 2025.
- ^{ix} Based on [Azure Hybrid Benefit](#) and [GigaOm Benchmark: Migrating Windows Server Workloads to Azure v1](#).
- ^x [The Business Value of Migrating and Modernizing IT Estate with Microsoft Azure](#). IDC. April 2025.
- ^{xi} [Microsoft Digital Defense Report 2025](#).
- ^{xii} [Modernize your applications in days, not months](#). GitHub App Modernization website.