

Savvy IT Is The Way To Go

By Rich Ptak

There is a lot of discussion in the context of cloud as well as traditional computing to discuss Smart IT, Smarter Planets, Smart and Smarter Computing. Which makes a lot of sense in light of the explosion in the amount of collected data and the massive efforts aimed at using analytics to yield insight, information and implicitly intelligence about, well, just about everything. We have no problem with smart activities.

We also hear a lot of speculation about the impact, good and bad, of advances in technology, emerging business models, and changing revenue, cost and delivery processes will exert on IT, and specifically enterprise IT. Add to these the predictions of the end of 'IT as we know it', with prognosticators describing a looming radical alteration in enterprise computing as in-house IT culminates in applications, data and computing moving into vast, amorphous clouds of distributed, but still centralized infrastructure and data centers. Who is kidding whom?

Smart computing isn't going to go away, and it makes a point. However, our contention is that it takes more than just Smart IT to succeed; it takes Savvy IT.

Savvy IT complements and extends smarts – with the ability to leverage all of what you know and what you can do to be successful. Savvy can be used as a noun, an adjective and a verb. The definition of the adjective describes Savvy as “having or showing a clever awareness in practical matters: astute, cagey, canny, knowing, shrewd, slick, smart, wise”. More colloquially, it means acting and being ‘street smart’. Watching and listening across the industry, we see a market evolving to favor moving with Smart IT to Savvy IT.

Savvy IT is concerned with optimizing the use of IT infrastructure, assets and resources to achieve enterprise goals. Savvy IT acts proactively to drive line of business staff to use emerging technologies by helping them to understand how technology can help develop and implement new business models and revenue streams. It is interactive, coordinated and cooperative efforts targeting external, as well as internal customers.

It's about a 'street smart' application of technology to solve problems and drive organizational success. It is based on the insight of personal experiences that includes an awareness and knowledge about the business, their industry and personal efforts to exploit data, capabilities and technology. Finally, it's about an CIO who pursues the goal of making sure IT's services are at least the same, if not better than the best services available from SaaS or service providers.

An explicit example of Savvy IT appears in the evolution toward real solutions to comprehensive business and operational problems that are driven and developed from the perspective of the customer or client end-users. Savvy IT works with the business to proactively identify, develop and implement technology-dependent innovation that act as game changers for the company.

One example is the radical alteration in the sped up cycle of development, testing and distribution of business applications as they become app-based services. Or, when IT staff leverage transaction merchandising services across multiple technologies – linking transaction services in mobile technologies with traditional systems of record to provide a seamless purchase experience whether ordering a purchase on-line, from a phone or flyer with the option for at home delivery or pick-up at a ‘brick and mortar’ store. An innovation that gives global merchandiser Target a significant competitive advantage.

Savvy IT requires both innovation and invention in the application of technology combined with experience that knows where and how to focus efforts that will either solve problems or reduce their impact in favor of continuing services. Smart operations provide a foundation on which to build; savvy tempers fashion with experience that ‘delivers’ despite the obstacles and challenges that inevitably arise.

In implementation and practice, Savvy IT involves and applies whether the model for IT services is built exclusively around an internal data center, an external cloud or service provider or a combination of both. Implementing Savvy IT is an organizational challenge that starts with IT, but extends to include the whole enterprise. Savvy IT is street smart. It’s about protecting the business from risks, existing and emerging that persistently evolve. We’ll explore more of the implications, impacts, processes and issues over the coming months.

Publication Date: May 9th, 2013

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