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Mobile data in 2015

Mobility is right at the top of the CIO priority list for 2015 – and with good reason. Now, more than ever before, employees are demanding access to the kind of information that will help them make key business decisions from any location.

Research from Vanson Bourne suggests 95 per cent of businesses have employees who rely on personal mobile devices and apps for work. The market researcher says 92 per cent of organisations recognise that mobile apps provide a way for the business to gain a competitive advantage.

Analyst Gartner, meanwhile, says the continued rise in the demand for knowledge illustrates how the digitisation of business has already moved from the fringes of business strategy to centre stage. The analyst refers to a nexus of four forces – cloud, mobile, social and information – that it says are now at the core of CIO spending strategies.

Gartner says as many as half of IT leaders cite analytics as an IT investment priority for this year, with more than a third (36 per cent) referring to mobile technologies. And more change is set to come, with Gartner suggesting the next wave of digital technology – which will draw on trends such as holograms, Google Glass, thinking machines and advanced approaches to analytics – is approaching quickly.

CIOs must create a strategy for the business that is flexible enough to cope with the many different facets of digital transformation, yet that helps the business to use knowledge across mobile devices in as secure a way as possible. It is paramount that CIOs and their CxO peers establish a strong basis from which employees can share and promote knowledge and ideas. So, what might this platform for change look

The cloud as a basis for digital transformation

The cloud – as one of the nexus of forces – has been hyped as game-changing technology for almost a decade, yet it is now increasingly accepted as a standard base from which to undertake digital business. Researcher IDC says total spending on cloud technology will reach $118bn in 2015, representing a 23.2 per cent year-on-year increase.

The benefits of the cloud are well rehearsed. In a world of fast-changing business requirements, the elastic computing resources of cloud platforms provide a means for executives to scale up – and scale down – IT systems and services on demand. Such flexibility provides a strong base from which to take advantage of the combined forces of mobile, social and analytics technologies.

Researcher Forrester suggests 2015 will be the year that on-demand IT moves to the centre of CIO business strategy. "The days of fighting the cloud are over," says Forrester principal analyst James Staten, in a recently released blog post. The researcher says IT leaders must learn how to add value to their company's use of on-demand services through facilitation, adaptation and evangelism.

To help their organisations make the most of the cloud, CIOs must focus on understanding the key aims of the business. For many organisations, a private cloud – which is under the full control of internal IT – will be the preferred choice; for others, public clouds offer an acceptable way to manage costs and information.

An additional option is the hybrid cloud, a kind of halfway house that gives users the security of a private service and the low cost associated to public clouds. Spending on the hybrid cloud will grow by as much as 50 per cent through 2015, according to Technology Business Research.

"Some in the market are choosing to implement private clouds for mission critical or data sensitive applications, but use the benefits of public cloud for other workloads and integrate the two in a hybrid cloud solution," says Lynn Collier, Chief Operating Officer at Hitachi Data Systems (HDS). "To meet these needs, businesses are looking for partners who can use the latest technology, consumption models and service level requirements to provide the most flexible and cost effective services."

Taking mobility to the next level

CIOs and their CxO peers, as such, need to work in a close relationship with their vendor partners. Externally, executives must work to find suppliers that offer a strong fit with their organisational culture and its long-term business goals. Internally, executives must work to understand organisational objectives, ensuring IT implementations are closely aligned to business requirements.

In many cases, these requirements will be tied to making information available to executives on the move. Researcher IDC suggests mobility will continue to transform the way virtually all forms of content, applications and services are created, distributed, managed and consumed.

IDC says the number of enterprise applications that are optimised for mobile will quadruple through 2015. The researcher says the continued demand for mobile access to information means IT firms will dedicate as much as 25 per cent of their software budget to mobile app development by 2017. These developments, suggest HDS, will help businesses satisfy users in three key areas:

- Data mobility: Fast access to data when it is needed, where it is needed, be that in a corporate office, remote office, customer site or location, or on a portable device
- Workforce mobility: Enabling a highly productive workforce, with increasing numbers of home office employees and telecommuters
- Cloud mobility: Being able to draw on a hybrid range of cloud technologies for a variety of requirements, including bursting, time to market and resource balancing

CIOs and their executive peers will be keen to provide data, workforce and cloud mobility solutions to the business challenges that end users face. However, it is also crucial that the services that are put in place allow employees to access information in the most secure manner possible.

To satisfy such demands, HDS suggest it is likely that CIOs will have to adopt and support multi-level cloud services: on-site, in order to adhere to data governance and privacy requirements in regards to public and private information; and off-site, in relation to the cloud applications employees use in the field, while also maintaining control, security and service level agreements.

"Such a multi-level approach to cloud and mobile access to information promotes the kind of policy-based management that means IT and business working together to plan at the aggregate level, rather than site by site or business unit by business unit," says Jonathan Preston – Business Manager Content, Cloud & Mobility at HDS. "This approach results is reduced risk and an opportunity to drive business value from mobile access to cloud-based information."

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