

Straight Talking – Getting more out of the net

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Getting better performance from the internet is one of the biggest challenges facing the IT industry and will remain a key issue over the next few years.

There are three main reasons why businesses of all sizes are set to become increasingly reliant on the internet: greater automation of cross-organisational business processes; flexible locations for data centres; and the rapid growth of the software as a service (SaaS) application delivery model. All three are closely related.

First, recent Quocirca research shows the main motivation for larger European businesses to open up their applications to the outside world is to enable direct electronic interaction with other organisations.

So should we be worried? Are the planet's IT systems about to fall in a heap as the internet collapses beneath them?

These include their customers, be they consumers or other businesses, suppliers and trading partners. Whether it is to manage supply chains, customer support networks, financial trading applications or some other business processes, organisations of all sizes are increasingly linked together over the internet, so a weak link or failure can have serious consequences.

Secondly, the applications that drive these shared businesses processes have to be housed somewhere and be easy to share. No one participant wants to be held responsible for a failure and the service levels required are daunting.

So businesses are increasingly turning to co-location providers that will house such applications in highly resilient, purpose-built data centres and in many cases provide IT management services either directly or through third-party specialists.

Given the global reach of the internet and distribution of participants, such resources can be virtually anywhere.

Even for applications that are restricted to internal users, the use of such managed data centre resources is attractive - especially for smaller businesses.

It is not just that smaller businesses cannot afford to build their own data centres. It also provides a practical way of separating IT infrastructure from IT users because keeping them housed in the same building is a business continuity disaster waiting to happen.

The savvy are doing this and, in most cases, linking the employees to their shiny new IT resource over the internet.

One spin-off of this remote co-location is the ability to locate data centres near to power generation facilities. This benefit will make it even more attractive as the IT industry and its customers come under increasing fire from environmental lobbyists.

This is pragmatic because it allows cheap power to be tapped into and because it is more efficient to transmit data rather than the power over long distances. It is estimated that up to 10 per cent of power transmitted over distances of hundreds of miles is lost.

Furthermore, carbon-neutral co-location providers are starting to emerge, such as Centrinet's Smartbunker in Lincolnshire UK, which claims to be powered solely by wind. BT has also recently announced plans to source up to 25 per cent of the power used by its data centres from wind but does not expect to achieve this until 2016.

If such trends continue, expect to see data centres in more and more remote locations accessed over the internet by far-away users.

The third reason for the increasing reliance on the internet is that many businesses are starting to realise they do not even need to run their own applications at all.

Whether applications are for internal use only, but especially if they are to form part of a business process that is shared between multiple organisations, they are increasingly being run by the software vendors that developed them in the first place as a sharable service.

SaaS means the infrastructure is provided and managed by the software vendor itself, housed by those same co-location providers and accessed over the internet.

On top of all this, as businesses rely more and more on the internet for delivery of their core IT requirements, they are competing with increasingly bandwidth-hungry consumer internet usage and low latency applications such as voice over IP.

So should we be worried? Are the planet's IT systems about to fall in a heap as the internet collapses beneath them? Well they might if nothing were being done but something is.

The collapse of the dot-com bubble in 2000 was caused by huge over-investment in internet infrastructure. That powerful infrastructure

Not surprisingly these specialists have to tackle their larger peers, Cisco, Juniper, Microsoft et al, which have their own offerings. But this is a fast moving industry where only the brave can keep up. All these relatively established vendors need to keep looking over their shoulders.

One small UK-based vendor, DBAM, has just released a benchmark suggesting it can move

allowed the internet revolution to continue unabated without too much attention being paid to the efficiency of how it was being used.

Today that luxury is no longer affordable, so businesses and service providers are investing in technology to get more and more out of the internet without further investment in infrastructure, which is why improving internet performance has become such an important battleground.

The market is already red-hot with many vendors like Blue Coat, Expand, Packeteer and Riverbed offering appliances that sit at either end of a network and compress, reduce and accelerate the data traffic. Some of them are also starting to offer software agents on PCs and mobile devices that will allow remote and external users to benefit from such services too.

There are also providers of in-the-cloud services such as Akamai, whose recently released web and IP Application Accelerator services can maximise performance between any two end points on the internet without the need for any new hardware.

very large files around thousands of times faster than has been done before. The point is that there is a lot more capacity to be wrung from the internet over the next few years.

Quocirca's report - Web enabled applications and the internet - will be published on www.quocirca.com.

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, Dell, T-Mobile, Vodafone, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at
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