

Essentials-as-a-Service: Taking Transformation to The Next Level

By: Stephen Vandegriff

As part of your strategy to digitally transform your organization, you've made the decision to move key applications—even mission-critical parts of your business—to the cloud...for all the right reasons.

Doing so is key to creating a more agile, responsive and competitive IT organization, a highly efficient and effective environment where finite resources are able to focus more on creating new business capabilities and less on maintaining IT operations.



But what about all the remaining mundane, keep-the-lights-on operational tasks that are 'essential' to supporting the always-available, 24/7 expectations of the business?

If the care and feeding of your office applications have been moved to Office 365 or Google apps, and the most critical business apps are now being delivered aaS, what about the remaining physical infrastructure that connects users when they are in the office or their physical devices, such as desktops, laptops, tablets and phones?

What about the care and feeding of those end-user devices that consume a tremendous amount of cycles to configure, track and deploy, as well as the service desk functions that are 'essential' to delivering availability, uptime and an exceptional experience to your user community? What's key to optimizing your ability to meet these sorts of demands?

Essentials as a Service (EaaS)

In 2019, IT leaders and CIOs will want to consider Essentials as a Service (EaaS), which involves offloading the remaining operational aspects of support to IT infrastructure experts to further drive agility and efficiencies throughout their organizations.

Based upon the limited growth of budgets in 2019 (Gartner estimates only a [3.2 percent increase](#) worldwide), IT organizations are not going to be able to add dollars or people to the mix, so they will want to leverage their limited resources do higher value creation work to increase the competitiveness of their organization, versus simply maintaining the health and well-being of their IT infrastructures and end-user support.

Put in the context of Gartner's Bimodal IT delivery model, EaaS is simply a better way to consume mode 1 services.

Bimodal is all about transforming legacy IT into an agile, rapid response organization that quickly adapts to changes in a company's competitive landscape. In this operational construct, there are two modes of IT delivery: Mode 1 focuses on stability, being operationally sound, and keeping the lights on, and Mode 2 focuses on creating new capabilities and applications that drive better end user and customer interaction—for instance web-based apps, mobile apps, and the really cool stuff that differentiates them from their competition.

One can argue whether there really needs to be two modes of operation to deliver a more agile IT environment, but the idea that offloading the mundane break-and-fix aspects of IT support to free up limited resources to focus on higher value and more fulfilling pursuits is a sound concept that organizations need to explore in 2019.

Delivering to new expectations

In addition to helping organizations more rapidly respond to the needs of the business, EaaS can also help organizations deliver to the heightened expectations of the new demographics made up of Millennials and Gen X or Zs. In reality, that's all about delivering an exceptional customer experience, whether that is to an internal customer like an end user, or an external customer buying a product or service.

Today's customers expect an experience that is highly available anytime, anyplace, on any device; and an experience that is simple, intuitive and secure.

The question is, does an IT organization want to invest the time, money and resources to set up and maintain an operational support structure to deliver this heightened level of user experience, or should they leverage an EaaS provider that specializes in delivering that experience as a consumable service, as a contracted outcome?

Does it really make sense, given your strategy of offloading operational tasks, to focus on higher-value business targets, to invest in global, follow-the-sun 24/7/365 multilingual end-user support with predictive, proactive, automated intelligence, natural language and omni-channel support? Or is it better to leverage an EaaS provider that delivers these state-of-the-art support services, which are designed and created to deliver an exceptional end-user experience?

A closer look at the 'Essentials'

Uptime and reliability – For a truly exceptional experience, people need to stay connected to their technology. The reality of delivering to the everything-on-demand, need-it-now, consumer-driven expectations today's end users is that downtime, interruptions in service and slow performance are simply unacceptable.

EaaS providers are constantly looking for ways to infuse innovation in the form of tools, process and automation into their service offerings to improve uptime, reduce clients' costs and enhance the end-user experience. Today, delivering to standard expectations and even satisfying SLAs and KPIs are table stakes. Organizations are looking for new ideas and enhanced services that save time and money, increase efficiencies and reduce ticket counts—and that's all about delivering innovation.

