

THINKTANK

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DYNAMIC INFRASTRUCTURE



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WORK MORE DYNAMICALLY

Every issue, ThinkTank aims to bring you the latest thinking and technology to help your business improve the way it works, and this month is no exception. Dynamic Infrastructure is a new way of looking at how you manage the resources within your business, from balancing your servers against the requirements of your customers, to, for example, how you monitor the effectiveness of your fleet of vans.

Dynamic Infrastructure helps you take all of your business needs and requirements, and instead of looking at them separately, aims to allow you to adopt a holistic approach. The joined-up solutions provide ways in which your IT services and infrastructure can potentially eradicate any problems, save you money and manage any risks, both now and in the future.

Marcus Austin, Editor.

STAY INFORMED. Previous issues of ThinkTank are available online at: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

By examining your IT systems and other business processes, Dynamic Infrastructure can help you save time and money – both now, and in the future – by using your resources to the full.

Dynamic Infrastructure is a business strategy which helps you find an answer to both business and IT problems, while allowing you to work more efficiently through potentially reducing costs, improving service and managing risk to your business. It examines your business's specific needs and looks at the peaks and troughs of demand, across the days, weeks and years, and then aims to effectively match those demands to solutions that will cater specifically for your business.

Balancing supply and demand is one of the biggest problems facing manufacturing and service businesses. Should a supermarket, for example, buy in 100,000 more ice creams just in case there's a heat wave? Or if a mobile gaming company upgraded from version 2 to version 3 of its software, how many more call centre workers should it train to guide customers through the new service? Making the wrong

Think Dynamic

So what's the answer? Should you implement just-in-time working? Is RFID tagging the best solution? Or is it time for a major rethink of what you already have?

Dynamic Infrastructure is a new way of looking at supply and demand. It's aimed at keeping your resources working to their full capacity all the time. It's about considering demand intelligently, looking at both business and IT issues together. Above all, it's about balancing and managing risk, while at the same time improving your service and saving your business money.

“It's about considering demand intelligently, looking at both business and IT issues together.”

Like all good solutions, Dynamic Infrastructure is no quick fix. It's a roadmap for your business that looks at what you want to achieve, and balances that against the IT resources that will be required and those you already have.

MAXIMISE YOUR RESOURCES

decision can result in anything from a minor inconvenience, to a major business disaster.

In addition to the traditional peaks and troughs in business, we are also starting to experience new and different demands. In the past, it was easier to forecast customer behaviour, but with the advent of the internet and mobile phones, this is becoming harder to predict. We live in an electronic world where people expect to be able to buy goods from a website, or contact a call centre at 2am.

Going virtual

One of the key ways that it can help your business is by introducing the intelligent sharing of IT resources through virtualization.

If a company is running six customer databases on six servers, virtualization could be a way of redistributing work across the system more efficiently. For example, during the day, virtualization could make all six servers available to handle customer queries, providing the

DYNAMIC INFRASTRUCTURE WORKSHOP

Take the first step towards Dynamic Infrastructure with a one-day IBM strategy workshop. All you have to do to take part is to get in touch and tell us about your business problems,

explaining your current IT infrastructure. Then, subject to availability, IBM will visit your organisation and look at six key areas, including finance, business processes, environmental impact, computing, data storage and networking. IBM will then analyse this information and present you with a Dynamic Infrastructure roadmap that

will potentially help your business save time and money over the next six to 24 months.

For more information on the Dynamic Infrastructure workshop, visit: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

capacity to handle any peaks in demand. Then during the evening, when that need subsides, instead of the servers lying idle they could be used for overnight operations. Without Dynamic Infrastructure, the likelihood is that servers would continue to be added to the system to match one-off or irregular peaks in demand, when in fact there was already enough computing power available, but most of it was being under utilised. Then, by adding a service management layer on top, you can intelligently and dynamically use those servers to deal with any task your business requires computing power for 24/7.

Assets and energy

Dynamic Infrastructure can also look at assets outside IT, and how they're managed. For example, applying the appropriate asset management software to a company's vehicle fleet could significantly reduce administration levels, by automatically flagging up when a service or MOT is required or road tax needs paying. What's more, fuel consumption could be measured on an ongoing basis, allowing running costs to be monitored daily, with any anomalies being dealt with quickly before they start to eat into cash flow.

SOURCES

Energy efficiency is a key area that Dynamic Infrastructure can help you address. Tracking how your business uses energy for heating, cooling and lighting over time can potentially result in large savings, and help you to fix your costs – or at least enable you to budget for them correctly. Also by centralising your IT, and bringing in services, such as cloud computing, at peak times, it could be possible to bring down your energy costs still further.

Flexibility and security

In fact, cloud computing is one of the key tools for achieving a Dynamic Infrastructure, and it's also one of the ways you can help improve your business resiliency. By pooling your IT and then backing up your systems and data to off-site data centres, for example, your company could start to become a truly 24/7 business, as well as being more flexible and able to withstand any disasters.

