INFRASTRUCTURES IN FLUX: BRIDGING TECHNICAL EVOLUTION WITH BUSINESS AMBITION

EVENT REPORT

A Roundtable Organized by

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At the core of business success lies the critical role of technical infrastructure. Today's thriving enterprises depend on the fusion of robust technical systems with ambitious strategies. These technical foundations now drive the essentials—agility, customer focus, and rapid innovation. No longer mere support, these systems actively propel growth, adaptability, and a competitive edge. This transformation raises pivotal questions for today's organizations. Do our existing cloud strategies align seamlessly with our long-term objectives? Can our future networks accommodate anticipated market developments and business expansion? How do we ensure the uninterrupted flow of operations while safeguarding critical business data in our highly interconnected era? Navigating this intricate intersection of technology and business strategy is daunting, especially for IT executives. How do they craft strategies that fortify resilience and foster growth in these converging domains?

On October 24, 2023, in partnership with Zones, CTN hosted a virtual roundtable on 'Infrastructures in Flux: Bridging Technical Evolution with Business Ambition.' The interactive and thought-provoking roundtable brought together global digital and IT leaders for meaningful insights and actionable takeaways. The participants shared their insights on outdated infrastructure, network architecture complexities, cybersecurity, digital literacy, operational knowledge, and more. The participating delegates were:

- ✓ **Aslam Mohammad** DIRECTOR OF IT AND BUSINESS APPLICATIONS **Globe Union Group**

- ✓ **David Yasenchock** DIRECTOR OF CYBERSECURITY GOVERNANCE, RISK AND COMPLIANCE **University System of New Hampshire**

- ✓ **Jeff Cann** CIO **Encore Electric, Inc.**

- ✓ **Michael Roberts** VICE PRESIDENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY **Utica University**

- ✓ **Raj Polanki** HEAD OF IT & DIGITAL/DIVISIONAL CIO **Wacker Chemical Corporation, USA**

- ✓ **Rajiv Rao** GLOBAL VICE PRESIDENT, SECURITY & NETWORKS **Zones**

- ✓ **Robert Dickson** CIO **Wichita Public Schools**

- ✓ **Rohit Agrawal** VP, IT, GLOBAL HEAD OF HYBRID CLOUD **Siemens Healthineers**

The virtual roundtable commenced with a moderator-led inventory to identify challenges obstructing seamless IT infrastructure, resulting in enhanced business growth. The participants emphasized effective communication, user training initiatives, risk management, and software-defined infrastructure, focusing on finding the most effective way to leverage IT infrastructure. The participants agreed that contextual change, skill enhancement, risk assessment, and faster adaptation are some critical challenges for management, with employees' resistance to change being their most vital. They also emphasized the need for comprehensive business continuity planning, resource collaboration, and knowledge documentation.

The virtual roundtable delved into several other noteworthy issues:

✓ **Outdated Infrastructure:** Hindering digital evolution due to obsolete technology.

✓ **Complex Network Architecture:** Managing networks, especially in remote industries like construction.

✓ **Cybersecurity Concerns:** Ensuring NIST 800-171 compliance, combating ransomware threats, and educating users about cybersecurity, specifically phishing attacks.

✓ **User Adaptability and Resistance:** Balancing tech progress with user adaptability, averting overwhelm, and addressing employee resistance to new technologies or process changes.

✓ **Business Continuity Misconceptions and Lack of Planning:** Limiting focus on backups, inadequate business continuity planning, and underinvestment in IT.

✓ **Communication Challenges:** Conveying technical changes effectively to employees and stakeholders, ensuring contextual understanding for better acceptance.

✓ **Operational Knowledge Transfer Challenges:** Impairing long-term support due to struggles in knowledge transfer; adapting training for diverse digital literacy levels.

✓ **Third-Party Risks Management and Assessment:** Overseeing risks tied to numerous vendors, assessing relationships, and standardizing technology across departments for consistency.

Key Viewpoints:

Aslam Mohammad
Director of IT & Business Applications
Globe Union Group

In uniting our decentralized organization, standardization across regions is crucial. Challenges in infrastructure and diverse viewpoints persist. Cybersecurity succeeded, but networking, data integration, and BI face inconsistencies

Jeff Cann
CIO
Encore Electric, Inc.

My challenge is aligning tech strategy with business growth in a construction-focused company. I emphasize a clear 'why statement,' like 'caring for our people from pre-hire to retire,' simplifying tech decisions, and fostering understanding.

