

ITEGRALUPDATE

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"The advent of virtualisation and cloud technologies has spawned a new way of addressing the business requirements-providing services rather than technology – which is all the business wanted anyway."

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Is 2010 the year IT starts to deliver?

Robin Watts, founder of Itegral, shares his views on the IT market today

For many years, customers have been refreshing their IT environments largely as and when vendors wanted them to. When a vendor brought out a new, faster or more powerful version, they would hike the maintenance costs of the old version and "encourage" customers to upgrade, often with the help of tailored ROI models. Sometimes it would be the incumbent manufacturer driving the refresh, and other times an alternative provider would win a new customer. Customers generally liked the fact that they were improving performance, and getting a new technology to play with, and with a booming economy everyone was happy. But this approach to technology change is very much drawing to a close for manufacturers as their new products become more commodity than conditional, causing many of them to look at retaining customers through offering service-based technology refreshes.

The economic downturn has also had a significant effect on customers' abilities to fund large capital purchases leading them to review requirements and how IT can service the business more efficiently. Customers are extending the lifecycle of existing investments and introducing technologies that can be built to a size proportionate to demand rather than those requiring wholesale migration. Virtualisation and cloud technologies have taken the lead in this new way of thinking, forcing IT departments to

discover creative ways of providing services, rather than product.

Ironically, while some customers have transferred certain aspects of their IT to a virtualised environment, allowing them to move off old equipment in a staged approach to contain capital expenditure, those who have adopted virtualisation throughout the entire sub-infrastructure are the ones reaping the biggest benefits of reduced costs and increased flexibility.

Carbon taxes introduced during the last few months are starting to have an effect on customers' thinking and planning. Itegral has been working with customers over the last 3 years, assisting them in reducing their power footprint through technology refreshes and implementation of new ideas. We are now starting to see new clauses come into contracts with hosting companies to define who will be responsible for paying the new green taxes, further focusing on this important change.

2010 is likely to be a year of immense changes in IT departments. With their accountability raised to new levels on the Board, the CxO who does not think ahead of the game and demonstrate value for money and ways of reducing costs is likely to find life very uncomfortable. With our business consultancy and in-depth experience of working with customers in these areas over the last few years, Itegral is well placed to assist with the changes.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT - CONTAIN YOUR COSTS

Project Management has arguably been happening since the dawn of time when God first said "Let there be light." But it's only in the last 50 or so years that it has become established as a recognised discipline and only the last 30 or so years that it has become a focused specialisation.

Most people would confess that Project Management of a large-scale change or implementation is beneficial for coordinating the team(s) involved, for understanding the dependencies and for managing budgets, but on smaller projects how can you reduce Project Management costs and yet ensure the project is still delivered successfully?

Itegral delivers dozens of projects every year of all sizes. Our fixed price, fixed deliverables based project management ensures you know what it will cost before you start and allows you to only pay for the project management required. If the project

Last month a customer required a highly experienced Project manager to help them scope and start to deliver a project in Europe. The project was still waiting final client approval to start and needed a clear scope definition and the roles and responsibilities defined to help convince the client to proceed. Itegral were able to supply a project manager within the timescales, with flexibility for attending last minute meetings and writing project documentation. As a result, the client has now commenced the project helping our customer land a multi-million pound order with a clear scope for services.



timescales are likely to be more flexible or you only require a few hours of project management each week, you can rest assured Itegral PMs are only going to bill for the time they expend, saving you a small fortune over having to recruit a full-time contractor.

SECURITY CLEARANCE REQUESTS

Did you know that government departments and other authorities who ask for people with clearance levels in advance of an order are breaching the guidance agreed with the Cabinet Office, except where the placement is short term or required at very short notice?

Cabinet Minister, the Rt Hon Angela Smith MP, recently stressed that "national security vetting controls are important, but must be applied proportionately and fairly. Where security clearances are necessary, an existing clearance should not be used as part of the selection criteria or inhibit access... except in rare cases where a contract is urgent or very short term."

