How managed service providers can boost your digital transformation

The webinar *Is Your Managed Service Provider Helping You Enable Innovation* was held April 5, 2018. Hosted by ITWC CIO Jim Love and sponsored by Carbon60, the session looked at how managed cloud and hosting providers can help accelerate an organization's digital transformation. Expert advice was provided by Bik Dutta, vice-president marketing of Carbon60 Networks, and Chris Christianopoulos of HP Enterprise. Melody Collet, senior vice president of IT & Operations at COMDA Advertising Connections, provided insights on how a managed services provider helped her company transform.

A market shift in IT purchasing

The way organizations consume information technology services is rapidly changing. "Organizations are looking for ways to increase speed, improve agility, and drive cost effectiveness," said Chris Christianopoulos of HP Enterprise.

To address these challenges, customers are increasingly sourcing and managing IT services across a blend of traditional on-premises IT, private cloud and public cloud to create the right mix for their unique business needs. But hybrid environments are complex to design and manage, he said. "You need to put your applications in the right place to ensure maximum performance."

Nonetheless, many small and medium enterprises in Canada are still trying to manage it on their own. Indeed, in a poll at the start of the webinar, 60 per cent of the participants said they are managing IT internally. Thirty-three per cent said they are using a managed services provider, whereas 20 per cent said they're using the public cloud.

" The value of the managed service provider is as the glue to stitch together the multiple vendors and offerings to bring together a comprehensive solution.

— *Bik Dutta,*
Carbon60
Networks

POLL: Where are you today?

Manage IT internally	60%
Using a Managed Service Provider	33%
Public cloud	20%
Other	7%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
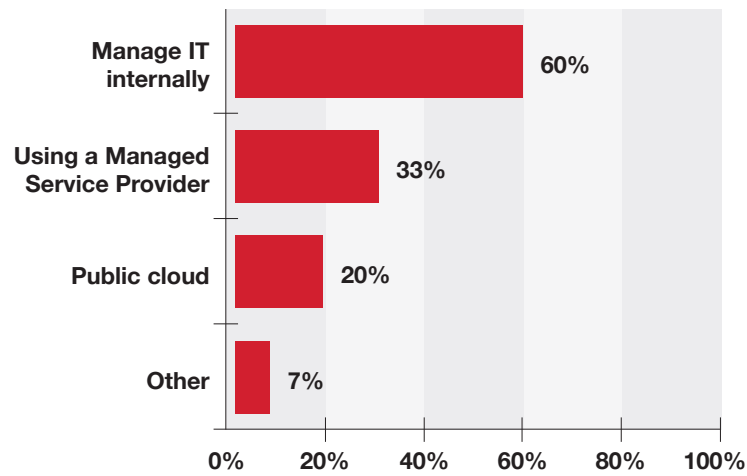
This approach is starting to change in Canada, as more organizations seek to buy their information technology as a service from third-party providers, instead of building it themselves, said Christianopoulos. Market data shows that spending for 'build' related solutions is growing at 14 per cent, while spending for 'consume' type services is increasing faster at 30 per cent.

Managed service providers (MSP) take care of the challenging issues in today's technology environment and "that allows the organization to spend its energy on driving its business forward," said Bik Dutta of Carbon60 Networks.

The benefits of using a managed service provider

In the second poll of the session, 69 per cent of participants said they rely on internal resources for advice when considering a public cloud provider. At the same time, almost 31 per cent said their main source of advice is a managed service provider.

"The value of the managed service provider is as the glue to stitch together the multiple vendors and offerings to bring together a comprehensive solution," said Dutta.

How an MSP supports COMDA's successful digital transformation

Five years ago, executives at COMDA Advertising Connections were facing the challenge of a disruption in their industry. The promotional products company needed to shift from a print-based sales approach using catalogues and flyers to an ecommerce model.

To compound the problem, COMDA's IT Department was not operating effectively. Multiple contractors were running IT projects with little overall coordination and costs were out of control. Contractors were constantly scrambling to keep up with a plague of system outages.

Collet decided that, if COMDA was going to succeed with its digital transformation, it needed to outsource the company's IT. "The need to innovate is what drove me to a decision to outsource," said Collet. "We now rely on partners to do the heavy lifting."

Two years ago, the added pressure on COMDA's IT systems and processes came when COMDA engaged a digital marketing partner to accelerate its digital strategy. COMDA drove a transformation of the customer experience, sales, and marketing. "Having Carbon60 at the table with our marketing partner enabled and supported COMDA through never before seen levels of agility and volumes of digital efforts that resulted and will continue for years," said Collet.

