

Why is automation the most crucial technology transformation step?



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Despite global economic challenges, businesses remain committed to technology transformation, with four out of five CEOs increasing digital technology investments according to Gartner.

Yet while IT teams are now central to achieving corporate goals, from realising new revenue to expanding market reach, the global shortage of IT talent is putting enormous pressure on existing resources.

Dene Lewis explains why automating IT operations is key to empowering talented IT experts and realising the digital transformation journey.

Add in the ever-escalating cyber security risk, mixed with the additional demands created by a hybrid cloud and on-premise infrastructure and something has to change.

IT teams need to adopt automation urgently. From security threat-hunting to network configuration, automation enables highly skilled professionals to be more effective and productive, at scale.

Delivering corporate value

The critical nature of technology to every business has changed fundamentally over the past decade.

With IT operations now targeted at creating value for an organisation, through revenue generation and business acquisition, the pressure is on to deliver digital transformation projects at scale.

At the same time, while the industry has simplified individual components of the IT solution, the complexity of the end-to-end IT architecture continues to increase – as does the cyber security threat.

IT teams are incredibly stretched, with vital skills such as security expertise very hard to source. The manual effort still required to achieve digital transformation is compromising both the speed and cost of delivery.

From manual network configuration and security orchestration, core operational tasks are demanding too much time and money – potentially creating

friction between IT operations and the rest of the business.

There are significant opportunities to add automation to the IT operations process, supporting skilled individuals to be more productive and effective.

Indeed, despite plans to tighten budgets and reduce costs to ride out the forthcoming economic challenges, key areas that may be exempt from these cuts are automation and AI.

Automation is now recognised as an essential tool to drive additional value from existing assets.

Any chance to reduce effort and maximise efficiency is hugely welcome, especially given the continued pressure on scarce IT skills.

Maximising scarce resource

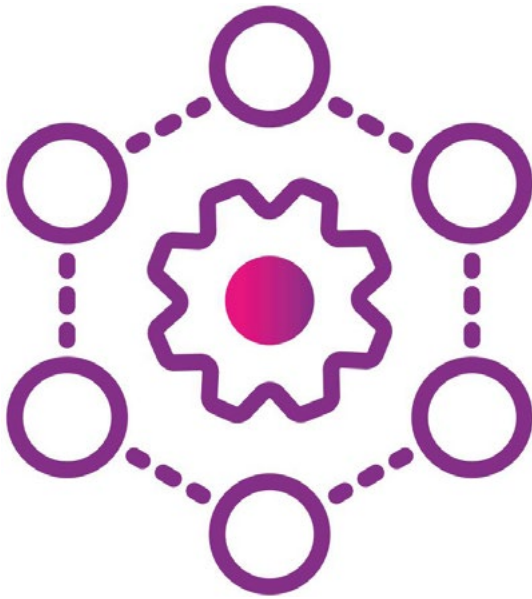
Within IT operations, automation has a critical role to play to allow skilled experts to be more effective and productive, meeting ever-expanding expectations, as well as challenges. But these are not simple tasks – this is not about simple automation of basic IT activities.

From network configuration to security threat-hunting and backing up cloud services, there is a range of critical tasks that require expertise, knowledge and thought.

These tasks are, however, repeatable and therefore ready for automation – especially for organisations deploying across multiple sites.

Network configuration is a prime example of both a key requirement in enabling digital transformation projects and a repeatable process that could, and should be automated. Any company with multiple sites or locations will likely be in a constant process of deploying or upgrading wireless networks.





And while each network will look similar, the setup will have a significant level of complexity, with the associated risks of network misconfiguration and security design.

Traditional deployment methods demand specific configuration scripts and manual activity, including an on-site visit.

By taking an automated approach to the latest software-designed architecture tools, a company can standardise, eradicating the need for personal interpretation – creating a centralised, consistent, repeatable approach across every deployment.

By automating configuration in a repeatable manner, a business can empower its highly skilled team to transform productivity in the way networks are deployed, or configurations changed.

The entire process, from initial set-up to ongoing management, is both effective and consistent.

Effective and productive

With confidence that the configuration is being delivered in a standardised way, IT operations teams can achieve new levels of flexibility and centralised resources enable people to work across multiple projects and places at any one time.

So where else can automation be applied to enable skilled experts to be more productive and effective?

Security threat-hunting is one task that is hugely complex and time-consuming. It is strategically essential but with security expertise at the top of the skills shortages, a task that many organisations struggle to achieve.

Using automation to transform the security threat-hunting process will enable the IT operations team to be more effective and productive, mitigating the increasing cyber security risks facing every business.

From security orchestration to automated response models, the use of automation will allow every

business to make the most of its existing expertise, allow skilled individuals to be super productive and create ever more effective security operations.

Backing up cloud platforms is another business-critical process that can be overlooked, especially when companies adopt cloud network provisioning. Traditional backup of network configuration data was on a switch-by-switch basis, limiting the impact should data loss occur.

With the cloud, however, the entire network configuration data is located in a single location – and data loss could be catastrophic.

A simple automated process for backing up and copying configuration data to maintain integrity, combined with automated data recovery should a problem occur, is an effective and swift solution for one of the additional challenges created by the extending hybrid IT infrastructure.

Creating the right environment

The opportunities for automation are significant. It is, however, essential to create an environment in which automation will thrive.

This is not about imposing the concept of automation on a business but about business leaders creating an environment that welcomes innovation; one where people are encouraged to explore opportunities for automation.

Creating an environment where people understand where automation can deliver value is the most powerful thing a leader can do to transform productivity and fast-track technology transformation.

Automation is changing IT operations. It is not just supporting highly skilled subject matter experts to be more productive and effective in an incredibly challenging operational environment; it is delivering business certainty and confidence in digital transformation journeys.

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