IT efficiency an ongoing imperative

Truth be told, we could spend the entire Intel IT budget on infrastructure maintenance and growth. We could keep the lights blinking, meet our SLAs, and continue to address the demand for more compute, storage, and network resources.

But that’s just one aspect of our mission and mandate. In addition to infrastructure maintenance and growth, we’re tasked with driving innovation, delivering new services, and enabling our business groups in new ways with data and technology.

We have limited financial and human resources. However, we still need to keep pace with the business and deliver new capabilities and add capacity to support our businesses.

We can’t do all this by just working harder so we need to proactively change the game.

At Intel IT, we are doing this by investing in efficiency improvements and automation. If we can maintain our (continually growing) infrastructure with fewer people and lower cost, we can reallocate those resources to new services, new requests, and new value-added activities.

I’m not simply talking about infrastructure consolidation and virtualization, although those are certainly viable drivers of efficiency. I’m talking about doing things in fundamentally different ways than we’ve done in the past. It requires operational and service transformation in addition to infrastructure optimization.

“With the pace of change continually increasing, we have to focus on velocity in addition to speed.”

David Aires
Vice President, Information Technology
General Manager, Information Technology Operations
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For example, we’ve always stored users’ email and files on their client devices. If a failure occurred, we would diligently reconstruct the PC or laptop and mine backup systems to retrieve the lost files. But the resolution process was time consuming and costly from an IT standpoint, and inevitably hindered user productivity.

Today, we are in the process of moving our users’ email and files into the cloud, a game-changing transformation that delivers several benefits. Backup and recovery will be seamless, allowing users to retrieve their files and get back to work quickly in the event of a problem. And because those files are in the cloud, they can be accessed from any device and location, giving users more flexibility and further boosting productivity. This transition will also enable our IT staff to spend less time reconstructing client devices and recovering lost files, and more time on higher value activities.

What may seem like a simple shift in our approach to email will have a dramatic effect on our efficiency, from both IT and business perspectives. And it’s a prime example of how we are doing things differently to free up time and resources — our most critical commodities.

The importance of automation
Much of what we’re doing to improve IT efficiency is centered on automation.

We are constantly looking for ways to automate tactical, routine activities so we can put more resources toward strategic, high-value activities.

The best opportunities are typically found at the intersection of IT and line of business (LOB) efficiency. Such opportunities help us be more effective as an IT organization, and also provide a faster, more satisfactory experience for our users.

In addition to putting our email into the cloud—which benefits both IT and LOB groups—we are working to automate routine service requests. Within the next three years, we want 90 percent of routine service requests to be resolved immediately and automatically. We’re also boosting our self-service capabilities, allowing users and business groups to configure and deploy software-defined server, storage, and network resources with a minimal number of manual steps.

In the past, a similar effort would have taken days or weeks, with dedicated support from Intel IT. In the near future, it will happen in minutes or hours, without IT intervention.

The difference between speed and velocity
We never run out of ideas for automation or efficiency improvements. We just can’t implement them fast enough.

With the pace of change continually increasing, we have to focus on velocity in addition to speed. Simply “pedaling faster” is unsustainable. So we need to pedal faster, but we also need to make sure we are taking the best and most direct route possible.

We do this by capitalizing on new technologies, exploring new ideas, and using existing resources in new ways. For example, we are beginning to adopt Voice over Wi-Fi in our internal buildings. By using our existing Wi-Fi infrastructure and antenna systems for voice, we can reduce our cellular costs and deliver a better user experience within our buildings.

Let’s face it, the constant demand for “more everything” can be overwhelming. And it can be extremely difficult to maintain pace. It’s why we are relentlessly searching for ways to work smarter instead of harder, transform our IT operations, and boost the collective efficiency and velocity of our workforce.