



On implementing Compuware's pioneering mainframe strategy

Compuware announced its innovative mainframe strategy begun in early 2015, with the launch of Topaz. A mainframe product, Topaz was designed to enhance the productivity of developers with little mainframe expertise. With quarterly Topaz enhancements (see our earlier blogs¹), Compuware has now extended their strategy with a strategic acquisition and the integration of Topaz with popular non-mainframe products. We assess their approach and discuss its importance to mainframe customers. We do this by presenting:



1. What's behind the strategy?
2. Overview and comments on Compuware's strategy (see more detailed comments here²),
3. Compuware advice for making this strategy work, and
4. Customer advice for assessing and tracking these efforts.

What's behind the strategy?

First, some background. Most IT organizations are stove piped, with distributed system (typically x86, UNIX and Linux) operations well separated from mainframe systems. Each exists in its own world with distinctly different cultures. The older mainframe group evolved its own way of program testing and development. Based on the COBOL language, the "waterfall method" exactly met the needs of the technology and times in terms of discipline, structure and exacting methodologies which resulted in long development cycles (typically running 18 to 24 months). (A handicap in today's fast moving market.)

Distributed systems also used the waterfall development method historically, but many are now moving toward agile methods and DevOps, in response to faster refresh requirements of mobile, social and cloud applications. Distributed systems' DevOps meet the needs of more open, faster moving and looser structured operations. DevOps also normally means that program releases undergo continuous development with new versions entering production in a 3 month, or even shorter timeframe.

Today's business requirements require that technology and solution production cycles occur on a rapid schedule. Traditional mainframe development procedures cannot keep up with the speed of changes needed. Modern high velocity mobile and cloud applications require coordinated software changes from the front end applications to the back end applications on the mainframe. Compuware targets this problem with its strategy and solutions approach.

¹ See our previous articles on Topaz at <http://www.ptakassociates.com/content/>

² ***Mainstreaming the Mainframe, Developers hold the key!*** at <http://ptakassociates.blogspot.com/>



The next problem is one of demographics. Mainframe application developers are an aging population. As they retire, sufficient numbers of replacements with mainframe experience do not exist. Current numbers of graduates of international university and school training programs are insufficient to meet replacement demands. On the other hand, there exists an abundance of open platform developers, all with the necessary coding skills, but lacking mainframe experience. Compuware has a plan to take advantage of the latter situation.

Finally, there is the business/economic issue. There exists an enormous investment in the mainframe that is impossible to replace or ignore. Billions of lines of COBOL execute in today's production environments. Very few companies can afford the cost of replacing or converting this code to a non-mainframe platform. In addition, very few are willing to take the risk of upending the mainframe code operating at the very core of their business operations. Many that try, fail in the attempt.

Overview and comments

Compuware's strategy involves empowering mainstream DevOps teams to use popular DevOps tools, techniques and platforms to manage mainframe code. Over time, this will resolve the lack of mainframe experienced developers. It provides additional benefit by jumpstarting DevOps on the mainframe.

Over the past year, Compuware followed this strategy in their own development (materially influencing their success at meeting their commitment for quarterly delivery), even as they fleshed it out with additional technology. For example, acquiring IPSW assets gave them consistent source code management and release automation for both mainframe and distributed system development. Further, they announced Topaz integration with other widely used non-mainframe development products³.

In our opinion, Compuware's strategy makes very good sense as it solves real problems. Most developers are already adept at working in multiple languages and environments. For example, they may be proficient in both Java and Ruby and familiar with the Eclipse development environment. If Compuware can create an environment where distributed systems developers use familiar tools to manage COBOL applications, COBOL then represents just another language to master.

Compuware Challenges

What challenges does the strategy pose? First, Compuware needs to gain the support of enterprise mainframe groups. They need a plan and ways to win over this group that may view such change as a threat to the status quo. Implementing DevOps methodologies in the mainframe world calls for significant cultural changes. Compuware itself has noted that some earlier customer attempts to do so have run into problems due to cultural resistance. Their tool

³ Details of the January 2016 announcements are on the Compuware website.



set must be relatively bullet proof to succeed. The way to ensure that is through buy-in and support from the mainframe staff.

Implementing a DevOps strategy will be a significant challenge for some mainframe customers. Compuware must be prepared to help them succeed. For instance, assisting customers in developing necessary processes to meet the challenge. The assistance provided can take many other forms, even including detailed documentation of success stories.

In addition, we believe that the support of the customer's key mainframe staff is necessary. They are intimately familiar with the procedures being used in their company's systems. They are aware of the reasons why these procedures work the way that they do, which is valuable as they adapt to new DevOps processes. It would be a huge benefit if they are persuaded to adopt the Compuware tools and lead the way for the change.

Compuware also needs to prepare their sales force to be able to offer advice and guidance to potential customers. As customers recognize the magnitude of the change that they face, Compuware staff should be able to address their concerns over costs, time lines, planning, implementation, challenges, etc. associated with implementing this strategy.

Finally, Compuware needs a very aggressive rollout strategy. We've seen evidence that they are already on this track. Success stories should be documented in detail. Compuware's sales force should be prepared to share these details with prospects.

Customer Advice

Now let's turn to mainframe customers. Every mainframe customer needs to have a strategy to deal with the demographic problems in the mainframe work force. "Hope" is not a strategy, and inevitably leads to unpleasant results.

Prospective customers should carefully review and evaluate Compuware's offerings. This starts with Topaz, which is central to the strategy. Consider an evaluation pilot project. The pilot project should be carefully chosen. A small well-defined project with a high likelihood of success will help to build confidence in the new approach, while providing a good starting point to evolve DevOps methodologies. In addition, Topaz can help development teams bridge the existing gap between distributed and mainframe systems, while providing a viable solution for maintaining mainframe support expertise.

Involve the companies' mainframe specialists. Their support will be critical to a successful move to a DevOps strategy. Approach the transformation prudently; learn from other organizations making similar transitions. Keep your eye on Compuware's efforts; monitoring as well just how successful their customers are at making this change. Timing is important here. Plan on incorporating the experience of others. We have no doubt that mainframe customers will develop a solution; and that Compuware's approach will be a key part of it.



Final Word

Overall, we believe that Compuware can succeed with their strategy. Their success to date provides the evidence that they are on the right track. Most customers can recognize that Compuware is delivering real solutions that are greatly needed. However, as discussed above, success in the marketplace is not guaranteed. They have some real work ahead of them. We believe that their success will be beneficial to the industry as a whole.

Publication Date: February 11, 2016

This document is subject to copyright. No part of this publication may be reproduced by any method whatsoever without the prior written consent of Ptak Associates LLC.

To obtain reprint rights contact associates@ptakassociates.com

All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

While every care has been taken during the preparation of this document to ensure accurate information, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. Hyperlinks included in this paper were available at publication time.

About Ptak Associates LLC

Our analysts cover a breadth of areas to bring you a "complete picture" on technology trends across the industry. Whether it's Cloud, Mobile, Analytics, Big Data, DevOps, IT Operational Analytics, Workload Optimized systems or some other emerging trend, Ptak Associates analysts cover these trends with a unique perspective that is both deep and broad.

Our clients include both industry leaders and dynamic newcomers. We help IT organizations understand and prioritize their needs within the context of present and near-future IT trends, enabling them to use IT technology effectively in solving business problems. We help technology vendors refine their strategies, and provide them with both market insight and deliverables that communicate the business values of their products and services. We provide all clients with an understanding of how their competitors are playing in their market space, and deliver actionable recommendations.

www.ptakassociates.com