

Changing business landscape sparks a race for digital talent - Accenture opinion

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The saying goes: 'The more advanced technology gets, the quicker it becomes more advanced.' IT infrastructure is changing rapidly. Complexity is on the rise. Digital talent is scarce.



Infrastructure is becoming code, and the cloud is evolving into a continuum of technologies. At the same time, a rapidly changing business landscape is demanding even faster transformation timelines. The combined effect? IT departments have enormous pressure to support an increasingly demanding and complex set of requirements with legacy technology and skills – some of which simply can't be met with existing infrastructure environments.



Willie Schoeman, managing director within the technology business and cloud first lead at Accenture in Africa

But there's more. All this acceleration has also radically changed how IT and infrastructure are delivered and operated. The shift to as-a-service and infrastructure-as-code has left many organisations a massive technology-related headache. Initially hired for their expertise in traditional data centres, mainframes, networks, and service desk operations, the infrastructure workforce is now displaced. Without proper investment and support to reskill, these highly skilled resources struggle to stay ahead of the mounting digital skills needed to work in a modern infrastructure organisation.

It's no surprise, then, that many organisations feel daunted by the prospect of unwinding their businesses from legacy infrastructure and commercial commitments. It may explain why only 12% of companies say they're currently reinventing their business with the cloud.

Migrating your people to the cloud

According to our research at Accenture, cloud leaders who transformed their people and their technology achieved 60% higher ROI on cloud investments than those who focused solely on the technology. However, not all people-change programmes drive the same amount of value. There are three 'no-regrets' people moves for the Infrastructure workforce that has the most significant impact on value at any stage of your journey across the cloud continuum: alignment, ability,

and adoption.

1. Alignment

Redefine the operating model for cloud or cloud-like operations, enabling seamless collaboration between IT and the business, engineering and operations, and human and AI/machine intelligence.

2. Ability

Reskill infrastructure talent in the cloud across multiple disciplines, including XaaS, infrastructure as code, software-defined networks, security, continuous integration and development (CI/CD), self-healing and other advanced technologies.

3. Adoption

Support infrastructure workers to embrace new working methods, including SRE, CI/CD, product management, full-stack accountability, and DevSecOps, by setting clear expectations, adjusting performance metrics, and creating incentives to align with new objectives.

It is important to note that with more significant numbers of cloud-based workloads and ever-increasing amounts of data flowing throughout the enterprise, the network can quickly become a bottleneck, choking system performance and creating frustration for every worker.

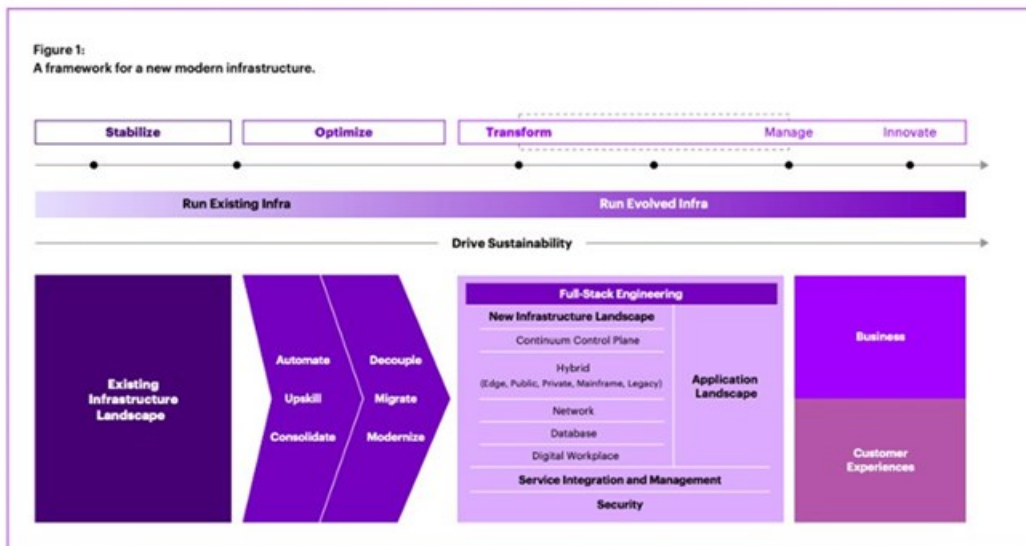
With such a significant role to play in the continuum, the network has never been more critical to the prospects of a business. The excellent news is networks are becoming far more automated, integrated, and software-defined. In particular, SD-WAN technology is transforming networks into platforms, enabling them to be configured and managed in a faster, more automated, more efficient, and more agile way.

With 5G also poised to enable radically enhanced cellular connectivity and private network capability over the next few years, enterprises will have a range of modern and agile options as they rethink their networks. And as organisations adapt to the post-Covid 'everywhere, anywhere' workplace model, this agility will be even more essential.

Harmonising the IT estate across the continuum

Sticking with traditional working methods – typically highly manual, reactive, and error-prone – is simply a recipe for chaos and escalating costs. Many have looked to bring stability and control to their IT environments by implementing cloud management platforms. These integrated products help organisations manage cloud environments by enforcing stricter security and compliance and increasing transparency across different infrastructure components. They also enhance expenditure control by enabling FinOps operating models that bring greater financial transparency and accountability to individual cloud infrastructure decisions.

As the concept of cloud expands, Accenture believes enterprises should go further still. By evolving the concept into a continuum control plane (see below figure), the organisation can extend its strategy beyond a pure technology focus to encompass the entire complexity of the enterprise. That includes the processes for building and consuming cloud continuum capabilities and the skills and abilities of the people who use them. With a continuum control plane orchestrating across the whole of the infrastructure landscape, organisations can unlock new agile operating models that accelerate concept-to-cash cycles and enable new and better experiences for customers and employees.



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In short, a continuum control plane provides the best of both worlds: the stability that's essential to controlling cost and the agility that's critical for future growth and innovation. It's an exciting future for enterprises, and it all rests on having a stable and optimised infrastructure foundation. The enterprise IT focus is transparent – creating ever-ready infrastructure for today while planning for a new tomorrow in the cloud continuum.

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