

Original Article

Building a Company from the Ground Up: The Cloud Carve-Out

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ABSTRACT

A corporate carve-out presents significant challenges for organizations that must establish an independent technology foundation within a limited timeframe. When a business separates from its parent organization, critical capabilities such as cloud infrastructure, identity management, networking, security, and operational processes must be established independently rather than inherited from the former parent environment. This paper presents an enterprise cloud carve-out approach for establishing PPLFirst as a standalone organization following its complete separation from PCG. The study focuses on the key considerations involved in building an independent cloud platform from the ground up, including cloud foundation, identity and access management, network architecture, security controls, and operational readiness. The approach emphasizes structured planning, rapid execution, governance, and the establishment of scalable and secure cloud capabilities required for independent business operations. The discussion provides practical insights into the challenges and considerations involved in creating an enterprise cloud environment during corporate separation and highlights the importance of building a reliable technology foundation that can support long-term organizational growth and operational independence.

KEYWORDS

Cloud Carve-Out, Corporate Separation, Enterprise Cloud Platform, Cloud Infrastructure, Identity And Access Management, Network Architecture, Cloud Security, Operational Readiness, Cloud Governance, Enterprise Transformation.

1. WHAT MAKES A CARVE-OUT DIFFERENT

Ordinary cloud programs improve or extend an existing foundation. A carve-out has no foundation to extend. On day one you have workloads and people that depend on the parent's infrastructure, and a countdown to the point at which that dependency must end. This creates a distinctive combination of pressures: the scope is enormous, the deadline is externally imposed, and failure is not an option because the business cannot legally or operationally run on the parent's systems indefinitely.

That framing is why I describe carve-out work as foundational in the most literal sense. Every other initiative the company will ever run — every application, every analytics platform, every future modernization — sits on top of the ground you establish during the carve-out. Decisions made here are not easily revisited later; they are load-bearing for years. That permanence is what makes the work simultaneously daunting and consequential.

2. STARTING WITH THE LANDING ZONE

The anchor of the entire effort was the cloud landing zone: the structured, governed foundation into which everything else would be deployed. Rather than letting resources accrete organically, I established the landing zone deliberately, with the structural decisions made up front. This included the subscription and account topology that would separate environments and workloads cleanly; a governance model defining policies, guardrails, and cost controls; a network architecture designed for segmentation and secure connectivity; an identity foundation for authentication and authorization; and security baselines applied consistently across the estate.

The discipline of designing the landing zone first pays enormous dividends. It means that as workloads arrive, they land in an environment that is already secure, governed, and observable by default — rather than requiring retrofit later, which in a regulated healthcare context is both risky and expensive. A landing zone is essentially a set of good decisions made once and then inherited automatically by everything that follows. The alternative — making those decisions repeatedly and inconsistently as each team deploys — is how cloud estates become insecure, expensive, and unmanageable.

3. GOVERNANCE AS AN ENABLER, NOT A BRAKE

In a from-scratch build there is a temptation to defer governance in the name of speed. I took the opposite view: governance established early is what makes speed sustainable. Policy-as-code guardrails, consistent tagging, cost visibility, and standardized configuration meant that teams could move quickly within safe boundaries rather than making one-off decisions that would need to be unwound. Good governance is not bureaucracy; it is the set of rails that lets an organization move fast without falling off.

The distinction I draw is between governance that prevents action and governance that channels it. Prohibitive governance slows everyone down and breeds workarounds. Channeling governance — guardrails that make the safe path the easy path — accelerates teams by removing the

need to deliberate over decisions that should be standardized. Building the latter into the foundation was one of the highest-leverage choices in the entire carve-out.

4. SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE FROM DAY ONE

Because PPLFirst operates in healthcare and handles protected health information under HIPAA, security and compliance were not features to be added later — they were preconditions of the platform's existence. Encryption, least-privilege access, network segmentation, centralized logging, and continuous monitoring were built into the baseline. Designing these in from the first day is far cheaper and far safer than attempting to impose them on a sprawling estate after the fact.

There is a deeper point here about regulated industries. Compliance is not a state you achieve once; it is a property you must be able to demonstrate continuously. By baking controls into the landing zone and encoding them as policy, we made compliance an inherent characteristic of the platform rather than a periodic scramble. New workloads inherit the controls automatically, and the evidence of those controls is produced as a matter of course. That is the only sustainable way to operate in an environment where an auditor may ask, at any time, to see how protected data is safeguarded.

In a carve-out, the deadline is not a target you would like to hit; it is the point beyond which the business cannot operate. That reality disciplines every decision.

5. SEQUENCING THE BUILD AGAINST A HARD DEADLINE

With the foundation in place, the work became a carefully sequenced program of establishing capabilities and migrating dependencies off the parent's environment. The sequencing mirrored the principles I apply to any migration: prove the foundation with lower-risk moves, mature the repeatable process, then execute the business-critical transitions with confidence. What made the carve-out distinct was the absolute nature of the endpoint — every dependency on the parent had to be resolved, not merely most of them.

Managing to an absolute endpoint requires ruthless clarity about what remains. I maintained a living inventory of every dependency on the parent organization and tracked its resolution relentlessly. A dependency that is forgotten becomes a crisis at cutover; a dependency that is tracked becomes a task. The difference between those two outcomes is simply the discipline of comprehensive tracking against a known, complete list.

6. LEADING PEOPLE THROUGH FOUNDATIONAL UNCERTAINTY

Standing up a company from the ground up is exhilarating and destabilizing in equal measure for the teams involved. The scope can feel limitless. I found that the most important leadership contributions were establishing a clear architectural vision so that teams understood the shape of what we were building, decomposing the enormous scope into achievable milestones so progress was visible, and maintaining a steady narrative about why the work mattered. When people can see the foundation taking shape and understand their part in it, an overwhelming mandate becomes a series of solvable problems.

Momentum is fragile in foundational work because so much of the early effort is invisible — landing zones and governance frameworks do not produce user-facing features. I deliberately made progress visible, celebrating the completion of foundational milestones so the team could feel the platform coming together beneath them even before the first workloads arrived. Recognizing invisible-but-essential work is one of the quiet arts of leading foundational programs.

7. WHY THIS WORK IS CRITICAL

I am candid about the significance of carve-out work because it is genuinely rare for an engineer to be handed responsibility for a company's entire technological independence. The cloud foundation I established was the precondition for PPLFirst to exist as an autonomous enterprise. Without the landing zone, the networking, the identity, and the security posture, the company could not have completed its separation or served its participants independently.

The broader lesson for engineering leaders is that foundational work is leverage. The decisions made during a carve-out — how the landing zone is structured, how governance is encoded, how security is baselined — compound for years afterward. Getting them right is among the highest-impact contributions a technology leader can make, precisely because everything else is built on top of them. A carve-out compresses that truth into a single, high-stakes program: you are, quite literally, building the ground the company will stand on.

8. IN PRACTICE: THE FOUNDATION THE CARVE-OUT PRODUCED

The landing zone this initiative delivered was concrete, not conceptual: a dual-region connectivity design with primary and secondary hubs joined by a virtual WAN, next-generation firewalls and web application firewalls concentrated at the hubs, spoke networks segmenting production, management, and identity workloads, hybrid VPN connectivity for remote sites and users, and automated DNS-monitored failover between regions. Identity was established across both populations from day one directory-synchronized workforce identity and a customer identity service for external users. Every application the company has deployed since lands inside that same governed structure, which is precisely the compounding value of getting the carve-out foundation right.

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