

POWERING PROGRESS

How Data Transformation Is Changing The Way We Work



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Hitachi **FORBES INSIGHTS** | Paid Program

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The way the world works is being rewritten on a daily basis. So too are the ways the world works with data. The dramatic increase in work-from-home mandates means that applications are putting greater load on data resources at unpredictable hours of the day. Leaders who relied on the informal data collected by visiting cubicles and holding in-person standups are now learning new ways to manage and communicate. And teams are being tasked with providing not just affordable business sustainability but also accelerated delivery of new business initiatives that have suddenly been pushed to top priority.

Innovations in data architecture are supporting and even future-proofing the rapid pivots of today's work world. But they're also raising questions about adopting flexible data solutions, using digital transformation to reach strategic goals and investing in infrastructure for the long term. We spoke with leaders and transformation experts to dissect these pressing issues about our new realities.



FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS

As companies navigate major disruptions, flexible data solutions have been critical.

How have they helped companies transition to a remote workforce and manage changing technology needs?



SCOTT CROWDER

Senior Vice President and CIO,
BMC Software

We've been working on digital transformation for the last seven years, and we're continuing to increase our efforts to become an Autonomous Digital Enterprise (ADE). Today, more than 80% of our business systems are software-as-a-service or in clouds, including our virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI). So when we made the decision in March to send all employees and contractors home, aside from increasing licenses on our virtual private networks and turning on incremental bandwidth in locations like our production data centers, we had no major challenges. And we've been able to onboard our new employees on our VDI, even in places where it has been difficult to get devices delivered to workers at their homes. As part of our evolution to an ADE, we'll be able to continue to thrive during seismic changes by embracing intelligent, tech-enabled systems across every facet of the business.



PAUL LEWIS

Global Chief Technology Officer,
Hitachi Vantara

No matter if your company has been thriving, challenged or changing during these disruptions, the reality now is that work-from-home is becoming the default, not the exception. Flexible data architectures have made it possible to switch in two weeks to a federated working model and dramatically change the way you do business in order to stay in business and keep paying employees. We've seen a massive uptick in automation as people realize they can take a 17-step process and reduce it to two. We've seen people change distribution channels almost overnight.



JUAN ORLANDINI

Chief Architect, cloud and data center
transformation, Insight

We have a facility in a country that went into sudden lockdown and had to decide how to get our folks access to the information they needed to do their jobs. Many didn't have internet at home other than a mobile phone. But our architecture allowed us to quickly spin up a cloud-based virtual desktop and a new security posture that allowed people to work within the new constraints.

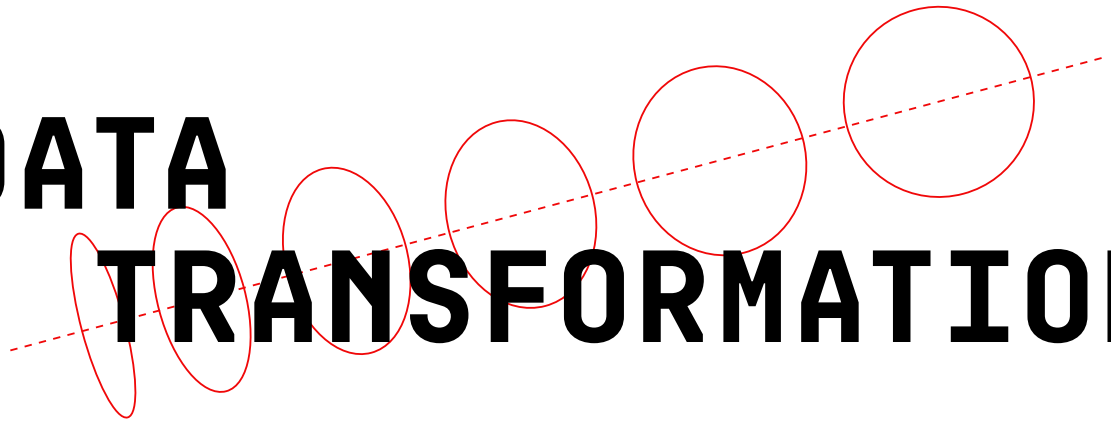


BRENT COLLINS

Global Data Center Practice,
World Wide Technology

We're seeing more large organizations switch to consumption-based models because they need latitude to work wherever they need to work in an unpredictable world. But it's also made clear that data has a lot of weight—it's more difficult to move than computational workloads, which is why in the early days of cloud you would see media loaded on trailers and physically driven to data centers.

DATA TRANSFORMATION



Most organizations have had to pause, redirect or otherwise adapt their digital transformation strategies to cope with disruption and uncertainty. **How has data transformation actually helped realign those projects?**



PAUL LEWIS

Global Chief Technology Officer,
Hitachi Vantara

When you assess the time/value difference between infrastructure, applications and data, they are 180 degrees. Infrastructure and applications have a finite lifespan as at some point you need to replace them with faster, cheaper and modern versions. As we add infrastructure and applications to our portfolio, costs become a concern where we also need to simplify and rationalize over time. But data is the reverse. It's valuable from the point of creation and doesn't need to be replaced. The more data we have, the more context we create to see beyond the single event. The bigger the pot of data, the more likely we will find nuggets of gold. Data is a value creator for IT and should be the foundation for digital transformation initiatives.



