

Microsoft's view on Cloud Governance - why control must be designed, not added

The holidays are over. Cloud platforms kept running. Incidents still happened. Costs still accumulated. Cloud does not pause when people do.

That is exactly why **Cloud Governance matters more than ever**.

Microsoft's Cloud Adoption Framework (CAF) is very clear on one point; Governance is not something you add later. It is something you **design in from day one** – or you will spend years chasing drift, exceptions, and technical debt.



Yet many organizations still treat governance as paperwork, approvals, or a post-project clean-up exercise. Microsoft does not.

Microsoft's core position on Cloud Governance

CAF frames governance as a **continuous discipline**, not a static rulebook. Its purpose is not control for control's sake, but to **protect agility**.

The goal is simple:

- Enable teams to move fast
- While keeping cost, security, identity, and compliance under control

CAF explicitly recommends starting small and pragmatic, then evolving governance as cloud usage grows.

Not everything must be perfect on day one, but the foundations must be intentional.

Microsoft summarizes this as:

“Governance by design, not governance by exception.”

What Cloud Governance actually covers (according to CAF)

In CAF, governance is not a single topic. It is a set of disciplines that work together.

Core governance areas include:

- Cost governance
 - Budgets, cost visibility, spending limits
 - Accountability across teams and subscriptions
- Security governance
 - Baseline security controls
 - Consistent policies across environments
- Identity and access governance
 - Least-privilege access
 - Separation of duties
 - Controlled use of privileged roles
- Resource consistency
 - Naming standards
 - Tagging strategies
 - Region and service restrictions
- Policy enforcement
 - Guardrails that prevent bad deployments
 - Automatic remediation instead of manual reviews

Governance is not about saying no. It is about **making the right thing the easy thing**.

The CAF governance model – intentionally iterative

One of the most overlooked CAF points are **Governance is expected to evolve.**

Microsoft discourages big-bang governance.

Instead, CAF promotes iteration:

- Start with minimum viable governance
- Focus first on cost control, identity boundaries, and basic security baselines
- Expand governance as cloud usage grows, new workloads appear, and regulatory pressure increases

Governance is reviewed continuously – not once a year. Cloud changes weekly. Governance must keep up.

Guardrails, not gates

Traditional IT governance relied on gates. Cloud governance relies on guardrails.

Gates create friction:

- Manual approvals
- Bottlenecks
- Slow delivery

Guardrails enable speed:

- Automated controls
- Clear boundaries
- Fast, safe delivery

If governance depends on people remembering rules, it will fail.

The uncomfortable truth

Microsoft's guidance is clear.

*You cannot scale cloud adoption, control cost, maintain security, or stay compliant **without intentional, automated governance.***

And you cannot retrofit it cheaply later. Cloud governance is not overhead. It is structural integrity. Design governance first – or inherit chaos later.