HOW TO DRIVE
BUSINESS OUTCOMES
WITH PROACTIVE IT

It your IT department improving or floundering? Do you find that your organization can easily pick up new business initiatives -- or does it seem to be spinning its wheels year after year? For many companies, an IT department's role lies purely in maintenance: when a disaster happens, they fix it. But an IT department can be much more versatile and effective with the right strategies and the right training.

"A proactive IT approach re-focuses your IT department".

Rather than addressing problems as they occur, your IT department is instead able to identify potential issues well in advance. Adopting a more proactive approach to IT leads to major organizational improvements: reduced expenses, increased productivity, streamlined internal processes, better customer experiences, and other positive business results.

Through this eBook, you'll find out more about the improvements that proactive IT can bring, in addition to how you can implement proactive IT for better business outcomes.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE IT

Reactive IT strategies respond to issues as they occur, while proactive IT strategies address issues before they occur. Yet there's more to it than just that.

WHAT IS PROACTIVE IT?

Rather than spending time on daily IT maintenance, a proactive IT department focuses on identifying and executing IT initiatives that will improve current business results. Proactive IT departments are in a constant state of evolution: identifying pain points and room for change and finding the optimal solutions. This stands in stark contrast with reactive IT, which focuses on putting out fires, addressing new compliance needs, and other day-to-day maintenance tasks.

But that doesn't mean that proactive IT is just about heading off issues before they occur. Proactive IT is also about streamlining operations, finding ways that the organization can capture more income, and leveraging technology to achieve business initiatives. In short, proactive IT turns an IT department into a revenue-generating department rather than simply a department that maintains and repairs existing systems.

"Reactive IT and proactive IT can be compared to living paycheck-to-paycheck vs. developing a budget".

Under a reactive approach, an organization is only able to "just make it" to the next disaster. Organizations are never able to grow or improve because they are always focused on addressing issues as they occur, and they are never able to make headway towards their goals.

Under a proactive approach, an organization can make plans to improve over time. An organization can "budget" its resources, including human labor and technology, towards improvements, and an organization can make structured, scheduled plans that will drive them towards these improvements.

WHY IS IT
HARD FOR IT TO BE PROACTIVE?

Many IT departments find themselves under constant pressure. They're short-staffed, have limited budgets, and need to address pressing security concerns. With BYOD, IoT, and multi-cloud environments adding even more pressure to security systems, IT departments need to devote all of their time towards ensuring that their system isn't compromised.

As most IT teams are also designed to prioritize help desk tasks, they must also manage seemingly infinite tickets. None of this leaves the time or the resources to work on improvement. Even if an IT department does want to develop out its proactive IT skills, it may not have the time. This is what leads to an IT department that has a myriad of initiatives on its list but never seems to make any progress. The goals are there -- the resources are not.

Further, many IT departments may simply not have the specialists that are needed to make the improvements that they desire. Many organizations build out their IT team with their day-to-day needs in mind, which means that their IT specialists may not necessarily be security experts or specialists in the cloud. With this skills gap present, it can be difficult for the IT department to achieve its goals even given enough time.

Finally, many IT departments find it difficult to be proactive because they don't have support from upper-level management. IT may find that their C-suite keep pulling them away from vital improvement tasks to work on other projects. If the C-suite does not support proactive IT, then the IT department is essentially powerless.

WHY DOES IT
PAY TO BE PROACTIVE ABOUT IT?

By taking a more proactive approach to IT, organizations can transition to solutions that cut costs. Migrating to the cloud, using single sign-on, or upgrading to a network monitoring solution, are all examples of proactive IT that can improve IT operations as well as communication.

"Modern businesses rely upon their technological infrastructure for virtually everything they do. Improving the infrastructure improves the business".

- Better security. Better security reduces the chances of an expensive cybersecurity attack, which could disrupt the company's operations for some time and lead to a loss of faith among clients. Better security solutions make it possible to improve security without making it more difficult for employees to complete their tasks.

- Responsive customer service. IT upgrades such as comprehensive communication tools (such as Microsoft Teams) make it easier for employees to take care of their customers -- thereby improving customer retention. Better automation also makes it easier for sales departments to generate leads and for leads to be captured, all of which improves the organization's bottom line.

