



NTT DATA

Building a Business-Agile IT Services Delivery Platform

IT leaders recognize the need for business agility yet struggle to ensure IT services delivery is up to the task, according to IDG research.

The case for digital transformation was made conclusively as companies accelerated their efforts and sought resiliency during the coronavirus pandemic. But according to a recent IDG survey of IT leaders, many organizations realize they still have work to do in overcoming the complexities of today's business and IT architectures.

Confronted with today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, IT services delivery must focus on operational excellence and continuous improvements that support and foster organizational competitiveness and agility. Yet, IDG survey respondents cite multiple challenges hindering their ability to optimize and scale IT services for speed in innovation and to meet new challenges.

"The ability of organizations to rapidly innovate and scale is now a business requirement and the emphasis on agility and rapid transformation has only increased in a post-pandemic

world," says Aater Suleman, Vice President of Cloud Transformation Services with NTT DATA. "Companies that did a good job increasing agility pre-pandemic were able to turn this into an opportunity or a competitive advantage, while those not ready were in a crunch to make changes."

Stability and engagement are essential for business success

IDG surveyed 100 IT leaders at director-level or higher in companies with 1,000 or more employees. In their efforts to advance IT excellence, their top strategy is to improve the business relevancy of IT services, followed closely by speeding IT services delivery.

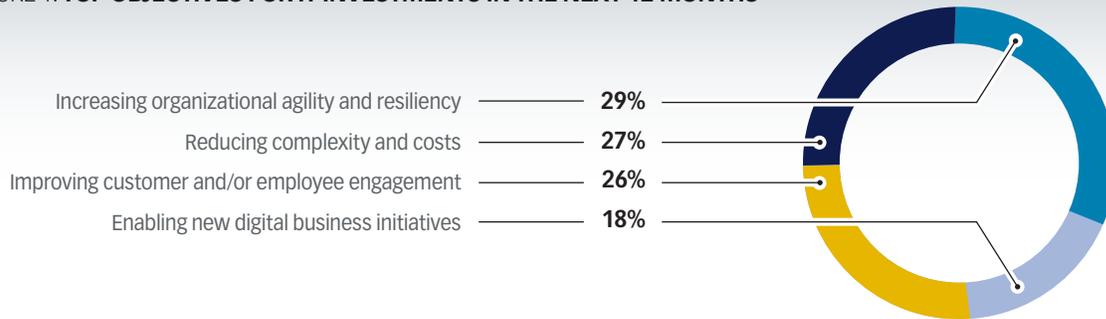
IT is clearly focused on business success. Specifically, the IDG study found that companies are seeking to prioritize IT investments that optimize business outcomes (see Figure 1).



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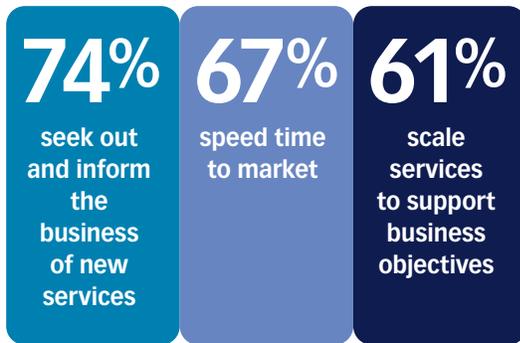
FIGURE 1. TOP OBJECTIVES FOR IT INVESTMENTS IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS



SOURCE: IDG

More than ever, enterprises recognize the need to react to changes at unprecedented speed, and that IT services delivery improvement is essential to meeting business expectations.

IT's Top Areas for Improvement



SOURCE: IDG

Leading with cloud services still a challenge

To achieve these goals, top priorities for infrastructure services over the next 12 months are cloud management, cloud security, and infrastructure monitoring. Yet, many survey respondents are struggling with implementation challenges.

"Moving into the cloud isn't just about keeping the lights on for a lower price," says Suleman. "If enterprises move onto a new platform and the innovation stops, then in five years they are going to be looking for another new platform. I'd urge them to think big and create a vision that is not anchored by current constraints."

The biggest challenge is cost management and control, according to 54% of respondents. Other obstacles include cloud security, cited by 40%, and managing multiple clouds (37%).

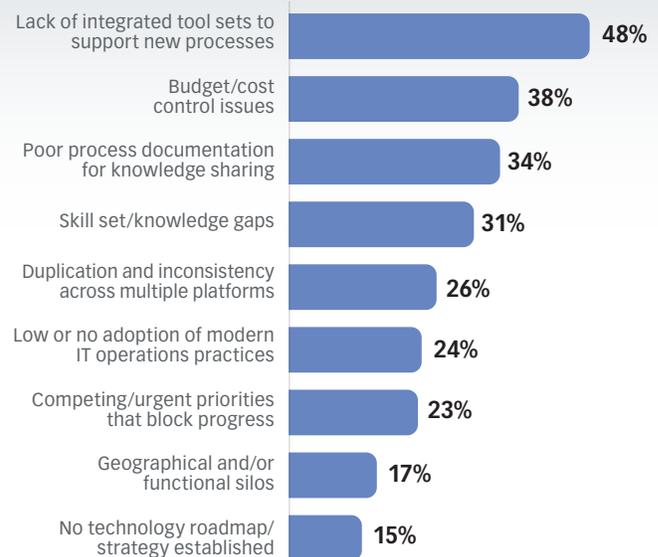
Implementation and integration are proving difficult when it comes to deployments, even to the point of defining scope,

assumptions, and risks. Almost half the respondents say they lack integrated tool sets to support new processes, including automation and orchestration (see Figure 2). That's not surprising, Suleman explains, "as most IT processes over time have been tuned by reviews, manual governance and manual controls."