David Yasenchock
Director of Cybersecurity Governance, Risk, and Compliance
University System of New Hampshire

We invested in third-party risk management software, which was effective but costly. The process remains labor-intensive and complicated. However, it emphasized the crucial need to streamline our approach and tackle cybersecurity vulnerabilities arising from fragmented IT systems.

Robert Dickson
CIO
Wichita Public Schools.

In a rapidly changing world with attention spans of 41 seconds, adapting to diverse digital literacy levels is vital. Embracing constant change and using various communication mediums frequently are essential in today's evolving landscape.

- **Cybersecurity Insurance and Digital Literacy:** Navigating cybersecurity insurance complexities, adapting to market demands, ensuring digital literacy, and engaging users effectively.

Along with presenting the challenges, the participants also brought forward opportunities and solutions to optimize IT infrastructure, nurture talent, enhance communication, and foster resource collaboration. Participants unanimously pointed out that finding the right balance between implementing technological changes for business improvement and ensuring a positive user experience will enhance productivity.

Opportunities:

- To enhance executive education to garner support for infrastructure challenges and importance.

- To utilize microservices and incremental learning for diverse users to enhance digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness.

- To balance technological advancements for productivity with a positive user experience.

- To create standardized, consolidated systems for efficiency, balancing flexibility for diverse business needs.

- To utilize AI and cloud technology for enhanced business operations and heightened security.

- To partner with external organizations and leverage resources for cost-effective cybersecurity enhancements.

- To implement focused strategies, involve stakeholders early and foster collaboration in the transformation journey.

- To establish an R&D team to address field-specific challenges and drive innovation.

- To demonstrate IT's contribution to organizational productivity and fostering stakeholder trust.

- To balance standardization with flexibility for diverse business needs.

Solutions:

Educational Approach:

- Using non-technical analogies to bridge IT-business communication gaps.

Michael Roberts
Vice President of Information Technology
Utica University

In the organization, identify your champions—those supportive allies who can help drive your initiatives—and empower them. Leverage their influence to train and raise awareness. Otherwise, IT efforts risk becoming white noise.

Raj Polanki
Head of IT & Digital/Divisional CIO
Wacker Chemical Corporation, USA

In our cybersecurity approach, we emphasize three pillars: employee awareness to prevent attacks, proactive vulnerability management, and preparation for business continuity. I provide training and external exposure, empowering my team to tackle challenges effectively.

Rajiv Rao
Global Vice President, Security & Networks
Zones

Balancing change for business benefit and user tolerance requires clear KPIs. Assess business downtime tolerance, ensure IT restores systems within KPIs, embed cybersecurity intuitively in app development, and provide upfront FAQs for user self-reliance.

Stakeholder Management:

✓ Practicing patience and understanding to navigate complex decisions in slow-paced environments.

Efficient Software Implementation:

✓ Implementing software-defined solutions for seamless large-scale changes across networks, workplaces, data centers, and cloud environments.

Global IT Support:

✓ Facilitating seamless support across dispersed sites for uninterrupted operational efficiency.

Comprehensive Continuity Planning:

✓ Encouraging holistic planning, considering tolerance levels and interim solutions for system failures, and moving beyond mere backups.

Targeted Cyber Training:

✓ Tailoring sessions for varied users, focusing on phishing awareness, boosting digital literacy, and minimizing security risks.

External Expertise:

✓ Utilizing external resources for cybersecurity assessments and infrastructure evaluations, bolstering security measures.

Empowering the Workforce:

✓ Enabling continuous learning, fostering external exposure, and advocating intuitive application design.

Strategic Communication:

✓ Highlighting business value and user experience, emphasizing the 'why' behind technology changes.

Knowledge Management:

✓ Encouraging documentation, robust risk management, and integrated risk assessment in procurement.

Rohit Agrawal
VP, IT, Global Head of Hybrid Cloud
Siemens Healthineers

In addressing unforeseen threats, targeted campaigns tailored to specific customer groups are essential. Acknowledging the rapid pace of change, our focus shifted towards precise and early communication. We involve stakeholders from various departments, explaining the changes and reasons behind them.

The event participants agreed that to achieve maximum efficiency, organizations should define their IT infrastructure strategy, rethink their business and technology architecture, prioritize their resources and investment, and create a pool of talented people. Defining IT infrastructure goals, risk assessment, vulnerability management, and business continuity is paramount in this dynamic business world. The roundtable concluded that such activities cannot be a once-in-a-year endeavor. It also focused on establishing uniform technology standards to support business processes.

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