What happens in the future?

Complexity and torpidity are all what the future isn't. The future of infrastructure is about flexibility and velocity as Barry Crist, CEO at open source and DevOps software solutions company Chef tells João Marques Lima.

What happens to the infrastructure in the future?

Let me first talk about applications and then walk back to infrastructure. In the enterprise there is a clear shift in IT's center-of-gravity from infrastructure-centric to application-centric. In fact, the "buyer" of infrastructure is shifting and, as a result, the future will be one in which app teams make decisions on where to deploy their applications. And those infrastructure "buyers" have two criteria for their decisions: velocity and reduced friction.

Forward-thinking app teams today are mostly leaning toward deployment on public clouds because of their speed and (relative lack of) friction. Hyperconverged and other on-premises solutions are enabling hybrid environments where costs and performance are better balanced for some applications.

Ultimately, finding the right mix of cost, performance, flexibility and ease of management depends on the application mix and enterprise business goals. Still, one thing is for certain -- application teams, and the CIOs and CTOs that both come from and are focused on supporting them, will lead the way.

Where are the lines being drawn regarding infrastructure vs apps?

Previously, there was a tight coupling of infrastructure and apps. If you wanted to ship say a web application, or something that ran on AWS or Azure, you had to spin up infrastructure that would support the applications, and vice versa.

In the post-digital transformation era, technologies like Kubernetes and Habitat create an abstraction between apps and infrastructure. Now a developer can focus on delivering value and features and delight vs having to rewrite their application for a new platform or a cloud migration.

There's a lot of focus these days on hybrid IT, and where the balance should be weighed between on-premises and cloud resources, how apps should be developed and deployed between them and who should have their hands on the wheels in each case.

The net is that the best decisions in any case always focus on user needs, with an eye to the two key metrics -- time, meaning how it can be saved and how product and service delivery can be accelerated, and money, meaning how it can

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be optimized -- either saved or gained -- relative to time.

The CIOs and CTOs who will emerge as leaders in the post-digital transformation era will be those who have a deep understanding of all three, and can factor all three into their infrastructure and application decision-making processes.

What is coming next in the field of digital transformation for infrastructure and what do CIOs/CTOs need to rethink if they want to be ahead?

The next stage, post-digital transformation, will center on the ability to build, deploy, and manage any application to any environment, much more easily than it's being done today.

Barry Crist

Digital transformation is the process of moving to the "next-gen" platforms of public cloud, cloud-native and things like microservices. Now that many of the barriers to these have been removed, the focus shifts to how new architectures enable real business transformation in terms of application delivery and operational flexibility in addition to the economic advantages.

The real issue is that the technologies that have been developed to date to move toward that to date are still extremely complex to deploy and manage. The require special skills and knowledge that most businesses just don't have access to.

The standards and implementations shift quickly and keeping up with all of the pieces of the puzzle required to enact real change takes more time and focus than people have.

The next wave of change will be driven by companies and technologies that allow cross-functional application, operations, security and other teams to work collaboratively, and simply, to meet their users' needs, without depending on siloed knowledge and technology solutions. The cloud provides some of this, but much more is needed.

Why so few companies are currently truly ready to do it?

Companies now need to worry less about being good at technology, and more about being masters at accommodating and harnessing change. The right infrastructure, designed around change, can be a driver of innovation instead of the brittle base of specific applications.

What is Chef doing around the whole theme of the future of infrastructure?

In the future of infrastructure, automation becomes more and more important, both in terms of managing a diverse infrastructure at scale, as well as being able to understand the state of all of your systems and services at a glance and having the tools to continually fix and update services and systems.

At Chef, our business is automation, and our Chef Automate platform gives companies the tools to quickly detect and correct anomalies in their entire estate, and automate the ongoing processes.

We have invested in a platform that works across the reality of organization's infrastructure, from on-premise servers and virtual machines, to container and cloud hosted applications. We also pride ourselves on being un-opinionated on what platforms you use, and passionately focused on letting you manage your hybrid infrastructure across legacy and cloud-native workloads.

Finally, as we see companies putting more energy into app-based strategies that are decoupled from infrastructure requirements, we are seeing more excitement around our Habitat offering. Habitat focuses on the application itself as the key to a company's delivery pipeline.

Habitat allows an application to be exported as a self-contained entity that can run on a variety of platforms, so organizations have flexibility to deploy the app to the endpoint they care about, without having to rewrite the application.

CEO
Chef Software
2013 – Present

Executive-in-residence
Ignition Partners
2012 – 2013

CEO
Likewise (acquired by EMC/Isilon)
2005 – 2012

VP, Application Performance Management
Mercury Interactive
2000 – 2005

Regional Vice President
Network Associates
1998 – 2000

Sales Director, Western Region
Trusted Information Systems
1996 – 1998

Information Technology, Field Sales
Apple Computer
1988 – 1996