White Paper

Leveraging Data and Insights to Accelerate Time to Value for IT Investments

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August 2020

IDC OPINION

The pace at which enterprises are working to understand, integrate, and successfully operationalize new technologies into their increasingly complex IT environments is accelerating. This is especially relevant with dynamic business requirements and the shift to digital working environments. Today, technology plays a critical role across all aspects of business. It accelerates the journey to the "future enterprise" as a key enabler for remote working, intelligent business processes, and external digital engagement. And, with many aspects of business being redefined at financial, ecosystem, and societal levels, organizations will increasingly realize that they will only deliver value at all levels through the power of technology.

At the same time, it is becoming more difficult for IT teams to accelerate their level of proficiency and innovation with new technology paradigms. Trying to integrate and adopt new technologies into existing IT environments is becoming increasingly cumbersome, with continuous toggling between various systems and information sources. According to IDC research, enterprises desire higher levels of design quality, and with that comes increased complexity in their environments. That said, 62% of enterprises stated that reducing complexity over the next two years is a key priority (source: IDC's *Cloud Pulse Survey,* 1Q19 and 3Q19). To remain competitive, and meet new digital demands, IT is now required to quickly assimilate and adopt new technologies and processes while upskilling people, realigning resources, and meeting existing demands. All of this must happen without disrupting or exposing the business to new risks.

IDC believes this is becoming unattainable for most organizations with limited resources, and lack of skills, which will require IT to assemble multiple services, partners, and vendors on their own to help accelerate their adoption and success of new technology initiatives. The ability to access the right information at the right time, in one cohesive place, will help alleviate some of these challenges.

IT teams learn and consume information in different ways based on their role, maturity, skill level, resources, and time. Having the means to tap into a variety of learning methods, adoption tools, and experts, as needed, can help IT teams deploy new technologies more successfully with limited disruption to the business. IDC has also consistently seen increased investment in life-cycle services, tools, and platforms that incorporate new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML). When these advancements are coupled with expert resources, IT teams can speed knowledge transfer and increase adoption. As a result of using these resources, IDC believes that IT teams will experience greater value from their IT investments.

This IDC White Paper discusses challenges in the market and how IT managers can leverage third-party resources to help them quickly adopt, innovate, and extract value from their IT investments.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

To remain competitive, and meet new digital demands, IT departments are now required to quickly assimilate and adopt new technologies and processes while upskilling people, realigning resources, and meeting existing demands without disrupting or exposing the business to new risks. According to IDC research, 24% of enterprises stated that they are dissatisfied with the ROI on new technologies because of increasing skills gaps required to operationalize their new technologies. And hiring new talent is a top 5 goal over the next five years (source: IDC's *Cloud Pulse Survey,* 3Q19 and 4Q19). Thus the role of technology in a networked world is more visible as an enabler of the business, especially in the following dimensions:

> Valuing the importance of the network and the ability to have a consistent reliable view of current network environment

While technology has moved closer to the forefront of the business in recent years, the need for business resiliency will make organizations even more appreciative of the critical role of the power of networking. In some countries, IT and telecom infrastructures have been officially named as "critical sectors" by the government, underlining their importance to the economy. This change in attitude toward networks could drive spending on new, more resilient network solutions in the coming years, accelerating the move to intelligent networking. A key part of this investment push will be around network visibility and management. However, it is not only about delivering more resilient solutions – the network will be a critical engine of innovation.

Desire to Innovate Faster and Extract Value from New Technology Investments to Drive the Business Forward

With new areas of prioritization, enterprises will increase investments on network initiatives that were previously slowed down or paused. A key focus will be network transformation investments, which will allow organizations to support a more distributed workforce in a world that has become increasingly digital. This digital-native network will be a foundation of all types of innovation in areas like multicloud, collaboration, the Internet of Things, and edge computing.

In addition, a forward-looking, digital-native network will be a network that places a high priority on security. While business continuity is the key focus today, the acceleration of digital security initiatives will be an ongoing and long-term investment focus. IDC is already seeing a clear understanding among end users that security and networking can no longer be addressed in separate silos. A connected approach will become even more important as the new work-from-home approach increases the threat vectors of most organizations.

