Keeping the Lights On: Why Unified IT Ops Management is Key to Digital Transformation Success

Digital transformation is everywhere. It heralds a new era of business agility and innovation-fuelled growth — catapulting the role of the CIO into a major boardroom player.

It’s no surprise that the global digital transformation market is growing at a CAGR of over 18% and according to MarketWatch is estimated to exceed $462 billion by 2024. But success is hard to achieve. Half of the US executives surveyed in one 2017 poll said their company isn’t successfully executing against 50% of their digital transformation strategies. One in five said they secretly believe it’s a waste of time.

It doesn’t have to be this way. There are many technical and cultural challenges to overcome in order to drive the right digital outcomes. But arguably some of the most important are linked to IT operations. Organizations must have the right unified IT operations management (ITOM) tools on hand to gain control over their increasingly dynamic digital platforms. It’s the only way to remove roadblocks on innovation, agility and performance, and provide the right foundation for digital success.

ITOM to the fore

IT leaders are under tremendous pressure today. They must support business demands for continuous innovation — delivering services faster, cheaper and often with fewer staff. Among the new breed of technologies supporting this new era of IT-driven growth are everything from big data analytics to mobile, cloud, APIs, microservices, software-defined networking and storage, machine learning and IoT. According to a 2018 IDC report, 89% of enterprises have plans to or have already adopted a “digital-first business strategy”.

There’s just one problem: behind a new breed of innovative customer and employee-facing digital services lies a hodgepodge of disparate and decentralized systems: virtual machines, hybrid cloud accounts, IoT endpoints, physical and virtual networks and much more. Many are outside of the control of the IT department, adding an extra layer of opacity and complexity.

Without visibility into the performance of these systems, early-stage problems can be missed which then end up snowballing into major incidents. Gartner estimates the average cost of IT downtime at $5,600 per minute, although the analyst admits that the figure could reach far higher — $540,000 per hour — at the top end. The longer-term impact on brand reputation and share price may be even more telling. Just ask the likes of BA and TSB’s Spanish owner and Amazon Web Services.

In this context, it’s difficult to overstate the importance of effective ITOM. Although the discipline is often viewed pejoratively as merely “keeping the lights on”, the truth is that without these solid foundations in place, digital transformation...
Time to strip away legacy

Appreciating the importance of ITOM to digital transformation success is one thing, ensuring you extract value from investments is far harder. The roadblock here is legacy tools and approaches — both fundamentally intertwined. In many ways ITOM has been left behind by digital change. Many organizations still view it as an afterthought: major investments in new apps and services are not matched proactively by improvements in performance monitoring. Part of this is down to perception of ITOM itself as a cost center rather than a value driver. But that’s because in many cases firms aren’t monitoring the right things. Focusing on availability rather than business service performance will not deliver strategic value from ITOM.

Siloed IT teams compound these challenges, preventing a move to more proactive monitoring practices, and instead creating disastrous tool sprawl. IT leaders are unable to gain clear visibility over the entire environment, meaning individuals and teams are doomed to repeat the same mistakes as their predecessors — continually firefighting problems, and auto-renewing even under-performing tools. Gartner claims that by 2020, 80% of IT operations tools and processes in IoT projects will be unable to meet business requirements.

Towards unified monitoring

With so much at stake, organizations can’t afford to rely on outdated processes and ineffective, overlapping tools. They need to invest in ITOM platforms that can provide insight into dynamic cloud and virtual environments as well as the traditional static, on-premises world. But beyond this, they need to unify this insight by consolidating onto a single monitoring platform.

This single version of the truth will enable IT leaders to detect bottlenecks, see how the IT infrastructure reacts to specific changes and spot the early warning signs of any problems which could impact performance. It’s the only way to minimize disruption and drive value from IT operations as well as elevate the role of the CIO.

From a digital transformation perspective this visibility and control means organizations can have the confidence to accelerate time-to-market and test the limits of business agility. That lights the way to innovation, growth and success — all made possible by strategic use of ITOM from a single platform.