

# The shift in data centre transformation

ICT spending in 2016 will largely be driven by investments in software, IT services and mobile devices. In South Africa specifically, overall hardware infrastructure will also be a big driver as a result of current market expansion. According to International Data Corporation (IDC), line of business or decision-makers from departments other than IT will rise to become major influencers of IT spending, making the CIOs role even more complex and demanding.



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Over the years, data centres in particular have undergone a strategic transformation to become an IT and business enabler rather than a mere business support function. IDC expects that by 2017 and beyond the conversations will move solely to the cloud with all data centre infrastructure spend utilised towards the creation, adoption and optimisation of 3rd platform technologies. Metering and chargeback will become mainstream in the move to create hybrid cloud environments.

Until last year, the infrastructure conversations were still skewed towards servers, storage and networking investments. While there was some overlap between these technology purchases, the majority of purchases were still made in silos on an ad-hoc and needs-base. Yonela Nkinti, senior research analyst enterprise systems, at IDC says: “Our latest research showed a lot of standardisation, consolidation and server virtualisation as enterprises began to understand the need to simplify infrastructure.”

The market has also matured to a stage where the conversations have clearly shifted to virtualised, converged and software-defined infrastructures. “Based on our CIO surveys and industry insights it is evident that enterprises are moving to an automated management phase within their infrastructure, introducing automation and orchestration within their environments,” she says.

## Virtualisation

IDC says the percentage of virtualised servers in South Africa will grow 50% by 2018, while servers’ shipments will increase by 3% in the same period. This indicates much faster growth in virtualisation and, as a result, virtualised server environments may reach saturation. Virtualisation reaching saturation may become a cost saving item due to management complexity. Once the market is saturated, the only way to continue to realise cost savings will be to move to private/hybrid cloud solutions or to extend virtualisation capabilities to client and storage infrastructure

## Software-defined infrastructure

“Software-defined infrastructure may result in as much as six times the cost-savings of pure server virtualisation. This includes the virtualisation of servers, storage, desktops and networking, all underlined by a software management layer which manages all operations,” says Nkinti. According to IDC’s South Africa CIO survey, 16% of CIOs have already implemented software-defined networks, while 38% are planning to implement it before the end of 2017. As for client (desktop) virtualisation, 27% of companies are planning to implement it before the end of 2017.

## **Converged systems**

She adds that many end users were planning to standardise on integrated systems. “We anticipate that, in North Africa and Europe, as much as 50% of all computing, storage or network resources and workloads will run on converged systems by the end of this year. While this hasn’t been the case for South Africa so far, there are indications that a lot of data centres in the region may standardise on converged systems, considering there aren’t too many legacy systems to overcome.”

Agility, productivity, flexibility, and cost saving requirements will largely drive the adoption of converged systems within META. In South Africa, from a vertical perspective, the banking industry will be the main adopters.

“In Africa, the adoption will be higher due to lack of legacy systems and an inherent skills shortage. Organisations in the region will also leverage converged systems to leapfrog older IT setups,” says Nkinti. “The rising adoption of converged systems will set the base for software-defined environments moving forward and blades will outgrow other form factors as a result of the fast adoption of integrated systems. These technology changes will continue to drive the evolution of data centres if they are to remain relevant,” she concludes.

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