

Opportunities to minimise

Resellers need to provide a service-based approach to businesses to help them rationalise their data centres effectively

By Bob Tarzey, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd, July 2008

On the face of it, data centre consolidation and rationalisation may not sound like a prime hunting ground for new business.

After all, the whole reason for carrying out the process is to discover under-used hardware assets and either squeeze more out of them, or get rid of them entirely.

IT managers are under pressure to get more out of data centres for two reasons. First, the need to support more applications and users with shrinking budgets, and second, reducing energy consumption as supply tightens and prices rise. Recent Quocirca research shows that the majority of businesses are struggling in both of these areas.

Out of 300 senior IT managers questioned across Europe and the US, almost half said the number of servers under their control was growing, and only 25 per cent felt that the number was shrinking. This is not very impressive in a world of virtualisation that is supposed to see rates of server usage double or triple. While about two-thirds of respondents said they were undertaking some degree of server consolidation or virtualisation, it is clear that for many, this is not yet leading to a reduction in the total number of servers.

Part of the reason is the sheer complexity now built into many data centres. It is hard to rationalise when you do not know what you have in the first place. More than 70 per cent of respondents admitted to finding servers they did not know existed and 30 per cent said they were not aware of all the devices connected to their networks.

These shortcomings hamper any attempt at reducing power consumption, which is the top priority. Around 80 per cent of respondents had enough physical space in their data centres for the next few years, but nearly 50 per cent are at or near their limits for power supply. One option

is to abandon half-empty datacentres and build new ones where there is more abundant power; the other is to control power consumption.

This does not just help to solve the power supply problem but also leads to a reduction in cost and carbon footprint. The latter is not a formal goal of most IT departments - presently only 19 per cent are held accountable for data centre power consumption. But this is likely to change, as 43 per cent of businesses have formal goals for reducing their carbon footprint.

So the answer to supporting more applications and users with little extra budget is better use of existing resources. Most IT departments agree, but are struggling to deliver. Resellers need service-based offerings backed by tools to help get the job done.

Better asset management is a good starting point: knowing what kit is in a given data centre and what its power requirements are. Once this is known, a plan for server reduction can be implemented. If the server estate is under control much of it can be virtualised to ensure better utilisation rates.

IT plays an increasingly important role in the day-to-day operations of most businesses. Many of the applications running in data centres can help business reduce their overall carbon footprint by enabling better collaboration and more efficient business processes. A well managed data centre needs to be seen as an environmental asset rather than a burden.

A free copy of the report can be obtained here

http://www.quocirca.com/pages/analysis/reports/view/store250/item20971/?link_683=20971

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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.

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