Moving to an IT services platform can automatically leverage preapproved practices, assets, and guidelines aimed at eliminating manual reviews rather than struggling to speed them up. "When building a new IT services platform, it should be machine-driven, not human-driven," Suleman says. "Humans should be part of the process, but make it machine-driven and use people when it's necessary. That's often the biggest mindset shift."



FIGURE 2. TOP CHALLENGES IN SCALING FOR IT EXCELLENCE



SOURCE: IDG

Building an IT services platform

The lack of a modern IT services delivery platform can detract from an IT organization’s ability to leverage IT automation, devops, and security best practices that support enterprise agility goals. The majority of respondents (87%) say they believe it is very important or critical to leverage an optimized, scalable, shared IT services platform.

Slightly more than one-third of the survey respondents perceive their organization’s ability to build a shared IT services platform as “very good.” All the technology industry survey participants rated their organizations in that category, while none from financial services did so.

Adopting a modern IT services platform can eliminate countless hours of mundane tactical work and manual effort, freeing up precious resources to focus on strategic initiatives. Intelligent systems today can perform cognitive, perceptive functions, making automation a crucial tool for business agility. Applying automation in the areas of provisioning, scaling, failover, upgrades, and compliance is essential in driving agility and executing on desired business outcomes.

Pivoting to a modern shared services platform can be difficult when the organization has an incomplete view of what’s needed to migrate and automate. Suleman gave an example of a manufacturing client that estimated its portfolio as somewhere in a range between 400 and 800 applications, and even that top number underestimated the actual total.

“Many were discovered that had been long-forgotten over time and were just continuing to run,” he says, adding that after

the discovery process it was determined that a third of the portfolio needed to be retired.

With a flexible, secure IT services platform, IT leaders can play a critical role in ensuring the business can thrive and rapidly evolve. Yet, they’re struggling with knowledge and skills gaps in trying to make the transition to modern, cloud-based systems. According to 45% of survey respondents, they expect to bridge those skills gaps through external partners.

Responding to demands from the business for more responsive and agile systems is a high bar to meet, and it’s made more difficult when internal teams are bogged down by manual, often mundane tasks. “IT leaders want to give their internal customers comfort that they can not only keep the lights on, but actually innovate,” Suleman says.

IT leaders recognize they cannot afford to go it alone. The shortage of cloud skills only makes it more difficult for IT teams to meet expectations. IT leaders must decide where best to allocate internal team members, and how to supplement them most effectively with external providers to meet the needs of the business, its customers, and its employees.

On average, 39% of IT services delivery needs are met by external partners, according to survey respondents. But over the next 12 months, 79% expect that to increase. Cost management and breaking down technology silos are the top areas where survey respondents believe external partners can be most helpful (see Figure 3). Data privacy and security along with cloud migration efforts are also likely to rely more on external parties.



FIGURE 3. MOST ATTRACTIVE BENEFITS OF AUGMENTING IT TEAMS WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS



Marshalling web services

Many organizations are turning to market leader Amazon Web Services (AWS) in the expectation that its immense cloud technology portfolio can provide the core services and tools to meet IT services delivery expectations.

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Aater Suleman

Vice President of Cloud Transformation Services with NTT DATA

“Usually, the biggest challenge for any organization is to understand all of what AWS has to offer, because very few people can speak to the breadth of services and the rate by which AWS adds new services,” Suleman says. “That all ties back to the talent shortage and the knowledge gap. Not knowing those services fully could be the biggest handicap if you don’t understand how to connect the dots.”

The lack of knowledge can lead to poor decision-making and the creation of services delivery architectures that won’t stand

the test of time. Suleman says that it can be too easy to focus on addressing immediate needs, rather than on the possibilities that can be achieved. “Organizations making the move to cloud often realize the original business case that they set out to achieve. However, the problem is they just stop there, running in the cloud what they already had.”

To avoid that stalemate, NTT DATA advises IT leaders to focus first on business relevancy and the business case, rather than the mechanics of the transformation project. “Frankly, the business case better not be just that ‘now we can run it cheaper,’ because that makes it an IT project again; the business case is how can we actually add more value to the business and provide a better experience for customers and employees,” Suleman says.

IT leaders also should strive to “innovate fearlessly and not be constrained by just what you know and by just what you have now, because that limits your ability to innovate long-term.”

His third point of advice is “while thinking big, don’t start big,” because it is important to create intermediate successes while the transformation is underway.

Just as importantly, he adds, “it is extremely critical to have the right talent available to take on cloud management, whether that is internal, or by using an external provider and putting the right tools in place.”

Leveraging AWS for Agility

AWS offers myriad services and tools that can be harnessed by IT to help deliver on business expectations if the organization has a clear path forward.

At NTT DATA, our AWS consultants work with clients to help them start from a secure foundation, integrate the latest cloud-native and third-party services, and learn how to use their platform to achieve their vision of the agile enterprise.

Learn more

Visit nttdataservices.com/aws to discover how our unique methodology can help you leverage AWS.

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