

VMware Exit Guide

A structured approach to
defining your platform strategy





Executive Summary

Organizations across industries are re-evaluating their virtualization strategy.

Changes in licensing, rising costs, and tighter lock-in have turned VMware from a stable foundation into a strategic concern. What was once an infrastructure decision is now directly tied to cost control, flexibility, and long-term platform direction.

As a result, many organizations are exploring how to exit VMware. But a common pattern is emerging: most initiatives are approached as migration projects.

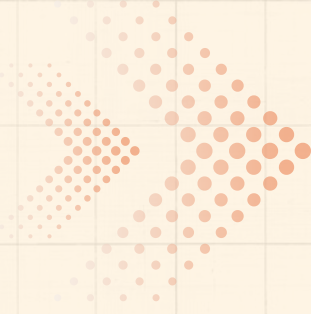
That may create short-term progress. It rarely creates long-term improvement.

A more effective approach is to treat VMware exit as a platform decision.

That means defining:

- ✓ What your future platform should support
- ✓ How workloads will be operated
- ✓ How the platform will evolve over time

Only then should migration be planned.

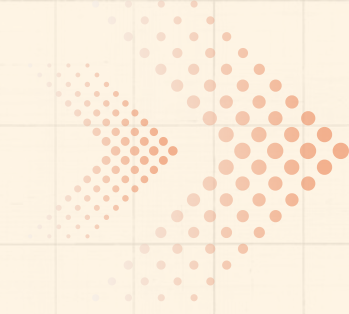


What this guide provides

- ✓ A clear view of the market shift
- ✓ A way to avoid migration-first mistakes
- ✓ A framework for evaluating options
- ✓ A structured path toward a better decision

Key takeaway

VMware exit is not simply about replacing a virtualization platform. It is about defining the foundation your infrastructure, applications, and future workloads will run on.



The Market Shift

The VMware discussion is no longer only technical. It is strategic.

1

Licensing and cost dynamics have shifted

What was once predictable has become more complex, more expensive at scale, and less aligned with actual usage.

2

Vendor lock-in is becoming a strategic constraint

Switching costs are high. Flexibility is limited. Adopting new technologies becomes harder.

3

Workloads are changing

Enterprise environments are no longer VM-only. Modern platforms increasingly need to support VMs, containers, data-intensive workloads, and emerging AI use cases.

4

Platform thinking is replacing infrastructure thinking

The focus has moved from where workloads run to how they are operated, how teams work with the platform, and how quickly systems can evolve.

Key takeaway

VMware is no longer just a technical choice. It is a strategic one.



The Common Mistake

Most VMware exit initiatives begin with a familiar assumption:

“We need to migrate our workloads.”

That sounds logical. It is also where many strategies go wrong. A migration-first approach usually focuses on speed, minimal disruption, and replacing one platform with another. The result is often a lift-and-shift outcome that carries forward the same architectural constraints, the same operational complexity, and many of the same cost problems.

The hidden issue is not migration itself.

It is the absence of a clearly defined target platform.

Without a destination, migration becomes reactive rather than strategic. It optimizes for movement, not outcomes.

The more effective approach

Start by asking:

- ✓ What should the platform support in the future?
- ✓ How should workloads be operated and managed?
- ✓ What level of flexibility and control is required?

Key takeaway

VMware exit is not a migration problem. It is a platform design problem.



A Framework for VMware Exit

VMware exit is often treated as one decision. In reality, it is a combination of decisions that need to be aligned.

1

Workloads

What are you actually running?

- ✓ **VM-dominant environments**
Often prioritize stability, compatibility, and minimal disruption.
- ✓ **Container-dominant environments**
Usually prioritize automation, developer velocity, and standardization.
- ✓ **Mixed environments**
Often combine different operating models, toolchains, and infrastructure patterns.

2

Timeline

How quickly do you need to move?

- ✓ **Immediate transition**
Driven by cost pressure, licensing deadlines, or executive mandate.
- ✓ **Phased transition**
A controlled, gradual move with room to learn and adapt.

✓ **Strategic transformation**

A longer-term initiative aligned to platform and modernization goals.

3

Strategy

What are you optimizing for?

✓ **Cost-driven**

Reduce infrastructure and licensing exposure.

✓ **Modernization-driven**

Improve architecture, workflows, and delivery capability.

✓ **Platform-driven**

Define a unified platform for current and future workloads.

Key takeaway

There is no single correct path. But there is a correct way to define your path.



Your Strategic Options

Once workloads, timeline, and strategy are understood, the viable options become clearer.

Option 1 - Stay on VMware

For some organizations, the short-term decision is to remain where they are. This can preserve continuity and avoid immediate disruption.

Advantages

- ✓ No migration effort
- ✓ Operational continuity
- ✓ Minimal short-term change

Limitations

- ✓ Increasing cost exposure
- ✓ Continued dependency on one vendor
- ✓ Limited platform flexibility over time

Option 2 - Replatform to another virtualization solution

This approach replaces the underlying hypervisor while keeping workloads largely unchanged.

Advantages

- ✓ Potential short-term cost reduction
- ✓ Familiar operating model



- ✓ Faster transition than full transformation

Limitations

- ✓ Core architectural constraints remain
- ✓ Operational complexity often carries forward
- ✓ Long-term cost issues may reappear

Option 3 - Stay on VMware

This model moves toward a unified platform that supports both virtual machines and containers.

Advantages

- ✓ Unified platform for multiple workload types
- ✓ Greater flexibility in workload placement
- ✓ Better alignment with modern operating practices

Limitations

- ✓ Requires upfront platform design
- ✓ Changes the operating model
- ✓ Needs a clear transition strategy

Key takeaway

Each option solves a different problem. The right one depends on your context, not market trends alone.



