



Put your data first to build business resilience in an era of digital disruption

Big businesses everywhere are pegging their future on a cloud-first strategy, with the sudden and intense requirement for remote working and virtual platforms having played a significant role in the urgent digital transformation journey. However, reconsidering the cloud-led approach and implementing a data-first strategy instead could fundamentally change business outcomes.

Data everywhere

“Technology is a significant business driver and data is the modern company's most valuable asset,” notes Ahmed Mahomed, CEO at Datacentrix, a hybrid ICT systems integrator and managed services provider.

“The rapid acceleration of digital transformation enabled many organisations to pivot towards new business models to support remote work and improve customer, supplier and employee engagements, and in doing so, maintaining and safeguarding data.

“There's no question that data is the modern-day company's most valuable asset; it is the very core of an organisation,” he explains. “Nevertheless, with the growth in remote working environments, data is no longer confined to the safety of on-premises infrastructure; it travels freely across many



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devices and between multiple locations, adding to the CIO's pain points.

“We're no longer talking just of the structured data from the days of business ledgers or, more recently, ERP systems. Currently, we see multiple data sources, as well as unstructured data in the form of mail repositories, end-user and IOT devices, operational technology systems and social media. All of these points are generating data in some form or another, such as information around customer and staff behaviour, vendor purchasing habits, stock levels and more.

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Ahmed Mahomed, Datacentrix CEO

“However, for the data to deliver real business value, it needs to be mined, managed and protected effectively.”

Shifting focus from cloud-led to data-led strategy

It is important for CIOs to understand where their data lives, how it is secured and how it is being delivered to where it is needed. According to Mahomed, it is here that organisations are finding that a purely cloud-led technology strategy is not delivering on these requirements.

A hybrid IT model, on the other hand, addresses the flexibility of cloud, while boosting a data-led approach, he says. “CIOs are realising that the wave of pandemic-driven investments has not been entirely optimised, including investments in cloud capability.

“What the modern business needs is on-demand capacity that combines the flexibility and economics of the public cloud with the security and performance of on-premises IT,” he continues. “A hybrid IT model should incorporate the ideal hosting environment for data to reside within, whether on-premises, co-

located or multicloud infrastructure. It will also consider the reliable transportation of and accessibility to data, as well as pervasive data security.”

Yet, embarking on a digitalisation path is a multi-faceted process, Mahomed says. “Typically, it's not the destination but rather the journey that is important. A data-first strategy provides a roadmap to digitalisation and Datacentrix's advice is to start with the low-hanging fruit within the organisation, extracting intelligence from existing data sources, applying this and scaling up as you go along. This strategy accelerates an organisation's time to market.

“The world around us is not standing still. Companies are becoming smarter and slicker, mining their data and using it to gain competitive advantage. Ignore this at your peril: it's no longer a case of debating the cost of deploying a digital strategy, but rather looking at whether your business can afford not to commence its digital journey,” Mahomed concludes.

“The time to close knowledge gaps within your organisation, and gain business value much faster, is right now.”

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