

It's time for IT Leaders to capitalize on Covid-momentum, consolidate their leadership and drive their cloud strategies

Byline article

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For many IT leaders, 2020 felt like a whole decade. Most of North West Europe locked down in late March 2020 and many of us are only just emerging from those restrictions over twelve months later. If necessity is the mother of invention, then during this challenging time, many CIOs have been pushed to achieve more than they ever thought was possible. They've enabled entire workforces to work remotely, putting in place the systems and tools that allowed them to be productive from their homes.

Now is an excellent time to just take a moment to reflect on what has been achieved and congratulate yourself for making it this far! In many cases, two to three-year transformation plans programs have been rolled out in as many months. And the availability of secure, flexible cloud services has been the key driver for this newfound business agility and resilience.

In many cases, the key driver for rapid cloud rollout was the overhead costs of all the on-premises systems that were costing money but not delivering any value. This realization has driven many of our customers to adjust their strategies – from the financial services organization that shelved a complex office expansion to those businesses planning to relocate their data centers. In these very different cases, the originally planned physical moves turned into software moves - they moved straight into the cloud, turned their Capex investments into Opex, and haven't looked back.

It's also worth acknowledging the many positives that have come out of the adversity we have faced. Prior to the pandemic, we witnessed the increasing democratization of IT, where lines of business drove a growing percentage of technology purchases in the name of flexibility and responsiveness. Enabling users to contribute to the technology decision-making process has proved invaluable in terms of slashing conventional long procurement cycles to meet immediate needs, but in some cases this autonomy left IT leaders struggling to keep pace with the explosion of what was once considered 'shadow IT'. Effective pandemic responses demanded more balance – neither a top-down or a bottom-up approach – rather a collaboration between IT and users, with technology deployment linked directly to business objectives.

Following a year of what one customer describes as “crisis on demand” – having to constantly deliver technology solutions to solve each new business challenge, how can leaders take advantage of the organization's newly acquired ability to make fast decisions to continue to progress on their digital transformation journeys? For most, the cloud-focused environments that delivered the business agility needed to survive the pandemic will be the foundation of ongoing transformation. Now is the time to capitalize on the momentum achieved to date.

You need to know where you are to be able to map a path to your destination

The first thing to do is evaluate what you have. Your IT infrastructure might be holding up your business growth right now – but you don't want any future surprises. You did what you needed to deliver an effective pandemic response – now's the time to optimize your environment and make sure it is ready to deliver the future demands of the business.

You need to conduct a detailed audit as it is very likely that your business uses cloud services you were not aware of. The key to success here is data – track every metric you can, paying particular attention to security, resilience, cost and efficiency. Fujitsu customers have the option of a single pane dashboard for their entire hybrid environments. If that's not available, collect all the information you have, particularly relating to areas where you suspect there are issues.

Once you have a good handle on your assets, you also need to look at their dependencies. When you optimize your balance of Hybrid IT or redistribute workloads across your multi-cloud environment, you don't want to break any systems. Remember that some of these factors will be outside of your control, with connections spanning anything from payment systems to government systems, physical and service world relationships.

This is also a good time to check that the other elements you need for success are in place. This might be structural – for example, do you have the right number of individuals with relevant skills to support your infrastructure? What SLAs or KPIs do you need to achieve? How will you manage your network of partners or suppliers effectively to support rapid

decision-making? To what extent do you need to rely on partners to fill skills gaps?

You also need to be your own new cloud CFO. You should scrutinize your financials to identify what you are paying for and ensure it is the best fit. With so many options that can be deployed with just a few clicks, it is easy to over specify. It's not uncommon to find that you are paying for all the bells and whistles for even your dev environments, and, just like those dusty server racks you forgot you had, infrastructure drift means you might be paying for cloud services you didn't know you had. Consider all the potential costs- for example, you might think your cloud storage is cost-effective, but have you factored in how much recovery will cost you in the event of an issue?

Don't forget to bring the lines of business with you as you plan your next steps. Ultimately, the role of technology is to support the business. At Fujitsu, we firmly believe that co-creation is one the most effective approaches to finding the best solution. An effective IT infrastructure serves the business and the varied needs of its different departments. Lean on the expertise of your peers to guide your ongoing transformation.

Security is likely to be a priority

Once you know what you have and where you want to go – you need to identify the gaps. After more than a year of employees working from home, using various devices outside the corporate network – security will likely be a priority as your company's attack surface will have increased. This is another critical area where collaboration is key – educating your co-workers is the most effective line of defense against cybercrime. We've seen that an impersonal, death-by-PowerPoint approach won't cut it. Your goal has to be to help each employee understand their role in delivering effective security – empowering and encouraging them to take action if they identify an issue. Working closely with each department to focus training on the security risks related to them will reap dividends.

Don't forget to keep an open mind for the future – the cloud or multi-cloud infrastructure that helped you weather the last year may no longer be the best fit for your business. Now is the time to optimize systems – ensuring that each workload is on the most appropriate cloud and that you have oversight over your entire infrastructure. The good news is that there are tools available to manage the move – we Fujitsu even have a system for moving mainframe data to the cloud if that meets your business objectives.

What if you didn't spend this year becoming agile and cloud-based?

But what if your business is in one of the industries that have been 'dormant' over the last year? In much of the region, that could be retail, travel or hospitality. The good news is that just because others have reached multi-cloud maturity faster, that doesn't mean it's too late for you. You might even have a significant advantage. Over the last year, lessons have been learned, and our cloud partners have developed a host of new services that will help leapfrog you over any adoption learning curve.

Regardless of where you are on your multi-cloud transformation journey, Fujitsu has tools that can help. For example, SpringBoard, which

accelerates organizations to [AWS](#) and [Azure](#), taking an Infrastructure as Code automated approach to cloud adoption, management and governance. This accelerates cloud onboarding with standardized processes and includes best-practice templates that act as guardrails for your team and checklists to ensure that all dependencies are taken into account. Our methodology also includes regular health checks to make sure that your infrastructure is optimized to serve your business and meet the demands of your customers – giving us the opportunity to course-correct where necessary.

This last year has taught us valuable lessons: businesses need to be highly adaptive to respond to ongoing uncertainty and rapidly shifting expectations and that it's hard to go back and fix things. Now is the time to embrace multi-cloud and have it work hard for your businesses. And now is the time for IT leaders to capitalize on the momentum that has been achieved this year, for them to seize the day and lead their businesses into the future. And, if you need help planning your post-Covid optimization, [Fujitsu's transformation workshops offered across all platforms](#) can help.

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Sanjeev focuses on understanding a customer's business drivers and using technical excellence to identify, design and deliver web-scale architectures, strategies and specific multi cloud solutions that address these business drivers and add value to a customer's business. He has a deep technical knowledge and proven track record in leading sales teams and Cloud Enterprise Architects in delivering complex solutions, working with key Fujitsu partners such as AWS, Microsoft, Oracle, VMware, and Google.

