7 STEPS TO IMPROVING IT RELEVANCE

Close the Gulf Between IT and Business Users
The Disconnect Between IT Teams and Business Users

Years ago, businesses users had virtually no choice when it came to resolving IT-related needs and issues. If it took months for their IT team to deliver a new server for an application in development, they had to wait. If it took too long for IT to troubleshoot a critical application, they had to deal with it. While this caused significant dissatisfaction, there was little the business could do from a practical standpoint.

Then came AWS, which changed the world of information technology forever.

For the first time, line-of-business users had real choices at their fingertips—a way to get around restrictions and regain a sense of control. These new options didn’t create a divide between IT organizations and business users—they simply magnified an issue that was already there.

So now what?
Your End Users Now Have Choices

Today’s workforce expects fast, simple access to business applications on any device—without latency or bandwidth issues. Speed, agility, and efficiency are the goal, and if IT teams can’t deliver, users won’t hesitate to find what they need on their own to get the job done.

Now more than ever, IT needs to align with business users to help them get what they need, and ensure the security and integrity of company-related data and information. And they need to do it in such a way that it’s simple, straightforward, and makes sense.

Here’s a 7-step plan to help you get back on the path to relevance by helping your users get what they need and still protect the business.
7 Steps to Boosting IT Relevance

1. Implement self-service for resource requests
2. Market IT services to your end users
3. Infrastructure as code
4. Become an IT developer
5. Begin to think about multi-cloud networking
6. Go beyond infrastructure and deliver complete stacks
7. Help app dev teams move containers to production
1. Implement Self-Service for Resource Requests

Offering self-service is the most important thing your IT team can do to increase relevance. It goes beyond simply updating request fulfillment processes like help-desk tickets, and embraces true self-service. Because when it comes to the public and private cloud, there’s no room for tickets or help desks.

Self-service fast facts

- **Speed is everything.** Good self-service offers near instant gratification. It just works.

- **What they know is what they want.** A consumer-simple experience mimics the experiences users have with the apps and devices they use every day.

- **Automation is your new best friend.** Automation helps dramatically speed up the provisioning of infrastructure resources, so that you can provide what your users want faster.

- **One size does not fit all.** As you’re choosing a self-service model, look for one that accommodates the diverse needs of your users. Consider solutions that provide catalog, CLI, and API level access.
2. Market IT Services to Your End Users

Traditionally, IT teams haven’t needed to market their services to business users—but with so many other options out there, it’s time to step up and create more visibility around what you do, so that your users know what to expect, and how to get the most out of your organization. The more they know about what you offer, the less likely they’ll be to seek out unapproved resources.

As you market your IT resources, remember to:

- **Identify** what you provide in clear, simple language
- **Show** case studies to demonstrate what users can expect
- **Explain** the benefits of IT resources to users
- **Meet** users where they are: host events, lunches, and learning sessions

But important as marketing is, it’s not sufficient on its own. You still need tools that enable you to deliver better service.
3. Enable Infrastructure as Code

In a software-defined data center (SDDC), everything in a traditional hardware-based data center is abstracted as software, making it simpler to create and deploy environments. In fact, many IT professionals have begun to think of infrastructure as code, a fundamental shift in perspective that can be transformative.

WHAT IS INFRASTRUCTURE-AS-CODE?

Forrester Research describes this Infrastructure-as-Code (IaC) mindset as follows:

With IaC, developers can use a building-block approach that lets them specify exactly what kind of environment they need for any given project. Each building block—compute, storage, and networking—can be quickly and endlessly configured for any kind of request. IaC supports self-service, and is programmable. Since it is programmable, it can easily be tied into continuous integration/continuous delivery (CI/CD) tools that are driving the application development process.

