

Servers in the New IT Landscape: The picture is changing

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Regardless of all the talk emerging that Cloud will be the future of IT, the on-premise server will still have a vital role to play in the development of IT infrastructures for business of all sizes, especially SMBs.

Looking to the Future

Many SMBs are still running systems based on Windows Server 2003 infrastructure. Windows Server 2003's end of support (EOS) is a point of concern for many SMB IT buyers. The upgrade path that SMBs choose will have an enormous impact on their direction going forward and will determine how well they are placed to take advantage of the new drivers for technological adoption such as collaboration.

The trend for small enterprise in the past has been to wait for such a time as this to review applications and the existing IT infrastructure to avoid large support and ongoing management fees.

An IDC report from July 2014 titled Windows server 2003: Why you should get current (IDC July 2014), recommends customers develop a strategy for mitigating and modernising existing Windows server 2003 and related application installations as soon as possible, given that end of support is imminent.

This presents the reseller community with a unique opportunity to have discussions with clients about the nature of existing IT infrastructure and applications sitting on it. Are they entirely on-premise? Do they want to move to the Cloud? What are the critical applications sitting on this platform? Is there a high instance of BYOD? Answers to these questions will inform the approach taken to designing the next phase of a client's IT infrastructure. By offering a balanced solution, resellers ensure that customers continue to rely on them for vital solutions going forward, while also enabling recurring revenue

for their businesses. The key here is that resellers will enable clients with the tools they need to take advantage of emerging collaborative processes. The on-premise server will be a key part of these strategies.

THE FOUR MAIN DRIVERS FOR IT INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT ARE CLOUD, MOBILITY, BIG DATA AND SECURITY. AS THE TECHAISLE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS, KEY BUSINESS DRIVERS FOR COLLABORATION ADOPTION ARE CHANGING.

Market Trends: Why Collaboration is Key

A Techaisle 2014 report titled *SMB and mid-market content management and collaboration solutions adoption trends study*, shows that in the Asia/Pacific region, 63 per cent of SMBs are turning toward collaboration as a key business growth driver.

The study showed that, in a list of 10 solutions ranked by SMB use and planned use, 'content management & collaboration solutions' is positioned as the fifth highest-ranked solution. However, four other solutions were more highly ranked – social media, mobility, Business Intelligence, and Cloud. All are expected to deliver collaboration-related benefits.

Viewed not just as a solutions process but as an organizational capability, collaboration is pervasive and critical to SMB IT buyers. This is reflected in data demonstrating that collaboration (and Cloud, social media and mobility) is a contributor to business growth, not strictly to cost savings.

The Oakton Employee Collaboration Index 2014 explores the way employees are collaborating across business of all sizes. Shaji Sethu, chief solutions and innovation officer at Oakton explores the best approach to allowing for collaboration.

"Best practice consists of enterprise-grade collaboration tools that consistently and reliably deliver an interaction experience that matches the way workers want to interact," he said.



Whether this collaboration takes the form of traditional face-to-face, email or newer collaborative processes, businesses will increasingly be looking at ways to encourage collaboration and thus improve productivity. IT infrastructure must reflect this.

“While currently there is a strong desire to build robust content repositories the next wave of SMB collaboration adopters are emphasising speed of innovation, demands for improved productivity, and imperatives for faster time to market.”

So the question remains: how to best leverage this technology and industry trend analysis to create ongoing revenue streams and provide customers with the infrastructure they need now and going forward?

The answer: Agility.

Offering solutions that combine robust on-premise compute with complimentary collaborative services like Cloud ensure resellers can provide a cost-effective, productive solution to clients. Cloud may be a useful tool for enabling increased productivity. However, unless IT infrastructure is grounded in a strong on-premise compute solution, the end user may be faced with mounting costs, reduced speed of access to data and questionable security.

The server isn't dead

Resellers should now be taking advantage of the opportunity to discuss the nature of their client's existing IT infrastructure and the applications sitting on it. No matter the specific make up of such infrastructures, customers will be looking for ways to modernise and future-proof deployments to leverage collaboration. This is where the expertise of resellers comes into play.

The push for agility in IT deployments has led to a desire among SMBs for hybrid solutions. The Techaisle SMB and mid-market content management and collaboration solutions adoption trends study sights a strong connection between mobility and collaboration. The analyst firm's survey data indicates that 42 per cent of the global SMB workforce is mobile. It also lists the ability to provide or support collaboration as a key driver for Cloud investment. While useful for collaboration, Cloud deployments cannot match the reliability of on-premise solutions. They may enable mobile workers to more efficiently access data on the road, but are not as suitable for mission critical applications as on-premise infrastructure. The server is undoubtedly still a critical part of IT deployment strategy.