Efficiently Onboarding New Technologies

As cloud operating models and processes become increasingly pervasive across the enterprise IT landscape, the operational silos that separated the networking team from its IT counterparts will dissolve. New technology skills, in areas such as automation and programmability, will become increasingly important to the collaborative processes that will be essential to achieving successful

onboarding and operations. Organizations realize the importance of agility and how unforeseen challenges make it vital for IT to be ready to change its approach overnight. During COVID-19, for example, traditional office-bound roles were moved off the premise in a matter of a day or two, and organizations embraced video meetings at an unprecedented rate. The ability to operate in a cloud-managed nature provided a key advantage to companies that have embraced this approach. Networking vendors that clearly understand customers' needs and pain points around onboarding and operations will be well positioned.

Ability to Quickly Remediate Issues/Problem Resolution and/or Preempt Issues

Related to the onboarding challenges outlined previously, problem resolution will remain a key theme, especially in a world with potentially fewer IT staff at the corporate office. A network that is relatively easy to support is very good, but a network that can preempt potential issues is even better. We're seeing forward-looking vendors investing large amounts in an intelligent, intuitive network that can be an ally of the IT operations staff.

> **WHAT CISCO'S CUSTOMERS SAY**
>
> "CX Cloud was easy to provision. Within 20 minutes, we were up and running with a UI that was easy to read."
>
> "Lots of opportunity to learn contextually."
>
> "Easy to navigate portal that is organized and includes relevant policies and use cases and pulls all the pertinent information together."
>
> "Complements our investment in DNA Center to execute our work."

The Need for Consistent, Updated Information and Insights

Networking is moving toward the goal of end-to-end digital-native networks built upon the convergence of previously distinct boundaries between network types and locations. Leading network infrastructure vendors are embedding AI-supported automation into their portfolios, leveraging current advances in ML and software-defined networking to increase network programmability, visibility, and security. There are several advantages to having consistent information and insights, including reducing the need for manual network configuration and management. Initial use cases for AI-based network operations will begin with improving visibility, alerting for anomaly detection, determining root cause analysis, and faster problem resolution.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

IDC believes enterprise IT teams must collaborate more efficiently while becoming increasingly self-reliant, so they can enable their users to do more with even less.

To that end, IDC has seen an increase in the development of new life-cycle services, tools, platforms, and resources to help IT troubleshoot and remediate issues even before they happen, leveraging AI and ML to be more proactive with the health and maintenance of an enterprise IT environment. These investments are just the tip of the iceberg of what is possible to enable IT to extract maximum value more quickly from IT investments. The availability of such services, tools, and platforms in one place to access insights, expertise, and learning resources when and how IT needs them to accelerate the successful adoption of new technologies and architectures will be the key differentiator.

Considering Cisco CX Success Tracks

Many IT organizations find that moving from design to deployment to optimization of new solutions and technologies can be an arduous process. It may include many hours or days of backtracking and finding the right resources and tools as well as appropriate remediation to securely progress through stages toward a successful deployment.
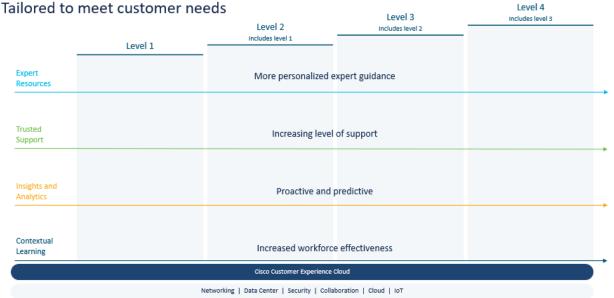
To that end, Cisco Customer Experience (CX) has introduced a new comprehensive suite of service solutions called Success Tracks, designed to simplify and dramatically accelerate the onboarding and management of organizations' Cisco technologies throughout the technology life cycle.