“Forrester, Lead The I&O Software Revolution With Infrastructure-As-Code, September 2017

“An SDDC treats infrastructure in the same manner that an application developer treats the application—it’s all code.”
4. Become an IT Developer

If infrastructure is code, then it makes sense for IT to adopt a more developer-like mindset. This means IT should think about treating everything in the data center the same way app development teams think about the software they’re building. App Dev teams leverage source control systems and a controlled and automated process to move software from developer laptop, through testing, and into production.

SOFTWARE-DEFINED DATA CENTER (SDDC) = IaC

With so much of the data center now software-defined, there is no shortage of targets where IT could begin to apply DevOps principles and CI/CD practices to IT Code. For instance: Configuration files; free form scripts written in Perl, Python, or any number of languages; scripts associated with Configuration Management solutions like Puppet, Chef, Ansible, Salt; workflows associated with any number of orchestration solutions.

The application of DevOps principles to IT Code is positioned to have the same impact on IT code that DevOps made on application code. Specifically, it can help to increase agility, improve quality, and lower the cost of IT Operations.
5. Begin to Think About Multi-Cloud Networking

Developing and deploying applications across clouds has become increasingly necessary, but it can be complicated. Software-defined networking (SDN) can simplify the process and help you realize greater levels of speed and agility.

Historically, setting up networking and security services for a new application was a time-consuming process. Networking and security teams had to manually reconfigure physical switches, routers, firewalls, and load balancers. With SDN, that’s no longer necessary. IT teams now have the ability to deploy and configure a virtual network that dramatically simplifies network and security operations. This allows IT to treat networks and security as code, and to treat any cloud as if it were part of a single enterprise network.

If you’re embracing DevOps principles, and you want to rapidly provision a complete infrastructure, you need to virtualize the network and security services right alongside virtualized compute and storage.
6. Go Beyond Infrastructure and Deliver Complete Stacks

Developers don’t care about infrastructure—they care about writing quality code that moves the business forward. The goal of any IT organization should be to give developers everything they need to accomplish just that. By helping developers get more done faster, it helps change the perception of IT as a blocker to IT as an enabler.

REMOVING FRICTION, ONE EXPERIENCE AT A TIME

To become an enabler, IT teams need the ability to deliver both frictionless Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) and some version of Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) to their developers. This doesn’t mean the same thing to everyone. For some, it means providing access to a platform that delivers traditional middleware components on demand. For others, it’s all about offering access to a full-fledged developer platform with tools that can help develop traditional or cloud-native apps.

Configuration management tools can help automate the delivery of middleware stacks to speed development and adhere to standards. Consider integrating these tools alongside other capabilities you use to automate the delivery of IaaS. As you proceed, take the time to figure out how to leverage solutions like Puppet, Ansible, Chef, and Salt. A Cloud Management Platform (CMP) can help—provided you choose one that can provision both 2nd- and 3rd-generation apps.
7. Help App Dev Teams Move Containers to Production

Thanks to how easy they are to create, developers creating net-new applications have flocked to containers. That’s because containers are highly portable across cloud environments and simple to update. But tools that support scaling up container-based operations, and moving containers to production, can be hard to find.

Existing tools fail to:

- Address all production-level requirements like speed, performance, and availability
- Address all enterprise requirements like role-based access and approvals
- Integrate container-based application components with traditional 2nd-gen apps

If your IT organization can help address these issues with your dev teams that are focused on cloud-native container-based applications, you’ll provide tremendous value to the business. Focus on helping them successfully move container-based applications to production, and watch your relevance soar.
Take the Next Steps Toward IT Relevance

Building good, productive relationships with your business users—from developers to customer-facing employees—should be the primary goal of every IT organization. Wherever you are on your journey to making your team more relevant, VMware can help.

A market leader in virtualization and cloud computing, VMware offers solutions for cloud management that can help you deliver services quickly and securely. VMware vRealize® Suite is a comprehensive cloud management platform that can help you manage multi-cloud environments and run all your apps, including traditional and container workloads.

With solutions from VMware, your IT team can become a better partner to both developers and business users, helping you maintain relevance—and keeping your organization secure.