

Adapt to Win with Modular Open-Source Infrastructure



Adapt Fast to Shifting Business Demands with Modular, Open Source Infrastructure

Most people have never heard of Cone Mills, Armstrong Rubber or American Enka. These three examples are just a few of the nearly 90 percent of companies that appeared on the Fortune 500 list in 1955 but are not on the list today. Fifty years ago, a firm that made the Fortune 500 list could expect to remain there for about 75 years. Today, that life expectancy is less than 15 years and declining steadily. In fact, more than half the companies that made the Fortune 500 list in 2000 have already fallen off.

Bankruptcies, acquisitions and mergers are just a few of the reasons organizations' fortunes change over time, but generally those that innovate, adapt and reinvent themselves fastest survive the longest. Berkshire Hathaway is an excellent example. What began in the late 1800s as a textile mill, has successfully adapted to change, shifted focus and diversified in order to remain in the upper echelons of the Fortune 500 list for over six decades.

Modern companies that defy the odds and succeed year after year understand the importance of business agility. These organizations react quickly to changing customer demands, new competitive threats or technology advances. And while it is their new products and services that may attract most of the attention, the real secret to a nimble business today lies beneath, in the underlying IT infrastructure.

With the right IT infrastructure, organizations can quickly respond and adapt to changes because they have a foundation that unifies the business, helping to collect and mine data to sense trends ahead of the competition and empowering development or DevOps teams to drive innovation through experimentation.

When it comes to IT, few organizations have the luxury of starting from a blank canvas. The key question for most is how to affordably bridge traditional IT infrastructures, in which they have invested a great deal of their resources, with modern software-defined infrastructures that provide the agility needed to adapt and win in today's rapidly shifting digital world.



Obstacles to Achieving Business Agility

With the rise of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, machine learning and the Internet of Things, organizations have to figure out how to get an edge on the competition by taking advantage of the mass of available data. But while the need for a unified, efficient and readily adaptable IT infrastructure is evident, organizations struggle to achieve it for several reasons.

One reason is that most IT infrastructures were built before the open source revolution. Proprietary hardware and software can lock-in organizations to a single solution or vendor, reducing flexibility and impeding the rapid adoption of new technology or architecture options—even when these new approaches offer clear advantages. By contrast, open source solutions are now an indispensable part of the modern IT landscape, holding the promise of innovation, agility and freedom of choice.

Another practical challenge is that many organizations have flat or declining budgets, preventing major investments to upgrade or transform IT infrastructures. As a result, companies have to find new ways to reduce operating costs and free up the resources necessary to pay for much-needed infrastructure improvements.

A third challenge is that mindsets must change along with technologies. CIOs and other business leaders are understandably hesitant to invest in IT without assurances of the benefits. They must be convinced that the IT infrastructure they are moving toward will quickly and seamlessly deliver the services the company needs, while also empowering innovation by supporting the latest as-a-service models and DevOps processes.

Even when attractive IT solutions are available, it is tempting to stay the course if the risks seem too high. Of course, risks are also associated with stagnancy, like the rapid turnover increasingly seen even among Fortune 500 companies.

Bridging the Gap with Multimodal IT

To optimize existing IT investments while also moving toward more agile IT infrastructures, organizations are increasingly embracing a multimodal IT transformation strategy. Research firm Gartner describes Mode 1 IT as a conventional IT infrastructure, typically delivering predictability, stability and efficiency to support traditional workloads and development practices.

On the other hand, Mode 2 characterizes a software-defined infrastructure that is focused on agile technologies and practices, including DevOps and continuous integration/continuous deployment methodologies, which are increasingly popular for supporting containerized and cloud-native applications.

A multimodal IT framework recognizes that each organization's transformation journey will be different, requiring a unique mix of traditional infrastructures, software-defined infrastructures and application oriented architectures. Adopting a multimodal approach makes it possible to embrace modern and agile technologies to deliver transformation, while ensuring conventional IT environments can smoothly adapt to a new technology mix. To address budgetary concerns, organizations also need to improve the efficiency of their traditional infrastructure, thus freeing resources they can then devote to innovation-driving solutions.

Open source solutions are a compelling element of any successful multimodal transformation game plan. As an example, using a modular enterprise-grade Linux with a common code base makes perfect sense. It simplifies the development, deployment, management and support of workloads across the entire multimodal IT environment. In addition, open source solutions makes it easier to transparently move applications across both traditional and software defined infrastructures. Linux also dovetails seamlessly with other open source projects such as OpenStack Cloud, Ceph, Kubernetes and Cloud Foundry. Platforms, solutions and tools built using these projects are rapidly becoming indispensable for successful IT transformation programs.

Adapt Fast to Stay Ahead of the Competition

To remain relevant in today's fast-paced digital marketplace, organizations must change faster than ever before, while also optimizing their existing investments. One way to do so is with modular, open source IT solutions that can bridge traditional and modern IT infrastructures, giving organizations the agility to respond not only to today's demands but also to whatever changes tomorrow brings.

SUSE has more than 25 years of experience delivering and supporting open source solutions for companies worldwide. As a truly open, open source provider, SUSE delivers proven solutions that can be deployed across a variety of hardware platforms to help customers unify their IT operations, intelligently sense and quickly respond to new trends, experiment boldly to drive market-disrupting innovations and adapt to win, no matter what challenges they face.





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