Don't let your business fall prey to IT evolution

Complexity is inevitable; being able to manage it is vital

Highlights

CIOs are under immense pressure to deliver new functionality fast and at low cost. But unless they ensure that their IT systems remain easy to manage, their mistakes could come back to bite them.

In Mary Shelley's famous novel, scientist Victor Frankenstein never set out to create a monster; quite the reverse. In fact, he sought to assemble and reanimate a human from constituent parts. He succeeds in creating life, but is horrified by the result and shuns his creation, who – granted the gift of life – then seeks revenge on him.

Without careful management, you risk letting your IT infrastructure meet the same fate. What starts out as a carefully designed IT landscape can soon turn into something far trickier to manage.

Customers are hungrier than ever before for innovative products and services. To deliver the new offerings they demand, you need to deploy additional applications and introduce more sophisticated functionality. At the same time, senior management frequently changes the shape and size of your company to maximise competitiveness. Those changes force you to integrate new acquisitions, support new departments, and manage many more users than you had previously imagined.

Since you are under immense pressure to make these dramatic changes fast and at low cost, it's tempting to cut corners. But if you start creating links between your existing systems using any available means – without stopping to consider the consequences – the whole infrastructure can soon become unwieldy. Suddenly, you've created hidden dependencies between the various components in your infrastructure. If you need to remove, replace or upgrade one of them, a whole host of unforeseen challenges can arise.

Unfortunately, this type of system complexity is all but impossible to avoid. The challenge is how to prevent your complex IT environment from hampering the development of new offerings and damaging the competitiveness of the entire business.

In response to this challenge, CIOs have virtualized their infrastructures. But this doesn't dramatically simplify the environment – it just shifts some complexity from physical systems to virtual ones. It might even make matters worse, because the complexity is now harder to see, and might be more difficult to control.

Before virtualization, it was easy to tell which applications were running on which servers. But since we introduced more virtual servers that is no longer the case. Because we shift applications between the various virtual servers in response to events such as technical faults or planned downtime, it can be difficult to work out which system an application is running on at any given time.

Most of the time, it doesn't matter which system is supporting each application – but if something goes wrong, that knowledge can be critical. You start running into problems, because your server specialists lack an in-depth knowledge of your applications, and your application specialists don't know enough about the servers. Most companies won't learn from that mistake until they've made it and suffered the consequences.

Nowadays, virtualization is being overtaken by a move to the cloud, which promises cost-efficiency, agility and scalability. Those are all wonderful benefits, but the risks of moving to the cloud must not be underestimated.

Cloud computing introduces an entirely new way of working, and leaves you heavily dependent on your chosen vendor. Does the cloud offer all of the functionality you need? Is the cloud secure? Where is your data held? How resilient are your cloud services? What can you do if your vendor doesn't meet agreed service levels? What are your rights if your vendor is acquired or ceases trading? Are you effectively tied to your current vendor, because it's too time-consuming and expensive to switch? Have you just swapped a technology straightjacket for a contractual straightjacket?

To make sure that your mission-critical systems are in good hands, it's vital to select the right technology partner. The good news is that IBM can help.

IBM has a 100 percent success record in meeting commitments to clients who have experienced a disaster, with over 50 years of experience in maintaining business continuity and managing disaster recovery scenarios. What's more, IBM employs more than 1,800 resiliency professionals, who are backed by over 400,000 IBM employees and Business Partners worldwide. With over 150 resiliency centres across 50 countries, IBM can provide someone to help you when you need it most, wherever you are.

Don't follow in Dr Frankenstein's footsteps by creating something that you don't understand and can't control. Think ahead and put the right controls in place, so that when disaster strikes: you're ready.

Take the next step
To learn more about IBM resiliency services, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: **ibm.com**/services/continuity

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