- Upgraded productivity tools. Tools such as Microsoft Office 365 can be used to improve productivity across the business -- if the IT department is given the time and resources to upgrade to them. Better productivity tools make it easier for employees to do their work, which ultimately improves effectiveness at all levels of the organization.

- Comprehensive communication suites. Communication tools can speed up operations, by making it easier for employees (and remote workers) to connect with each other. A comprehensive communication suite is also able to reduce many errors throughout day-to-day operations, which can further reduce the costs of fixing these errors.

- Improved scalability. An organization with forward-thinking IT can scale up faster (and scale down if necessary), thereby making the organization as a whole more agile and more competitive. Organizations with better IT departments are more flexible when it comes to pivoting, upsizing, and downsizing, which are issues that can often be extraordinarily costly to a business.

When companies are proactive about IT, they can both reduce costs and potentially find ways to capture more of their income. Companies that are proactive about their IT are less likely to suffer from financially devastating security breaches and are more likely to retain customers due to high customer satisfaction.

GETTING
PROACTIVE ABOUT IT

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THE ADVANTAGES OF USING AN MSP INCLUDE:

- An MSP can handle helpdesk requests, giving your internal team time to spearhead other IT initiatives. Too often, IT departments are inundated with mundane, day-to-day tasks, such as deploying virtual systems, backing up and restoring data, and answering lost password requests. While help desk tickets are absolutely essential to the operations of any business, they don't require that an internal IT team take care of them. By outsourcing them to an MSP, your team can instead focus on more important business initiatives.

- An MSP is going to have a better idea of the different solutions available. Managed service providers fulfill the vital role of a specialist and a consultant. They know which tools are out there and which make the most sense for your business. In fact, an MSP can create a complete roadmap for your organization to improve upon its current tools and its operations and can support your organization in moving towards these changes. All of this will make it easier for your business to achieve better overall business outcomes.

- An MSP has access to experts and specialists. It's prohibitively expensive for any organization to hire expert consultants and specialists for all of their business initiatives. For an internal IT department, it's often better to have a jack-of-all-trades crew who can wear different hats. Comparatively, an MSP will have a number of experts on staff that can help fill the gaps in your own IT department. An important area for this is security, as security specialists are hard to find and retain. A security expert can be procured directly through an MSP, however.

- An MSP provides a buffer for long-term growth. If your organization needs to scale up quickly, an MSP can easily provide these resources to your organization without additional, permanent costs. For businesses that have seasonal requirements or for businesses in fast-paced industries, the ability to scale up and down technologically can mean the difference between success and failure.

- An MSP has the experience needed to transition a company to new technology. It isn't always about having the technology or even having the specialists. Transitioning a company to a new technological infrastructure -- and to new business processes -- is a skill and an art form in and of itself. MSPs can create complete plans for organizations that are interested in making a transition to more advanced IT strategies. This is most commonly seen when organizations attempt to shift over to the cloud.

- An MSP can provide on-going training. As an IT department continues to grow and evolve, it also becomes necessary to provide support to the staff and the executives. MSPs can provide on-going training that a proactive IT team may not have the time to provide, especially as solutions continue to improve and to evolve. When departments have questions regarding new solutions, the MSP will be able to respond and provide a point-of-contact for requests and inquiries, rather than the IT department needing to manage these requests on their own.

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SUMMARY

Organizations with a reactive approach to IT will never find themselves able to "get ahead" of the last technological crisis. A proactive IT approach is needed to improve upon a wide array of business operations, ranging from improved customer satisfaction to better security solutions.

Yet it's not always possible for an organization to embark upon the process of growing its proactivity alone. Rather, many IT departments need outside help. An MSP can facilitate growth through expert consultants, human resources, and the technology that the organization needs to grow.

It's difficult for an organization to switch to a proactive IT approach without potentially losing track of their daily business tasks, and that can be risky for any business. An IT department that needs to both manage day-to-day operations while also improving upon organizational infrastructure will find itself split between priorities.

By switching to a proactive approach with the help of an MSP, organizations can better utilize their existing resources. Proactive IT can help an organization grow in many ways, from reducing overhead to expanding their technological infrastructure. Once in place, proactive IT strategies can improve upon themselves -- and all without sacrificing their day-to-day operations.

Does your organization need to develop proactive IT? Upgrade your company's communication tools with Red River.

ABOUT RED RIVER

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