

Businesses ignore applications architecture to their detriment

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For businesses, it's no longer about infrastructure alone, it's about applications, and how these are architected. How applications work and function can highlight problem points in the business, and identifying these will in turn, prevent outages.

Too many CIOs don't know what's under the hood of their organisation application wise, and end up being stuck with a spaghetti infrastructure that cannot be supported. If the architecture isn't right, the whole IT system is a mess. The idea behind application architecture is to define the application ecosystem necessary to support the business.

Align with the business

An important element is looking at how applications align with business capabilities. This gives a proper perspective of how the applications support the business. Next, the business needs to understand the technology that makes up the various applications, which includes the software, including the actual application plus what it runs on - Web or application servers. It also includes the hardware and network elements that the application requires, the interface that the application provides for integration, and the data sources it draws on to function.

In addition, companies need to consider which staff in the business use which applications, and for what functions. It is impossible to properly architect applications without taking into consideration who will be using them. This must include who uses the application, how often, and what for, who owns the application, who funds and maintains the application, who is allowed to change the application and what processes must be followed, and who supports the application.

It has long been said that information is the currency of the modern economy, and a factor in driving the organisation. Creating, organising, managing and storing that information is a primary function of many enterprise applications. It is vital to establish how applications are linked to data, including the access of information through the application, the data created by the application to give users access to information, and the actual data that the application needs itself, to function.

Application infrastructure

Ultimately, application architecture is way more important than application design, and offers numerous benefits. For one, too many security breaches are the direct result of poor application architecture. Architecture not only has the biggest impact on how secure, or insecure an application is, it also determines the cost of fixing any vulnerabilities.

Moreover, proper application infrastructure is easier to maintain. Carrying on from my point about a 'spaghetti infrastructure' earlier, although a well-architected applications ecosystem may cost more upfront, it saves money and time in the long run. It is far easier and less time consuming to manage.

Another benefit is that a well-architected application environment is flexible and adaptable. None of us can foresee what the ICT landscape will look like in a few years, and because of this, our environments must be adaptable to changing technologies and trends. A badly architected environment does not allow for this. The environment and the applications themselves must be ready to scale along with the business and adapt as needed.

When you get right down to it, proper application architecture saves not only time, but a lot of cash. Even the best applications will be a waste of resources if they are not properly architected.

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