Built on Cisco CX's existing portfolio of services that customers benefit from today and new capabilities – combining expert resources, trusted support, insights and analytics, and contextual learning – Success Tracks enables IT professionals to realize the full value from their technology investments for a faster path to achieving business outcomes (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
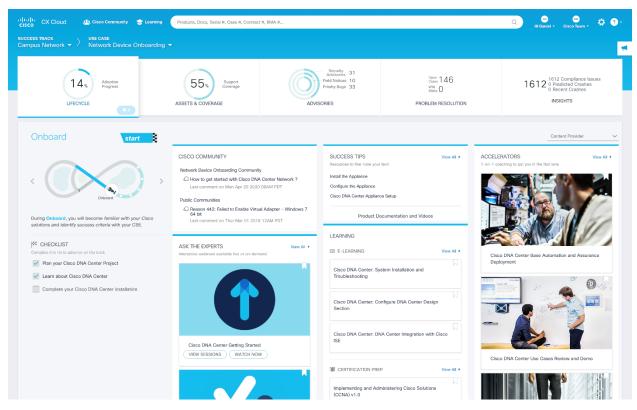
Success Tracks Levels

Source: Cisco, 2020

IT teams will be able to access and manage their Cisco technologies and Success Tracks capabilities through a single digital interface, CX Cloud. The CX Cloud is a customer portal containing information and insight, organized in such a way that IT can access the right content and the right tools at the right time to help move more efficiently through the technology life cycle. With this single-pane-of-glass approach, users get access to a variety of resources that help them methodically "check the boxes" toward successful deployment to onboarding to optimizing performance of their Cisco technologies.

What is unique is, once customers have access to the CX Cloud, they can see their environment organized in such a way that it allows for them to navigate linearly using the appropriate resources through a use case-guided approach, transforming the way they work. On the CX Cloud home screen, customers will see a dashboard on how they are progressing along the life cycle with supporting tabs for understanding their use cases, assets and coverage, any outstanding advisories, problem resolution guidance, contextual learning resource recommendations, and insights leveraging AI/ML (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Cisco CX Cloud

Source: Cisco, 2020

Success Tracks is available in four levels of services, each including a suite of capabilities so that customers can choose the level that best fits their needs. This allows for the purchase of Success Tracks based on budget, skills, available resources, and specific goals. With each level purchase, customers gain access to even more content and dedicated resources.

The first solution in this new offer is Success Tracks for Campus Network designed to help customers speed their transformation journey to a digital-ready network. Cisco plans to introduce more Success Tracks overtime spanning the range of Cisco architectures and multiple use cases.

CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

It is clear that a robust set of services that connect customers to the right expertise, insights, and learnings at the right time can help them accelerate adoption and extract the value from their investments to achieve business, technology, and operational outcomes. Typically, enterprises have anywhere from 5 to 10 strategic vendor partners, all of which may provide insights and resources that they would need to go to get similar capabilities all in one place. While access to information is powerful, prioritizing and dedicating resources to onboard and manage them effectively can prove to be a challenge for many enterprises as they execute on several concurrent projects, particularly with scaled back and disperse teams.

It will be essential for vendors to provide the appropriate usage training to help IT managers understand and access the information and benefits from robust service offerings. Otherwise, they risk the assets and insights not being utilized to their full capacity, which perpetuates a slowing of adoption and lack of success moving through the life cycle effectively.

CONCLUSION

Traditional implementation and operations approaches do not work in a multicloud world. IT departments must balance multiple projects across a range of domains, often against the backdrop of a skills shortage. IDC has seen an increase in the development of new life-cycle services, tools, platforms, and resources to help IT troubleshoot and remediate issues even before they happen, leveraging AI and ML to be more proactive with the health and maintenance of the IT environment.

Such solutions should bring skills and data-driven expertise into a single environment where organizations can identify and utilize the appropriate resources through a use case-guided approach, transforming the way they work.

To IDC, such a robust set of integrated, AI-based services that connect customers to the right expertise, insights, and learnings at the right time is the only way to help them accelerate adoption and extract the value from their investments to achieve business, technology, and operational outcomes.

About IDC

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