The Networking Mind Shift - Keeping Pace in Today's Transformational Era

By: Jean Turgeon

We live in exciting times— thanks to IoT (Internet of Things), technology innovations are creating entirely new business models and delivering solutions that truly have the potential to change people's lives. While we may just be at the beginning of this new transformational era, it's hard not to be inspired by the wide world of possibilities it offers.

Imagine a visually impaired individual walking down the street, using wearables to get a live description of their surroundings, provided through analytics delivered by sensors in her shoes, in unison with a camera embedded in their clothes, tied to city video surveillance system, in addition to google maps. Then, imagine this individual getting into a self-driving car and being driven safely to her destination. This scenario is not as far in the future as you might think. Automation sophistication will soon reach new levels, and today we're already seeing incredible advancements in health and remote patient monitoring, artificial intelligence, robotics, automotive, energy, and so much more.

But, how will all these new technologies come to fruition? How will businesses realize their true potential to change the world? To me, the backbone of innovation is the presence of an automated and secure networking infrastructure. Put simply, businesses need to have the right infrastructure to ensure success and keep pace with the steady, torrid progress of this digital age. Below I describe three processes your organization can employ in order to successfully shift its networking mindset.

Create cross-organizational alignment and collaboration

Many of today's leading businesses are evolving various executive roles such as their Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO) to work more closely and collaboratively with the business owners. This is because automation, IoT, cloud services, social media impact and the need for mobile services continue to become a larger part of digital consumerism, and consumers, of course, expect their data to be completely secure. So, while in the past, the role of IT was to provide "plumbing" or the latest technology to support your organization's business applications; today's CIOs have to take on new roles and responsibilities,

while aligning with business priorities to help transform the experience of those they service (customers and citizens).

Business priorities alignment is now critical, so it's essential for IT to involve leaders of every business unit in all governance and sourcing decisions. Your CIO has to focus on servicing the COO, CTO, and CEO more than ever; while the CMO has to adapt its go-to-market less on technology and more around customization of the customer and citizens experience in each of the industry verticals, which can vary greatly depending on where you are in the world. The reporting structure becomes almost irrelevant as the level of collaboration climbs to record new heights to achieve the new digital journey objectives.

Your technology leaders must invest more time in meeting with business leaders to ensure they have an in-depth understanding of their business challenges, business priorities, their competitive landscape and how IT can help provide differentiated services to its customers. This will require time spent evaluating new innovations and establishing architecture combined with various best of breed technology solutions. With the right foundation and new mindset, technology leaders can have a profound impact on the speed at which business transformation can actually be completed.

However, it is no longer sufficient to only focus on technology. Today's leaders need to first start at the business level, and then transform IT to align with the desired business outcomes. Achieving this kind of next-level alignment across your organization will not only help your business execute at the pace required to maintain a leadership position, it will ensure you're providing the type of incredible experiences your customers expect.

Press the reset button on your network architecture

With the ongoing digitization of the enterprise, business requirements have changed dramatically. Many organizations still seem to think if they can make their network go faster; it will magically align and deliver on the business needs. But you can't expect to apply the same old legacy model of the past 20+ years to meet the next generation of enterprise needs.

To build a much more agile, secure and scalable network architecture, businesses have to change their mindset and literally press the reset button. The legacy architecture has evolved with a great deal of complexity as requirements for virtualization and security have changed, so applying the same type-solutions will only hold you back.

Don't spend valuable time and resources "keeping the lights on". Find innovative solutions that help your business deliver the new services your employees and customers need. Before selecting your technology partners, have a clear understanding of your business outcomes and evaluate all the solutions in the marketplace before showing blind faith in the market share leaders. With an open mind, and a bit of research, you can find a networking solution that has a transformational impact on your business outcomes.

Think beyond the cloud and towards service elasticity

Services aren't consumed in the data center, so regardless of the cloud deployment model that your organization selects, you still need to think of how you can extend these services to your customers. Today's customers expect the same services in a mobile environment and, therefore, the days of static configuration for specific services are over.

Services elasticity is the only game in town now. Similar to roaming with your cell phone, you don't call your service provider to let them know you just landed in a new country, you simply turn your cell phone on and you get service. Your next generation network architecture must also be able to deliver the same thing. This means fully automated provisioning and services elasticity, regardless of where you are and what you use to access the applications or services you need.

While this could almost sound futuristic to some organizations, it is absolutely possible today. But,

to achieve it, businesses need an end to end automated networking secured architecture; they need to understand the limitations legacy networking architecture and transition away from a nodal configuration model, which has a high degree of complexity.

By moving to a simplified architecture model that only requires Point of Services (PoS) provisioning touch points, your network architecture will truly behave and deliver services securely and rapidly. And, when you combine this automated and secure networking infrastructure with business process workflow automation, while leveraging advanced analytics, there is no limit to what your business can achieve. However, do not under-estimate the transition to next generation authentication solutions such as facial recognition, voice, finger-printing, finger-prints on smart devices/terminals, etc. The question is: what technology solution can scale to the level IoT needs? Some say the concept of blockchain may profoundly transform this area; today we're more focused on financial transactions but don't be shocked if it goes beyond this in a near future.

For organizations, the time is now. Don't let infrastructure stop you from achieving your potential. Adjust your mindset and think outside the box. The last three decades of technology innovation have served us well, but there is a new era around the corner, it is the Era of Automation; Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and IoT where human input will be required less and less to deliver the desired business outcomes. Think of all the sensors being deployed, embedded in clothes, shoes, utility services, self-driving cars, drones, and more. The world is changing and so are your internal processes and how quickly you need to adapt. Don't be left behind, align your organization. Do your research. And select next generation network automated architecture, workflows, security, cloud, IoT that's capable of delivering fully-automated secure provisioning and services elasticity, so you can provide your increasingly mobile customers with a personalized and valued service experience they now demand and expect from your business.