

This year's Gartner Fall Symposium/ITxpo – held from 3rd to the 7th November in Cannes – was organized around the theme of IT and the economy. This report offers an overview of what was on attendees' minds and what they learned from Gartner analysts and each other.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

At the start of the week, Gartner's head of research, Peter Sondergaard, outlined a key question facing infrastructure and operations (I&O) leaders: How can you do more with less? Going into 2009, I&O leaders face the dual priorities of modernization and cost optimization. Attendees following the I&O track at Symposium found a number of technologies and strategies to help them address these issues. These included:

- **Cost Reduction:** I&O leaders were told to start thinking like CFOs. During 2009, I&O leaders will not only need to reduce costs, but they'll also need to reprioritize their budgets to focus on IT that provides differentiation and competitive advantage.
- **Virtualization:** Virtualization is having a huge impact on infrastructure architectures, processes and operations, people and skills, and the business. It is the most important trend in I&O through to 2012. Virtualization, coupled with consolidation, represents the primary means that I&O leaders have to reduce the cost structure of their environment. These initiatives do "double duty" in that they are also the focus of near-term I&O modernization efforts.
- **Cloud Computing:** Cloud computing and Web platforms will be the main delivery models for external business service providers and business process outsourcing providers by 2015. I&O leaders should look to using cloud computing services as an adjunct to what they are doing within the I&O structure they have built.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Future of Infrastructure and Operations

I&O leaders are striving toward service orientation, pay-for-use chargeback models and more virtualized and automated architectures. Virtualization will remain the most important trend in I&O for at least the next three years and likely longer. And in conjunction with cloud computing, virtualization will allow organizations to adopt a dynamic sourcing approach, with some services sourced in-house and some sourced from the cloud.

Recommendations:

- Consider economics, quality of service and agility as the principal metrics to determine whether to keep an IT investment in-house or to buy it as a service.
- Implement a modern infrastructure and source alternative delivery models to meet business needs.
- Build a strategic plan that aligns people, processes and technology with the business.

The Green Data Center Pays Off

Most data centers waste a substantial portion of the electricity they consume, due to inefficient and archaic power and cooling practices. Several techniques can help to make data centers more energy

efficient: plugging raised floor breaches; installing blanking panels; hot and cold aisle containment; variable-speed fans and free cooling. Some of these techniques lend themselves best to new data center build-outs, but many of the techniques can be retrofitted.

Recommendations:

- Start measuring data center energy efficiency, and keep track of your results to demonstrate good corporate citizenship.
- Analyze and improve cooling efficiency with air flow analysis, the use of hot and cold aisles, and liquid-cooling solutions.
- Build new data centers from the ground up to be highly energy efficient.

Workshop: IT Infrastructure and Operations Leaders: How Best to Address Your Key Challenges

I&O typically accounts for up to 70% of enterprise IT budgets and 70% of CIOs' key issues. As a result, I&O leaders face incredible challenges and pressures. 50 I&O leaders attended a workshop to identify their key challenges and best practices to help overcome these challenges. Workshop attendees used the IOMM to help build a road map for continual I&O improvement.

Best practices from the workshop included:

- Work with the business to determine key metrics.
- Appoint relationship or service managers to review business services.
- Build tools around processes in a business-focused way. Focus on end-to-end tools rather than components.
- Develop a portfolio comparison tool to assist stakeholders in business management and help them determine what's important.
- Develop an end-state strategy plan. Break this into phases and gain acceptance from the business for the phases and overall strategy.

The Unified Communications Scenario

Enterprises can improve workgroup productivity, customer service and communications for mobile workers through unified communications (UC), but it's unlikely to generate an immediate return on investment for IT departments. Gartner expects adoption of UC technologies to be slow until 2010, as organizations try to preserve their existing communications investment and overcome technical challenges. After 2010, Gartner expects UC to be an accepted part of enterprise communications.

Recommendations:

- Before embarking on a UC project, change the mind-set of IT budget stakeholders. UC can deliver operational benefits to workers, workgroups and business process, but will not necessarily lower costs for the IT department.
- Build a requirements matrix based on the requirements of the job – not on title, department or business unit.
- Review your organizational structure to decide if it is suitable for the emerging generation of communications.