The Future Platform

Choosing how to exit VMware is ultimately a decision about what comes next.

For many organizations, the instinct is to replace one virtualization platform with another. That may solve an immediate issue. It does not fundamentally change how the platform operates or evolves.

A different model is emerging.

Modern environments need a platform that can support:

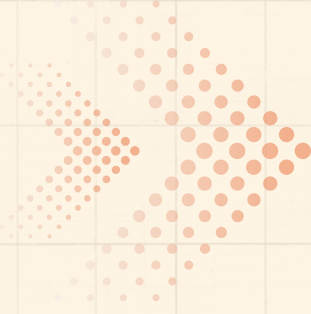
- ✓ Virtual machines
- ✓ Containerized applications
- ✓ Data-intensive workloads
- ✓ Emerging AI and machine learning use cases

Managing these across separate platforms creates fragmentation, more tools, more overhead, and slower progress.

The shift is toward a unified platform.

In that model:

- ✓ Virtual machines are not replaced; they are integrated
- ✓ Containers are not separate; they are first-class citizens
- ✓ New workloads can be introduced without redesigning the stack



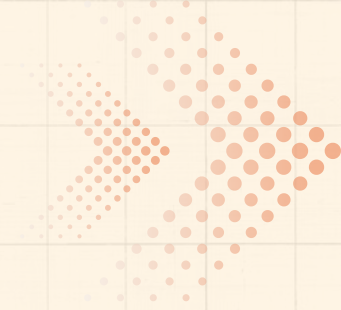
Kubernetes is increasingly becoming the control plane for this model.

It brings:

- ✓ A consistent control plane across environments
- ✓ Standardized APIs for managing workloads
- ✓ A flexible ecosystem for infrastructure, security, and operations

Key takeaway

The goal of VMware exit should not be to replace one hypervisor with another. It should be to define a platform that supports both current and future workloads.



What This Enables

A well-defined VMware exit strategy is not just about leaving a platform. It is about building a foundation for how your organization will operate going forward.

1

Lower and more predictable cost

Reduce dependence on tightly coupled licensing models. Gain better visibility and control over infrastructure spend.

2

Greater flexibility and control

Choose where workloads run. Integrate tools more freely. Adapt the platform as requirements change.

3

Faster delivery and improved developer experience

Support modern development practices. Reduce friction between development and operations teams.

4

Support for multiple workload types

Run VMs, containers, and new workloads on one platform instead of managing separate systems.

5

A foundation for future evolution

Adopt new technologies without repeated large-scale replatforming.

Key takeaway

VMware exit is not just about solving today's problem. It is about creating a platform that keeps delivering value as requirements change.

How to Start Your VMware Exit

A common assumption is that VMware exit begins with moving workloads.

In practice, the strongest approaches begin with clarity, not execution.

1

Assess workloads

Build a clear view of your environment. Understand workload types, criticality, lifecycle, and operational patterns.

2

Define strategy

Align the approach with business priorities. Is the driver cost reduction, modernization, or long-term platform design?

3

Map dependencies and risks

Identify what could be impacted by change, including integration points, operational processes, and critical systems.

4

Plan a phased transition

Sequence workloads logically. Validate assumptions incrementally. Adjust the approach as you learn.



What this achieves

- ✓ Reduces uncertainty before action
- ✓ Avoids costly migration mistakes
- ✓ Aligns execution with long-term goals

Key takeaway

Successful VMware exits begin with clarity, not movement.

Proven in Real Environments

The shift away from traditional virtualization platforms is already underway across industries.

Large financial institution

A large-scale virtualized environment with more than 800 virtual machines began a phased transition toward a unified platform.

Outcome

- ✓ Improved operational consistency
- ✓ Better cost visibility and control
- ✓ Modern practices introduced without disrupting core systems

Global manufacturing company

A multinational environment with both legacy and modern applications moved toward a more unified platform strategy.

Outcome

- ✓ Reduced tooling fragmentation
- ✓ Consistent operations across workloads
- ✓ Faster delivery across teams

Public sector organization

A compliance-heavy, sovereignty-sensitive environment adopted a platform-led approach with strong control requirements.

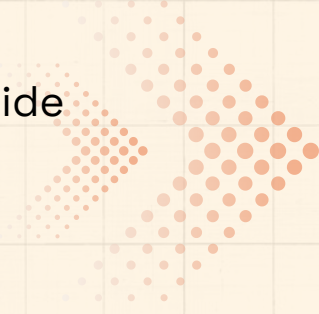


Outcome

- ✓ Greater control over infrastructure and data
- ✓ Better alignment with compliance needs
- ✓ Less reliance on tightly coupled vendor ecosystems

Key takeaway

VMware exit is not theoretical. It is already being executed in complex, real-world environments.



Conclusion and Next Step

VMware exit is often approached as a technical transition.

In practice, it is a strategic decision that defines how your platform will operate for years to come.

Organizations that focus only on moving workloads tend to recreate existing challenges in a new environment. Those that define their target platform first create more meaningful outcomes: better cost control, greater flexibility, and a stronger foundation for future workloads.

A successful VMware exit begins with clarity:

- ✓ Understanding the current environment
- ✓ Defining strategic priorities
- ✓ Aligning on a target platform
- ✓ Planning a controlled transition

Every organization is different. Workloads vary. Constraints differ. Strategic priorities are not the same.



Stakater



Red Hat

Get Your VMware Exit Plan

**A structured, tailored view of your options, risks,
and next steps based on your environment.**

This is not a generic assessment.

It is a practical starting point for
making the right decision.

www.stakater.com