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**MSP**



## Digital Transformation: Four Ways Your Managed Service Provider Should Help

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For many enterprises, the notion of digital transformation can be as bewildering as its realization. What defines digital transformation? Even more, what resources can a company rely on as it embraces this next—and perhaps most challenging—phase in the technology revolution?

Simply put, digital transformation is the confluence of the Internet of Things, cloud computing, big data, AI, social media, and smart devices. Together, these technologies are describing a new era—one that is simplifying and accelerating existing internet capabilities, and delivering many new ones.

The primary interfaces for digital transformation are intelligent and untethered. Alexa, Siri, Cortana and other digital assistants, along with smart phones, are preferred by users who expect internet accessibility anytime and anywhere. Paper is a thing of the past, and most purchases and financial transactions are handled electronically.

Perhaps even more transformative is the idea that human interaction is unnecessary. Devices from home appliances and health monitors to

automobiles, traffic signals, factory equipment, and thousands of other devices can now operate autonomously and share information with each other directly.

The advent of digital transformation is making it possible for people, organizations, and even equipment to not only anticipate user needs and preferences, but also deliver a host of new products and services. Businesses are benefiting on another level as well, through huge new opportunities to increase productivity and efficiency. Yet digital transformation also presents many challenges—and any enterprise wishing to profit from this new era must face them.

For one, it's now a real-time world; speed and convenience are no longer seen by customers

***52% of Executives site a 'lack of familiarity with technology' as a barrier to digital transformation.***

Source: Santoku

as luxuries, but as expectations. As departments outside of IT become comfortable with setting technology agendas, building apps, and managing technology functions, systems and processes have also become decentralized. This is shifting IT's role from that of provider to monitor and advisor, making it difficult to control and manage technology assets.

As processes become virtualized and ubiquitous, data security is now even more important. Recent high-profile infiltration cases have only underscored the vulnerabilities present in the era of digital transformation, particularly in banking, retail, and transportation. Data is moving faster than ever, and in more directions. As a result, personal and corporate information must be bulletproof.

Most critical of all, however, is the need for IT agility. Networks, applications, business models, and workflows all must be scalable and able to evolve quickly. Enterprises must be able to respond to both expected and unexpected changes in direction and scope. The demands on people, infrastructure, and software have never been greater.



### **Valuable Ally**

At a time when enterprises are wrestling with the impact of digital transformation, it might not seem important to consider the role of a managed service provider. Yet MSPs are more than relevant—they can be surprisingly valuable to the process by freeing critical resources, providing objective insight, and speeding development for new products and services.

Managed service providers offer the extra human and technological resources that allow organizations to focus on their core business. Service desk,

system monitoring, endpoint management, and other routine functions drain precious IT time that can be applied to more critical tasks. MSPs not only free up IT staff, but also ensure that productivity is maintained throughout the larger enterprise.

There is another often-overlooked aspect that top tier MSPs provide. The data generated from service desk requests, repair records, and network monitoring can be invaluable in determining trouble spots and increasing IT efficiency. At a time when “shadow IT” is proliferating and new technologies are being rolled out at lightning speed, a good service provider can deliver the performance insights that will improve the development process.

In addition to data, MSPs also ensure best practices are followed—practices that can save hundreds of thousands of dollars, eliminate roadblocks, and shorten time-to-market for new digital transformation initiatives. As the focus increasingly shifts to new technologies and services, these best practices will help instill the real-time, 24/7 reliability demanded by employees and customers.

### **What to Look For**

As your enterprise navigates its journey through digital transformation, an IT managed service provider can be of real assistance. Not all service providers, however, are structured the same—and their value-add can vary widely. Here's what you should expect from your MSP as your enterprise moves toward digital transformation:

#### **They should be up-to-date on the latest trends.**

A proper MSP will be astute and well-informed on the latest developments in hardware, software, and networks. It should be able to implement these developments if or when necessary; moreover, it should be utilizing current technology itself. Look for a provider with an internal development program in place to keep its staff well-trained and informed.

**They should be able to think strategically.** In the past, managed service providers typically operated with a service delivery approach akin to Chinese takeout; pick the items you want from the menu, and we'll deliver.

Today's competitive environment can no longer tolerate pick-and-choose. Your service provider

should be able to help you work through priorities and challenges strategically. It should understand and respond to your changing business conditions with complementary and holistic solutions. It should be assertive about its role, offering alternatives without being asked.

Assuming you get this kind of proactiveness from your MSP, it makes sense to give it a seat at your table in the early stages of new projects. Offering representation allows your provider to analyze your needs against its capabilities and strengths for maximum advantage.

**27% of Executives rate digital transformation as a 'matter of survival'.**

Source: CapGemini

**They should demonstrate that it can help optimize your IT efficiency.** Again, a strong MSP will take the initiative to analyze and inventory your infrastructure on a regular basis, typically every six to twelve months. It will evaluate the validity of

your systems to the marketplace, and recommend changes, investments, and upgrades where needed.

Surprisingly, many enterprises don't have a handle on the age and viability of their IT investments, nor do they define refresh or end-of-life thresholds. A review from your MSP will help determine the market value of your infrastructure, as well as future ROI. It will identify areas for new investment, along with underutilized devices that can maximize existing capacity.

**They should be willing to tie their performance to your business objectives.** SLAs should be no problem for high-value, top tier MSPs. Look for a partner who is willing to commit to measurable results and regular performance reviews.

If you're fortunate, you have a strong relationship with one or more IT managed service providers who can walk alongside you as your organization adapts to the new digital age. By seeing your MSP not simply as a vendor, but as a partner and valued resource, you'll be one step closer to matching the rate of change in the digital landscape—and to effectively achieving your transformation goals.