This shift in the industry may lead end users to believe that the need for an on-premise server is no longer as great as it once was. This statement is slightly misleading. There will undoubtedly be a move to Cloud deployments in the SMB market for some workloads. However, there will still be a need for in-house servers for mission critical applications. The Cloud is not yet (and may not be for some time) a comparable solution for the vast majority of the SMB market.

For the overwhelming majority of SMBs a physical server will continue to be an integral part of IT infrastructure. An on-premise solution offers the speed, security scalability and cost-efficiency that Cloud is not yet capable of. Whatever solution resellers offer, it must be based in a strong on-premise compute solution augmented (if necessary) by specific Cloud deployments.

The reseller is uniquely placed to guide SMB partners through the treacherous environment of collaboration-enabling solutions like new server adoption. The knowledge of available offerings and the specific needs of client's give the reseller a unique perspective on how best to approach the dilemma.



Future Proofing IT Infrastructure

A recent IDC white paper titled Business Risk: Effective Technology Protecting your Business, states that one of the major concerns of SMBs worldwide is reliability. Included in the report is a list of 'customer pain points' that relate to implementing and maintaining IT infrastructure. This includes: systems and applications reliability; networking and systems management; security issues across infrastructure; and marrying old and new compute infrastructure, as the key areas of concern.

These reliability concerns mean that many SMB customers will be looking for a solution that includes on-premise, server-based mission critical applications. By combining this with some sort of Cloud compute, resellers are not just offering a cost-effective IT deployment, they are providing the client with the optimal solution to drive their business forward in the era of collaboration.

So what do you say to a client that is running a myriad of different generations systems across their IT infrastructure? Usually they are happy with most of the system but have one aspect that needs a refresh or upgrade. They do not want to replace PC's or printers that may only be a year or two old, and they want a solution that means all this technology can work together in a coherent and productive manner.

great way for employees to have access to important information and collaborative projects. While not as efficient or fast as on-premise solutions, they are a great way to bolster a strong IT infrastructure

No matter how a client's compute power is segmented, the hybrid model ensures reliability and flexibility for them, access to new and innovative ways to collaborate on projects and an ongoing revenue stream for the reseller.

BY OFFERING A HYBRID SOLUTION, RESELLERS ENSURE THAT CUSTOMERS CONTINUE TO RELY ON THEM FOR COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS GOING FORWARD, WHILE ALSO ENABLING RECURRING REVENUE FOR THEIR BUSINESSES.

A HYBRID OF ON-PREMISE AND CLOUD SERVICES MAY BE THE IDEAL SOLUTION FOR MANY SMBs. IT COMBINES THE EFFICIENCY OF ON-PREMISE SERVER-BASED APPLICATIONS WITH THE CONVENIENCE OF CLOUD COMPUTING, AND ALSO ALLOWS FOR BYOD.

The solution is not as difficult as many think. A hybrid of on-premise and Cloud services may be the ideal solution for many SMBs. It combines the efficiency of on-premise server-based applications with the convenience of Cloud computing, and also allows for BYOD. Cloud storage is a



The Benefits of Transition

Apart from the protection of vital intellectual property and avoiding redundancy related concerns, there are many benefits of modernising server infrastructure. The Windows 2003 EOS is an excellent opportunity to introduce clients to the array of offering on the market and the benefits of upgrading existing infrastructure to the most current solutions.

The *Windows server 2003: Why you should get current (IDC July 2014)*, recommends a holistic approach be taken when considering possible upgrades.

“Think not just about an operating system migration/update but also about the entire software ecosystem that remains on Windows Server 2003 today, and make good decisions that benefit the whole application stack and offer the longest return on investment.”

The report mentions the ability to use IPv6, modern virtualization software with Hyper-V, comprehensive management with System Center 2012 R2, and improved product SKU options help make it easier to deploy and manage Windows Server.

Deployments based on the latest iteration of on-premise servers will ensure SMB clients gain the agility to cope with future changes in IT infrastructure. It also means that resellers will be well placed to provide effective and profitable solutions going forward augmenting server sales with pay-as-you-go deployments like Cloud. SMB end users will be able to take advantage of options that facilitate collaboration and BYOD while ensuring a stable, reliable and secure on-premise compute for mission critical and other applications.

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WHY YOU SHOULD GET
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