From a support standpoint, the goal is to eliminate issues proactively, so an interruption to the user never happens—and, if there is an issue, to resolve it faster so the user is impacted as little as possible.

This includes employing leading edge technologies such as automated self-healing to capture and resolve issues in real-time, and predictive analysis to mitigate issues before end-user escalations. It also includes proactive analytics detailing the health of a device as well as the ability to look back retrospectively to determine the root cause of an issue. And finally, enabling self-help interfaces to allow end users to hit an 'easy button' for one-click resolutions to fix issues without having to call for help.

Kiosks and Genius Bars – A challenge facing companies today is how to provide instant access and support to users in a consumer-oriented environment. In 2019, a trend that IT organizations will want to consider is leveraging an EaaS provider to deliver technical support via café-like locations in high-traffic areas on corporate campuses convenient for end users. These walk-up support desks are staffed with qualified technicians with great customer service skills. Quick fixes are performed immediately or loaners are provided for longer repair. Kiosks and Genius Bars are also used to showcase approved corporate technologies as in an Apple or Verizon store.

This strategy is a great way to support traditional workers who demand the most out of technology and to hyper-enable tech-savvy workers who bring their own devices (BYOD) to work.

Self Service Portals - EaaS providers have developed one-stop digital portals that allow end users

to see the status of their service desk tickets and request items to procure or services to be delivered via automated service catalogs. Service catalogs are a central listing of the goods and services that are available to the end user.

Here is how this looks in action. Instead of putting a new employee through what can be a long, frustrating onboarding process, instead that new team member goes to an automated service catalog to choose their corporate-sponsored device, business applications, corporate credit card, and so forth. Validation and authorization of the requests are automatically generated and sent to their manager or approval party for authorization. The employee then receives their device, configured based upon their persona, ready to go when they power up the first time. Imagine the productivity jumpstart.

Voice Authenticated Password Resets – Although password resets are typically relatively short calls to the service desk, they represent increased costs as well as introduce compliance issues and security vulnerabilities.

To counter the friction generated by these situations, another trend that organizations will want to explore in 2019 is automated password resets based upon voice sampling and authentication technologies delivered by EaaS providers. In addition to delivering a great experience that gives convenient access to change or reset passwords no matter the user's location, such as offering self-service resolutions that require less effort, are more secure and can ensure a better adoption rate by the user community.

Mobility Device Support – Today, it's all about connectivity anytime, any place, on any device. But delivering that experience from a mobility perspective based upon the many tasks that have to be orchestrated and executed can be frustrating and time consuming for IT support resources.

EaaS can deliver a more seamless experience by delivering devices fully configured, not just with a browser and email but with the mission-critical applications that users need to do their jobs. EaaS providers can also manage the security of the devices and mobile end points and, finally, provide Telecom Expense Management to audit and resolve cellular billing issues on a monthly basis.

Product Lifecycle Services – Procurement, integration and logistics may sound pretty old school, but the reality is that many large organizations do not want their finite resources focusing on the tactical execution of integration, configuration, storage, shipping and asset tracking of end user equipment and devices.

Whether it's a single laptop or a complex deployment of a highly integrated set of technologies, EaaS providers can assess requirements, develop the plan and then source, configure, integrate and 'palletize' the solution. And then, as part of full-lifecycle support, they can also receive aging equipment back into logistics centers for asset disposition, brokering the equipment and sharing the proceeds or decommissioning hard drives and certifying disposal.

Focusing IT on higher-value creation activities

In 2019, IT organizations can continue to deliver these types of 'essential' services using their own internal resources much as they've done in the past—but the question is *why*?

According to Gartner, 28 percent of spending within key enterprise IT markets will shift to the cloud by 2022, up from 19 percent in 2018.

If it makes sense to move mission-critical applications to multi-cloud environments and SaaS providers, what additional efficiencies can be gained by offloading the remaining, often mundane and repetitive IT support functions?

Essentials-as-a-Service allows organizations to focus resources on higher-value creation, deliver even greater agility to the organization to respond faster to the needs of the business, while at the same time enhancing the end-user experience.

