



With various forces combining to transform the IT landscape, how do you see the role of the IT department evolving?

The combined forces of Cloud, SaaS, Democratization, and Consumerization of IT are transforming the role of IT departments. The smart IT departments will move to focus much more on supporting and enabling business agility and end-user efficiency related functions, and a lot less on maintenance and infrastructure upkeep. The other IT departments will be replaced, or the businesses they are a part of will go under. More and more businesses will move in that direction and will do so faster.

I think the need for businesses to move faster and leverage new technology is much stronger and clearer now than it ever has been. With the exception of very few cases, there really is no justification for businesses to run operations that are not their core-competency. Just like the vast majority of businesses don't run their own power-plants for electricity, store their money in a vault in a basement, or operate their own telephone exchange, so too will the move their application and data consumption to service providers who can do it better, faster, cheaper.

IT isn't going away, it's evolving. The need to adapt technology and empower the business with the right mix of business agility and ability to focus on its core strengths through technical innovation while balancing the necessary controls and visibility are here to stay, and as we move ahead IT departments will be able to offer their businesses better and better solutions from more and more choices than they ever were able to, when they were chartered with building and running their own.

One example of IT department evolution is in the realm of Security where IT departments can allow businesses leaders the gain the benefits of cloud technologies and apply innovative offerings to balance the needs of security, compliance, regulation, and discovery without compromise, and in most cases even surpass existing solutions.

What's the future for hybrid cloud strategies?

Hybrid clouds are here to stay, and rightfully so. The definition of "Hybrid Cloud" is morphing from purely "on-premise vs. cloud" to on-premise, private cloud, public cloud, and I believe the definition of "hybrid cloud" should expand even further to include mobile and cloud-connected devices, as well as SaaS applications that connect to and host business data and applications.

More and more organizations will invest in hybrid cloud solutions like Dropbox, box.net, and Google Docs that perpetuate the justification for having infrastructure that isn't just virtualized and cloud, but also physical infrastructure that you can carry with you to use when you're on the go, off-line, or otherwise want offline access. I think that the balance will shift from mostly on-premise legacy systems doing the heavy lifting, to most of the workload being done by cloud vendors that specialize. Wherever possible (which is almost everywhere) the on-premise piece of the puzzle will be reduced to end-point devices focused on content creation and consumption and local mobile usage.

Increased awareness of the availability and variety of capabilities coupled with the reality of increased security in the cloud, will drive adoption exponentially. Public cloud will be the biggest piece in the hybrid-cloud equation within this decade, and Software-as-a-Service will be the biggest within the public cloud.

Are traditional on-premise mega-vendors really committed to Cloud, or is it just a strategy to perpetuate and protect their on-premise legacy?

The short answer is both.

There are two types of mega-vendors, those that refuse to accept that the world is changing and will continue to invest and promote antiquated solutions that have worked for years, and those that understand that there is a C-change happening. Those that "get it", are faced with an interesting dilemma, do they wait-and-see how the market plays out and then make a move, or do they try to innovate. Most mega-vendors aren't great innovators and do so mostly through acquisitions of smaller more agile businesses that can traverse an emerging market.

Even if a mega-vendor "gets-it" and has the technology and business model to take on the

cloud opportunity at hand, there is still the internal battle with those that are milking the cash cow and want to perpetuate and protect their on-premise legacy offerings.

When I was at EMC in the early 2000's, our CEO, Joe Tucci talked about seizing the opportunity of the changing landscape to innovate and cannibalize our own offerings, before somebody else would. He was right, and EMC was smart enough to embrace commodity hardware in storage, expand their software to heterogeneous platforms, invest in (through the acquisition of VMware) virtualization, which ostensibly erodes hardware sales, and come out stronger and faster, and better positioned to succeed in the market.

Mega-vendors are just as vulnerable to failure as smaller vendors, it just take longer, and makes a bigger sound when they hit the floor. It's usually because of a failure of imagination and failure of understanding what value they provide to customers. Customer don't want to buy specific technology, they want to buy technology-based solutions that fit their needs. Needs change and evolve.

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