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Future-Proofing Your IT Strategy

Imagine you're a physician working at a hospital where the records are stored electronically. An unconscious patient comes into the ER, but before taking action, you need to read his chart and make sure he's not allergic to the first-line medication.

In a normal scenario, you would quickly verify the patient's record and proceed with treatment. But what if the hospital's network was down when the patient came in? It's not difficult to imagine the potentially tragic circumstances that could ensue.

While this may be one of the more dramatic examples illustrating a network's important role in the enterprise, it's a valid one. The layers of architectures and IT systems that comprise a network are critical to a business's ability to not only function, but also grow as the IT landscape continues to evolve. The logical course for any organization is to think about its core services in strategic terms, future-proofing its network to ensure it scales at the same rate as the business.

"The overall IT architecture of businesses is changing rapidly. Companies are deploying more of their applications in the cloud, as well as more IT capabilities like the Internet of Things," says Jesper Andersen, CEO of IT automation and security company Infoblox. "All of those changes require a more dynamic networking infrastructure, one that allows you to change much faster as companies invest in IT. Regardless of where you are on that journey, you need to purchase network capabilities that can function well and give you dependency, scalability and reliability, but also allow you to shift gears as you change your business."

Starting at the Top

It's a process that must begin at the upper echelons of the organization. It's up to the C-suite to lead the conversation around IT infrastructure and ask the big questions that will determine how a business leverages its network architecture to gain a competitive advantage. Increasingly, that means building an infrastructure capable of supporting new technologies—such as AI, machine learning and the Internet of Things—that will strengthen a company's position in the market landscape.

"There isn't a business out there that isn't under attack by new startups that can leverage IT to provide different types of business models," Andersen says. "And on the positive, there are no businesses that can't find ways to leverage IT to offer better services, capabilities and products to their customers—or at a minimum, create higher profitability for their businesses."

The challenge, ultimately, lies in ensuring the vast array of tools supporting the network architecture communicate with each other and fully integrate. This is especially important from a security perspective: The analytics systems used by a security operations center may require information from systems ranging from IP addresses to the DNS. When the different services governing the network communicate seamlessly, Andersen says, Infoblox can notify a vulnerability scanner the moment an IP client makes a query to a suspect domain via a DNS connection.

"These integrations between different systems are things we feel are extremely important. But unfortunately, they're something that many product vendors don't focus on," Andersen says. "They tend to pool their resources into making their own niche area the best it can be, whether that's a firewall or something else. Instead, we've found that integrating these different systems is something that's really compelling to our customers."

Powering the Enterprise

Businesses in every industry, in both the private and public sector, stand to reap significant benefits by approaching IT more strategically. Andersen points to a school district in Clark County, Nevada, that Infoblox partnered with to update a 15-year-old BIND system that had made it difficult to implement new, student-aimed technologies. By replacing the old system with several new solutions, like a firewall and DNS management tools, the district's IT team was able to become more agile, spending less time on mundane tasks and focusing more time on strategic initiatives[*].

The same could be said of numerous banks, mobile operators and manufacturers—or hospitals, for that matter—that have partnered with Infoblox to develop or scale their network infrastructure.

"In today's world, everything is powered by IT," Andersen says. "Every single machine and device that's part of a company is connected to a network, and that means the stability of the services we provide—the resiliency and availability—are so critical. If the DNS servers we sell to our customers were to go down, businesses would come to a grinding halt."

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