

IT requires business-focused transformation

New findings by EMC indicate that three-quarters of CIOs believe that five years from now they will need to be able to launch new products, services and applications in half the time it takes them today. 41% say that extracting value from ever greater volumes of data is the top IT challenge facing the business, with 37% expecting this to still be the top challenge in 2019.



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Ranked second in 2016 is the need to accommodate business unpredictability and the associated demands for rapid scaling. By 2019 this is expected to be replaced by the challenge - and opportunity - of enabling real-time business operations.

However, the study reveals that many CIOs are concerned that their company will struggle to overcome these challenges and harness these opportunities. Two-thirds (69%) worry that business growth will reveal weaknesses in traditional IT operations and infrastructure and could lead to IT inhibiting rather than enabling innovation in the organisation if they do not have the right infrastructure or tools.

Taking active steps

This point is not lost on CIOs and their business colleagues and many are taking active steps to address the situation. For example, 80% of the leaders surveyed feel that implementing a more advanced and agile IT infrastructure would reduce risk and complexity and provide a solid platform for future growth. Further, nearly half are already training IT professionals in skills including converged infrastructure, cloud computing and business skills.

The research, which surveyed over 2,700 business and IT professionals in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, suggests that in many organisations CIOs are at risk of isolation. They can find it hard to manage the challenges of steadily rising expectations for IT, interference from colleagues in other roles and a lack of common ground with the rest of the C-suite.

Recognition of the value and potential of IT increases measurably with company size - companies with 1,000 or more employees demonstrate few of these concerns, and are also far more likely to have introduced a modern IT infrastructure and invested in skills.

The study also reveals that in many smaller organisations the power over technology decision-making is left in the hands of other parts of the business. According to 39% of the professionals surveyed, in their company the IT agenda is set by functions other than IT and business, for example marketing (11%) and sales (10%). This disconnect is seen in the boardroom, with 58% of CIOs convinced they have overall control over IT, while just 14% of business CIOs agree with them.

Transforming IT

"The research casts new light on current attitudes towards IT within businesses of all sizes. To reclaim full control, CIOs and their IT teams need to stop spending so much time building and managing different infrastructure components," Nigel Moulton, EMEA CTO at VCE, the Converged Platforms Division of EMC, commented.

"Instead, they need to transform IT into an efficient business-focused engine that can scale rapidly in response to changing business needs. This demands a modern data centre. One way of achieving is by implementing a robust, software-defined, converged infrastructure. Convergence can power more agile development and increased speed to market, addressing directly some of the top IT challenges identified."

"A powerful infrastructure will deliver the high performance, scalability and agility the business needs. Too much effort is still spent simply keeping the operational lights on, when the business needs to focus on developing and releasing new, value-added products and services. IT needs to be free to focus on meeting business goals. A converged infrastructure will enable it to do so," Barry Cashman, vice-president, EMEA, VCE, the Converged Platform Division of EMC, adds.

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