

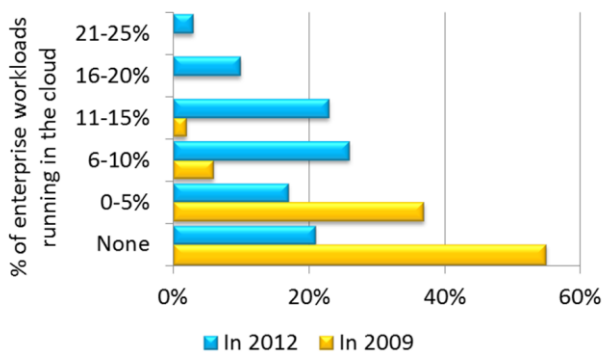
End game approaches for the channel – Feb 2011

Bob Tarzey, Analyst and Director

Quocirca Comment

Two on-going and fundamental changes in the way IT is provisioned and used seem only likely to accelerate in 2011. First, there is the move towards cloud based infrastructure for processing and storing data (figure 1). Then there is the proliferation in the number and variety of user end points for accessing that data.

Figure 1: Growth in use of cloud – source Nov 2009, Goldman Sachs IT Spending Survey¹

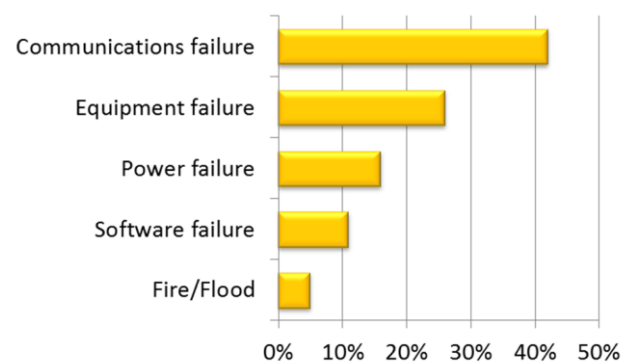


Both trends have many benefits for businesses, such as keeping costs down, better business continuity, more flexible working practices and more efficient business processes. However, there is a downside: it can be tough ensuring consistent management, security, compliance and access across all the devices where data may be.

Many businesses will struggle with this, but it represents an opportunity for managed service providers (MSPs) and VARs with the right offerings in place to sell additional services to existing customers, and win accounts from competitors that fail to rise to the challenge.

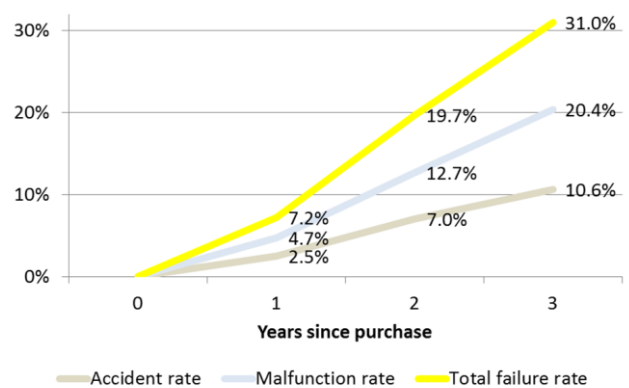
Discussions around business continuity plans often focus on high-profile disasters such as flooding, fire and power failure. However, data from Plan B, a disaster recovery specialist, suggest that the most common reason that users can no longer access applications is due to communications or equipment failure (figure 2).

Figure 2: Reasons for central application failure – source Plan B Disaster Recovery²



When it comes to equipment failure, this is more likely to be the user end point than a server, and with user end points the problem is as likely to be accidental loss or damage as it is to be a malfunction (figure 3).

Figure 3: Three year laptop failure rate, source SquareTrade Laptop and Netbook Reliability Report Nov 2009³



This problem is only going to get worse as business processes become reliant on user access from an increasing range of devices. This includes point-of-sale (PoS) devices, ATMs, ticket readers, video displays -- all usually in remote locations -- as well as all those easy-to-lose smartphones, tablets and laptops.

To manage this it is necessary to have management tools and services that enable a consistent security and compliance policy across both centralised and distributed IT infrastructure. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that services are in place, so when the inevitable happens and user end points are lost or broken, data is not compromised and replacements can quickly be re-provisioned.

One of the attractions of cloud based infrastructure, especially for SMBs, is that service providers take on the responsibility for ensuring availability; they can also gain economies of scale with suppliers and have the expertise available to ensure they can do this at a cost which is hard for businesses to achieve if their core value proposition lies elsewhere.

All these arguments also apply to user end point management.

However, the tool types required are different. All the end points need to be discovered, registered, and made known so valid end points are recognised when they request access to centralised resources. The sheer number of end points means that many repetitive tasks need to be automated, bearing in mind that the execution of such tasks may need to be asynchronous, depending on when the end point next comes on to the network.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel here. There are end point management tools vendors including Kaseya, NTR Global, Symantec/Altiris and IBM/BigFix that have the tools an aspiring MSP or VAR can use to expand its system management services to cover user end points.

Only those that do rise to this challenge can consider themselves to be providing a comprehensive service and be regarded as a total MSP.

Quocirca's report The Total MSP is freely available at:

<http://www.quocirca.com/reports/546/the-total-msp>

This article first appeared on in Computer Reseller News and on:

<http://www.channelweb.co.uk>

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Full access to all of Quocirca's public output (reports, articles, presentations, blogs and videos) can be made at <http://www.quocirca.com>