Demand for security cleared individuals is not limited to government departments nowadays and the levels required for banking, insurance, medical and other roles is constantly being tightened as companies struggle to demonstrate due diligence in case of law-suits.

Basic Clearance (BC) level checks are being required for basic roles with Counter Terrorism Checks (CTC) and Special Clearance (SC) being needed for more sensitive situations.

Outside of specific security checks, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for any roles working with private customer or patient data are pretty much de-facto now and often Financial Records checks are required for the most basic roles in Financial organisations.

Itegral has worked with vendors and other companies to obtain many of these checks prior to deploying

individuals for roles and typically turns most checks around in a matter of days.

If you should need security cleared individuals for a role, now or in the future, Itegral currently has personnel available for deployment on your projects including:

SC cleared Project Manager: Kevin has >20 years experience of delivering multi-disciplined projects across geographical borders.

SC cleared Storage Consultant and Unix Admin; Tony has 25 years experience working with Unix and Storage environments and is highly skilled in HDS, Sun and NetApp.

IT SALES FIGHT BACK

The last year has been tricky for IT Services sales with many companies tightening their belts and reducing head-count, focusing on 'core' business and eking out the last penny of revenue from their existing clients.

We at Itegral hear this on a daily basis as feedback from the hundreds of calls we make every day with many yielding the same stories; no capital budget, reducing operational expenditure and insistent demands from the business to deliver the promises that IT departments have been making over the past few years.

For us this is always an interesting time as our clients look to remove fixed cost from their budget and replace it with a genuine resource on demand model. Traditional models of body shops have proven to be hit or miss with no guaranteed end result.

Even with a growing client base, largely due to the referrals of our clients, we have to cold-call on a daily basis to get the message out. We have found over the past 20 years in IT sales that in general no-one will have heard of your company or if

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they have, they have no idea if you can do what you say you do. And yet, when we speak with customers, our message is always welcomed and clearly understood;

“We help you to achieve your business goals through the flexible and utterly reliable provision of proven Professional Services, or you don’t pay a penny.”

Outside of referrals our largest new business generation comes from cold calls so the next time you have a call from Integral why not take it? You never know we may have a solution for your problems.

SERVER VIRTUALISATION ASSESSMENTS

The question these days is not so much **“why** should I virtualise?”, it is more **“what** can I virtualise?” and also more importantly **“how** can I virtualise?”.

The market first really woke up to virtualisation in open-systems around 4-5 years ago when server virtualisation first appeared on the scene. Prior to that, it had primarily been the domain of the Mainframe or niche virtualisation offerings such as StorageTek’s VSM or hardware solutions such as Sun’s E10k. But in the time since Server Virtualisation awareness has become mainstream throughout IT, a plethora of other virtualisation solutions has sprung up; Storage Virtualisation; Desktop Virtualisation; Application Virtualisation to name but a few. It seems that every IT manufacturer and supplier has jumped on the Virtualisation bandwagon.

Rather like seeing the seemingly constant stream of TV adverts for the latest NOW music CD (are they really up to #456?) it would be understandable if one felt that this push on virtualisation was just another ploy by IT vendors to get customers, large and small, to pass over to them a significant percentage of their Cap-Ex Budgets. While this is quite true (after all that is ultimately

why the likes of MS, VMware and Citrix to name but 3 of the key virtualisation “players” are so strongly pushing their numerous virtualisation offerings) the customer business benefits that can be obtained by organisations who employ virtualisation solutions are substantial.

As well as the bottom line of “saving you money” through reducing valuable computer room floor space, power and cooling, conserving energy and providing the capabilities of greater resilience and redundancy, virtualisation can improve business flexibility and agility.