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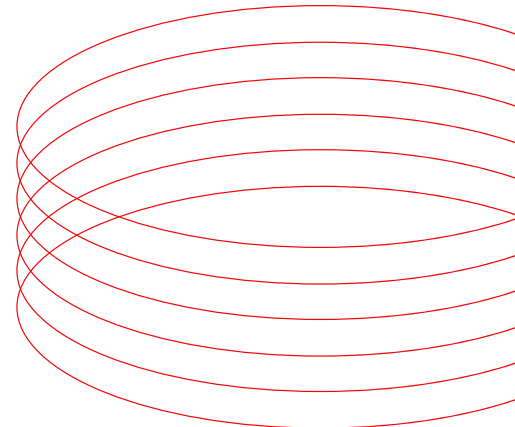
Now that we're hyper-aware of a world that could be changing quite a bit, we're seeing people realize they want the flexibility to shift data around whenever they want. The only way to get to a utopia of a data fabric that lets you move your data anywhere, fully encrypted, on all the right protocols and performance tiers, is to get better insight into where your data lives.



PAUL LEWIS

Global Chief Technology Officer,
Hitachi Vantara

Shifting to a federated culture has made everyone more aware that data is everywhere. Data is created, stewarded and secured at the edge, in the cloud, at the data center, in the supply chain and at customer locations. And keep in mind that, now that these laptops at home are both creating and consuming data for monetization, the edge can't be treated as the "poor cousin" anymore. Data at the edge has to be a primary consideration for IT, and the VP of data could even be seen as the foremost creator of value for IT.



FORWARD THINKING

Data transformation and the disruptions of 2020 go hand-in-hand. Both create new perspectives for future enterprise investment in infrastructure. **How have they created opportunities that might otherwise have taken years to materialize?**



PAUL LEWIS

Global Chief Technology Officer,
Hitachi Vantara

The New Normal has created real-time long-tail changes on two fronts: edge as primary and IT agility by default. The edge, the home, is now the primary work setting where you need to securely access applications and both create and consume corporate data. IT resources were needed to change the physical office environment, consolidate tools used to collaborate and lead people as culture shifted from the 9-5 office setting to 18-hour productive flexibility. Secondly, we no longer can deliver IT projects in six months with million-dollar price tags. We have three weeks to create mobile apps and e-commerce capability. Fortunately, we loosened corporate processes and now allocate resources by project instead of acquiring them by project. All these changes that would have taken years.



JUAN ORLANDINI

Chief Architect, cloud and data center
transformation, Insight

Now that FASB [Financial Accounting Standards Board] rules have started looking at some leases as capital expenses, there is less incentive to use the old leasing model. But there are new financial mechanisms by which you can do consumption-as-a-service on-premise. Above a minimum capacity, you only pay for what you consume and the title to the equipment remains with the manufacturer. Nothing goes on your books or is held by a third-party leasing agency.



PAUL LEWIS

Global Chief Technology Officer,
Hitachi Vantara

Over the medium to long term, we will see more people still working from home, meaning reduced office space over time. That's going to create money for innovation in IT. And IT is no longer going to respond to every request saying that it needs six months and \$1 million at a minimum. We now know that we don't need 30 people to make decisions or to have the CFO approve every big purchase. We know we can empower a small set of people to spend where it's needed, and the outcome doesn't need to be perfect.



SCOTT CROWDER

Senior Vice President and CIO,
BMC Software

The other thing that's been beneficial to us was going down the unified communications path seven years ago. Moving from 50/50 on-premise/on-site to almost entirely work-from-home has shown us that some of these solutions aren't as well-suited for packet loss or latency, so we're shifting our adoption. But it's been very significant overall to untie ourselves from on-premise communication infrastructure.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Other companies can learn valuable lessons from these experts and their experiences. One crucial piece of advice, according to Hitachi's Lewis, is that leaders should double down on their cybersecurity efforts—especially as both the quality and the quantity of phishing attacks are rising.

“Worry less about DDOS attacks on your database and more about social engineering attacks on at-home workers,” he says. “As an individual, it’s easier to trust someone claiming to be from IT if they’re calling me at home than if they’re calling me at the office.”

Meanwhile, BMC's Crowder reminds IT executives that the last mile of progress can be the toughest. For BMC, it took four years to transform 36 traditional data centers down to four. “To go from four to zero will probably take about the same level of effort, because the systems that are left are a pretty integral part of our corporate infrastructure,” he says.

And finally, be patient. These changes take time, Insight's Orlandini says. “Some people are trying to do in six months things that took [other massive companies] seven years.”