Dynamic Infrastructure can also help inform your security strategy. Virtualization could potentially make it easier for anyone to access your critical business information, by consolidating it together rather than having it spread across separate servers. This is why Dynamic Infrastructure also looks at your physical security, by regulating who is and isn't allowed into your offices and by restricting internet access to employees using passwords or smart cards.

Another benefit of Dynamic Infrastructure is an assessment of your Information Infrastructure, and how your data is managed within the business. This looks particularly at compliance, availability, retention and security. One of the key bugbears in IT has been keeping up with the security patches, data compliance, and knowing what to do with your archived data: the more servers you have, the bigger the problem. By centralising your IT and by using virtualization, the security updates become much easier to manage, compliance is simplified, archiving becomes an easier process, and, because there's just one route into the data, policing the data is also much easier.

Centralising your servers addresses the key problem of keeping up with the latest security patches. Usually, the more servers you have, the bigger the problem; but by centralising your system and using virtualization, security updates become far easier to manage. What's more, rather than having multiple routes into an organisation through various data silos, there's just one, which makes policing much easier and more effective.

Data overload

As we said at the start, Dynamic Infrastructure is not a simple one-product-fits-all approach: it's essentially a solution that aims to utilise everything you already have, then fits that to your businesses current and future demands, allowing you to potentially save time, money and manage your risks intelligently. Have a safe journey.

DO YOU HAVE HP SERVERS ON A MAINTENANCE CONTRACT?

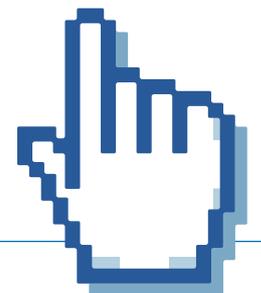
Your company could make significant savings switching provider to IBM. IBM ServicePac for Maintenance of HP Server Products offers the highest level of service excellence and expertise but typically at significantly cheaper rates than the equivalent service from HP.

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To find out more about how IBM Dynamic Infrastructure can help your business, visit: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

IBM LEADS WEB PORTAL MARKET

Companies across the globe go for WebSphere Portal 6.1

IBM is the global market leader in enterprise portal products and user interaction tools, according to analyst Gartner, with more than 6,500 IBM clients using the company's Web 2.0-enhanced WebSphere Portal software.

IBM web portals have been well received in many different sectors. They are particularly prominent in the finance industry, where

they are used by the top 10 global banks, seven of the top 10 European banks, nine of the top 10 US banks, and eight of the top 10 Asia Pacific banks.

IBM WebSphere Portal software version 6.1 is designed to securely combine information from the business and the web. The Web 2.0 features help employee productivity and can allow quicker information gathering, while the live text feature allows a user to click on text – in the context of the business process being

used – and see supporting information related to the job at hand.

For example, a salesperson clicking on a client's address could also be presented with a map and driving directions, or an electronic business card could pop up when accessing a person's name.

For more information on IBM's WebSphere Portal software version 6.1, please visit: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

IMPROVE YOUR DATA MANAGEMENT

New offerings from IBM Optim and InfoSphere portfolios

Managing and extracting useful business information from disparate data sources within an organisation is getting increasingly complex. To help ease the problem, IBM has announced new offerings within the Optim Portfolio, which aims to enable organisations to work more efficiently across disparate data platforms,

and reduce their development and administration costs.

In addition, IBM has created the new InfoSphere Foundation tools, which will help speed up access to critical business information and help manage this as a strategic asset.

Working together, the Optim and InfoSphere portfolios combine to help organisations

manage the complete lifecycle of their business information, from requirements to retirements, regardless of the complexity of their data infrastructure. The aim is to achieve improved operations through better informed decision making.

To learn more about IBM's Integrated Data Management offerings and InfoSphere Foundational Tools, please visit: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

FREE ONLINE GUIDE TO AVOIDING DATA LOSS

Video tips on information security from IBM experts

The latest set of fast-track Q&A videos from IBM aim to provide valuable tips on managing your data. Each video is designed to present practical and effective techniques to help your company guard against the loss of key business information.

The videos aim to address some of your biggest fears over data management, including:

- Understanding the risks and costs associated with data loss

- How to protect data that is distributed across branches and on personal devices
- Building a business continuity plan that meets the data protection needs of your business
- Complying with regulations.

The short videos, produced in conjunction with Guru Online, are divided into 19 different subject areas, and explore a number of the key issues concerning your company's approach to data protection. These include how you can to make sure you can recover the critical data required to keep your company running, and how

often you need to test your ability to recover this data.

As Lydia Baldwin, Solutions Manager at IBM Business Continuity and Resiliency Services, points out in one of the videos: "No one wants to be in the headlines for data loss."

To see the videos, please visit: ibm.com/expressadvantage/uk/thinktank

Learn more about Dynamic Infrastructure.
Contact your dedicated Client Manager.

Andy Campbell, IBM Client Manager
Tel: 08705 122133 (544019)
E-mail: andy_campbell@uk.ibm.com

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