Never ones to sit on their laurels, Integral consultants constantly review the virtualisation marketplace to assess and evaluate new virtualisation offerings to be able to provide our customers with the best possible advice in respect to the many opportunities available to them, and more importantly on how particular benefits of specific solutions can benefit individual customers’ requirements. Whilst directly partnering with key industry manufacturers and Solution Providers, Integral is also in the enviable position of being independent of any vendor, allowing us to offer completely impartial and objective advice and guidance to our customers.

IT Managers now know that virtualisation solutions are not a “flash in the pan” marketing ploy that will disappear once a new computer buzzword technology comes along. Virtualisation is here to stay and is something that can benefit every single organisation that uses IT. Virtualisation should certainly not be referred to as pie-in-the sky, but possibly more accurately as substance in the *Cloud*....however, more on that next month.

Everywhere we turn in the IT World we are bombarded with advertisements and sales literature trying to convince us to go down the “yellow brick road” towards virtualisation Utopia.

Early in Jan 2010 a customer approached Integral requiring an urgent server assessment engagement. This was required to be undertaken at extremely short notice to allow for capture of month end processing and to allow the necessary customer project budget information to be produced in the same month. A key requirement for this engagement was the ability to respond quickly and implement the data gathering for a server virtualisation assessment. By using the Lanamark Suite and Partner Portal Integral were able to instigate the assessment and start data collection on the day the initial customer meeting took place. This would not have been feasible, given the timescales, using other assessment data gathering tools.





BCP / DR - DEMYSTIFIED

Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is about planning for the unknown. The plan enables us to recover operational status and resume business as usual.

The process concentrates on delivering a holistic approach by understanding all risks including operational risk. Through this process we identify the scope and boundaries of the business continuity plan. This is further refined through a risk assessment known as the Business Impact Analysis (BIA) where we conduct an assessment of; the people, the business, technology, information, supplies and stakeholders. This analysis forms the foundation of the business continuity, crisis management and the requirements for Disaster recovery.

As part of the business continuity plan, testing is imperative to establish and prove whether the plan works. These tests can be carried out on a part or the whole of the infrastructure, with representatives from IT, the business, suppliers and stakeholders. Occasionally our customers request us to organise a test without their staff knowing in advance, to test readiness under normal operating conditions.

After conducting a test we produce reports based on lessons learnt from the exercise and provide recommendations on how to implement improvements.

As with many areas of critical business operations, there are a number of rules of thumb:

- If it has not been tested it does not work.
- Establish a regular maintenance schedule of the plan.

- Involve staff through an education and awareness programme so that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- Monitor and report on progress and issues on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Disaster Recovery (DR) is about planning for an expected incident. We utilise the Business Continuity Plan to prepare us for the "expected" scenarios we are likely to encounter.

The difference between the expected and unexpected is in the level of preparation required to respond.

We utilise the information from the business impact analysis to prepare our response to the different scenarios.

We prepare to recover to an alternative work site; this can be another building, location or a work area recovery site. The requirements we identify are;

- People: critical people required at time of invocation and after invocation.
- Technology: access to applications, telephony, networks and services.
- Information: recover data, paper records and manual workarounds.
- Suppliers: reinstate third party services.
- Stakeholders: reduce reputation damage.

BCP and DR will always be a work in progress because we live in a dynamic world. Therefore, education and awareness is an integral part of continuing to develop both areas.

- Make BCP/DR part of the management lifecycles including performance management.
- Keep testing.
- Keep it realistic and meaningful.

ABOUT US

Itegral provides Project Management and Consulting services to many Blue Chip companies and household names throughout the UK and Ireland.

Itegral works with its customers and carefully selected partners to deliver complimentary Professional Services, ensuring the best possible resources are made available at competitive prices. Our key focus is on reliability and value, allowing you to achieve your business objectives and complete your projects on time and within budget.

Our consultants can help you with every phase of developing and deploying innovative IT solutions and services, from assessments, designs, deployments and support.

For more information please contact us on 020 3384 4547

www.itegral.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Robin Watts, Andy Walden, Mel Mehmet, Will Everingham, Jon Pavitt