The results have been impressive. Online orders increased by 48 per cent last year. Major improvements to its website led to a 45 per cent boost in its conversion rate. "With the partnerships we have made, COMDA is now in a better position to succeed in the digital landscape."

Shrinking capital budgets are also driving organizations to seek technology as a service, said Dutta. In particular, organizations start to look at different models, based on operating instead of capital expenditures, when their hardware reaches end of life.

The skills gap continues to be an issue for many organizations. "When we began our transformation, I knew I needed help from the outside," said Collet of COMDA. "I couldn't build an internal team fast enough."

> ❝ Service providers are not tied to a specific supplier or technology, so they can help their customers optimize their total cost of ownership.
>
> *— Chris Christianopoulos, HP Enterprise*

POLL: When considering a public cloud provider, what is your main source of advice?
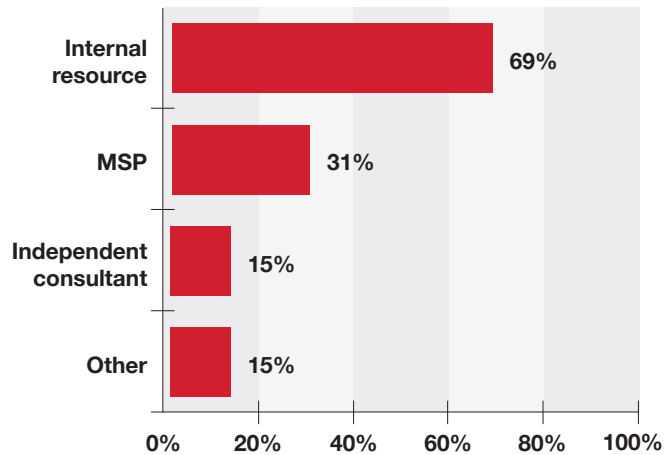
The lack of skills can make it even more difficult for organizations to deliver the always-on, high-quality customer experience required in today's marketplace, said Christianopoulos. "If you want to help the business achieve its goals, that's where a white glove service from an MSP will help drive success.

This "white glove service" is what differentiates MSPs from large cloud vendors, said Christianopoulos. MSPs can provide customized services that go beyond the standardized offerings of public cloud vendors. "Service providers are not tied to a specific supplier or technology, so they can help their customers optimize their total cost of ownership," he said.

Ultimately, MSPs foster innovation by managing an organization's infrastructure and processes, so that they can focus on their core business, said Dutta.

What to consider when selecting an MSP

The top priority in selecting an MSP has to be its service-level capabilities, said Collet. They must provide 24/7 x 365 support, both remote and on site and there should be clear written procedures for escalation. "You should feel confident that the support team will be on top of a request at all times," she said. In the event of an emergency, a fast resolution time is crucial. A good MSP should be communicating with you the entire time.

Collet warned that organizations should watch out for vendors that require chasing to get a response or that do not take accountability when working with other vendors. As well, they should treat your staff with the same level of respect and response they would give to a vice president, she said.

Building the relationship with a partner starts with your own business, Collet said. "Be open and honest and say exactly what you're expecting," she said. "Introduce them to your customer and your business. A key differentiator is when the vendor is willing to come on site and engage in conversation with your leaders. They should understand everything about your business."

About Carbon60

Carbon60 Networks specializes in delivering end-to-end managed hosting and cloud computing solutions for public and private sector organizations with business-critical IT workloads. Carbon60 provides a white-glove customer experience culture to provide a deep level of technical support services combined with a nimble approach, making it the trusted choice for companies that need a partner to deliver solutions with world-class reliability, performance and security.

www.carbon60.com

About ITBusiness.ca and ITWC

ITBusiness.ca is Canada's leading information source for line-of-business professionals seeking to leverage technology to drive their business goals – from HR through to marketing and the C-Suite. Providing an overview of trends and technologies, ITBusiness.ca also offers insights into product availability, deployment challenges, and business outcomes within a Canadian context.

ITBusiness.ca is published by ITWC, a privately-owned digital media and content services company. Building on more than three decades of solid relationships with Canada's technology decision-makers through award-winning excellence in journalism, ITWC delivers incisive, relevant information to executive and managerial audiences. It also provides leading, integrated marketing content strategies to clients, including more than 200 global Fortune 1000 companies.

www.itbusiness.ca | www.itwc.com