KEYNOTES

Welcome Address and Analyst Keynote

There are no easy or safe decisions in the next year – get over it. Be smarter, conquer your fear and make the hard choices. We are in a new age in which IT is still essential... But so is change. Gartner recommends you take action now; examine your inventory, rank it to find your priorities, question everything you have, protect your key people who can deliver your priorities, reconsider each budget line, plan for multiple futures and then choose where to cut AND where to spend.

IT is very good at acquiring systems but it's time to learn how to "manage what you have." Use this opportunity to move from the accidental legacy architecture you have inherited toward a 21st Century sustainable architecture. Use the downturn to modernise and prepare for the return to growth; remember this is your chance to get executive support for the change process so you can do what's necessary.

It's also time to innovate. It's time to "learn to let go" instead of always seeking to control and stamp out user driven innovation and technology choices. Find the opportunities for reinvention. By cultivating innovation and recalibrating your awareness of where differences can be made you will be able to drive down costs and harness new ideas. You need to upgrade or you risk lower speed, lower power and performance than more agile competitors. Do rationalise your portfolio but be careful! Exploit commoditization, use the cloud, and leverage partners where appropriate. Take stock and decide what you need... And what you can change. We live in interesting times; it's time to focus, it's time for courage, it's time to get started.

Mastermind Interview: Ian Livingston, CEO, BT

For the next year, things are going to be tough across the business world. The key message from Ian Livingston, CEO of BT, is you should plan for it – being prepared won't harm you. No one is recession proof. No one is going to escape the present climate unscathed. Companies should be looking at both the top and bottom line simultaneously, to cost cutting as well as continuing to seek opportunities for revenue growth.

Remember that in this difficult time the need for green IT is not going to go away. And with innovations like telepresence and virtualization, it isn't a case of paying for green IT at the expense of the business. Green IT can and does save you money if approached sensibly, and is something customers want to be a part of.

Reducing headcount is definitely going to be one of the core approaches CEOs adopt; it's inevitable. When talking to its customers, BT is finding that they are examining costs and looking to refocus on higher growth regions of the world. The opportunity for IT is to streamline the bureaucracy and to move to a position where the CIO and the key IT management are change leaders and change enablers contributing to overall business efficiency and effectiveness.

Radical moves in the name of cost cutting are not the right approach. Use technology and process to reduce failure, work on increasing agility and ensure customer experience is at the forefront of each decision. This has to be the answer; making the organization more able to realize opportunity and deliver to customers more effectively. Don't force people to use new technologies; think about where social networking technologies, cloud computing, Software as a Service (SaaS) and remote working can make life better for the business and for employees and use the technology to serve those ends – make people want to use the new approaches.

Mastermind Interview: Contractions and Balance: Business is IT and IT is Business: Steve Chambers, CIO and Valerie Dias, Executive Vice President, Chief Risk and Compliance Office, Visa Europe

How to get Business and IT to work effectively together is a constant question. The first step is to stop asking the question – the divide between business and IT does not exist unless you create it. In Visa, they have formed joint project boards and everyone is encouraged to continually ask "why?" It's vital to identify, in clear business terms, the purpose and goal of a project. Success must be measured in business terms – how will the project positively impact the business?

It's important that everyone understands that they are all part of the one organisation. Creating trust at all levels across the business and within IT is critical. Visa ensures this by having an IT directorate embedded throughout the organisation. All project teams should ask the "why?" question when they are asked to undertake a project. This close relationship between business and IT can be the key to achieving competitive advantage. If IT is not closely aligned to the business, a gap is created that will add unnecessary risk, time, complexity and cost to a project. A key objective for any CIO should be to minimize this space.

Overcoming scepticism can be a difficult hurdle. Leaders need to be firm in their beliefs, demonstrating on a practical level that their ideas and solutions can work. This process may take some time, but over time, behaviours and attitudes will begin to change. Success breeds change, which in turn breeds more success. Leaders need to have a sustained vision and purpose to ensure this.

People, politics and personalities are often the root cause of conflict. Conflict can, however, be useful, so long as it is focused on solving the challenge and moving forward. But when conflict becomes about entrenched positions and blame, then it benefits no one.

If you can't articulate the value of technology spend... then all you are doing is spending money. Always, always, ask "why?"

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