



Infrastructure & Operations
Symposium Community

Trip Report

Infrastructure & Operations Leaders Gartner Symposium/ITxpo

Key Takeaways

The infrastructure and operations (I&O) leader's role covers a wide expanse of enterprise IT — nearly everything except business applications (and I&O runs those applications on a production basis). At Gartner's Symposium/ITxpo in Orlando, over sixty sessions were devoted to I&O. The I&O Leaders Community was the most heavily attended of all the role communities at Symposium/ITxpo — with 1,079 registered participants.

Many of the issues raised at this Symposium/ITxpo showed that the I&O leader's function is gaining a much greater strategic visibility within the enterprise; hence, the I&O leader needs to focus more on the strategic aspects of the role. Attendees showed more interest than ever before in broad structural issues — for example, benchmarking and metrics, I&O organizational structure, consolidation and virtualization.

Most of these issues aligned closely with the theme of this year's Symposium/ITxpo: "Driving IT. Powering Business." That's also the primary goal of a new tool that Gartner showcased at this event: the Infrastructure & Operations Maturity Model (IOMM). IOMM enables I&O leaders to assess enterprises' I&O maturity — across the four key dimensions of people, process, technology and business management — and to develop a systematic and prioritized road map for continual I&O improvement.

And what were the key "takeaways" from this year's Symposium/ITxpo Infrastructure & Operations Leaders Community?

- I&O leaders must see themselves — and work to be seen — as business leaders, not simply technologists. Anyone who wants a place at the table where the most important decisions are made has to show that he or she belongs there, and the only way to do that is to demonstrate business and strategic leadership.
- Enterprises must approach I&O issues with a much greater sense of urgency. Most enterprises have made reasonable improvements in I&O, but they can't afford to become complacent — especially because of the constantly increasing demands placed on I&O by changes in the business and technology environments.
- One key to optimizing and demonstrating the business value of I&O is to make I&O much more cost effective. Consolidation remains the I&O leaders' primary tool to accomplish this. (see Table 1 for results of a poll conducted at Symposium/ITxpo).

Table 1. I&O Consolidation Poll Results

What is your number-one I&O consolidation priority?

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Reducing costs: | 65% |
| Improving service: | 20% |
| Enhancing disaster recovery: | 10% |
| Increasing agility: | 5% |

What statement best describes your situation when it comes to major I&O consolidation projects?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Haven't done any and have no plans to: | 0% |
| Want to consolidate, looking into it: | 10% |
| Have a major project under way: | 35% |
| Already done a major project and have no plans for more: | 5% |
| Have already done a major consolidation project and plan to do more: | 50% |

What have you consolidated or have definite plans to consolidate?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Data centers: | 70% |
| Servers: | 90% |
| Storage: | 80% |
| Networks/telecom: | 75% |
| Other: | 5% |

Note: Percentages based on approximate number of participants who chose that response to the question. Total number of participants: 125.

Conference Highlights

Nearly everything at this event — from the keynote addresses to the keynote and MasterMind addresses to the analysts' presentations and workshops to the attendees' questions and comments — showed how focused the IT world is now on delivering and demonstrating real-world business value. And the I&O community is not exception.

In his keynote, Gartner Vice President and Distinguished Analyst Carl Claunch, noted the pressures that I&O professionals face today, especially given highly constrained budgets and economic uncertainty. "Not only does infrastructure need to deliver what the business needs at a cost it can afford," he pointed out, "but it also needs to be agile." I&O needs to be able to respond quickly to market changes and competitors' movements. That means exploiting technologies such as virtualization, and using automation extensively — but only when it offers a real payoff for the business.

Many of the analyst presentations that received the most comment and questions focused explicitly on delivering real-world business value.

"IT Infrastructure and Operations Leaders: Enhance Business Value With Gartner's Maturity Model"

The day-to-day difficulties of managing a large, complex enterprise infrastructure and operations environment means that the critical need for actionable metrics is often overlooked. In this presentation, Donna Scott and Jay Pultz, both Gartner Vice Presidents and Distinguished Analysts, presented the new Gartner IOMM. The immediate action plan for leaders in this area includes:

- Assessing and benchmarking current I&O maturity along the four key dimensions: people, process, technology and business management.
- Establishing an IOMM task force with a core team of I&O leaders.
- Beginning with simpler, more easily achieved projects to gain success — or break up painful issues into projects that can be achieved within about three months.

"The Future of Infrastructure and Operations"

In this wide-ranging presentation, Vice President and Distinguished Analyst Tom Bittman took a look over the horizon, at the trends, technologies and business drivers that will shape I&O between now and 2016. He offered guidance for I&O leaders who want to shape the future, not just react to it:

- Harnessing key trends and technologies, including virtualization, unified communications, configuration management databases (CMDBs) and dynamic multisourcing.
- Building a strategic plan that considers process, technology, people and management
- Measuring progress as the key to delivering agility and quality of service

"IT Infrastructure and Operations Leaders: Address the Most-Challenging Priorities"

The I&O leader has the toughest job in IT, facing relentless pressure to handle an enormous number of high-priority projects. In response to a large number of requests from Gartner I&O clients, Jay Pultz presented a set of best practices for prioritizing the most business-critical initiatives, from virtualization to consolidation:

- Identifying and focusing on highest priorities and readily achievable goals
- Developing a systematic consolidation plan
- Moving toward the real-time enterprise via virtualization and automation.

The format of this session was new and interactive in nature. Pultz keyed up major issues, conducted several polls, and we had "open mike" time in which participants shared best practices. Key results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 2. I&O Organization Polling Results

In your enterprise today, how is I&O primarily organized?

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Technical discipline: | 65% |
| Function: | 10% |
| IT service: | 5% |
| Customer/business unit: | 0% |
| Process: | 0% |
| Combination/matrix: | 20% |
| Other: | 0% |

How can I&O organizational efficiency and effectiveness best be improved?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Reorganization: | 15% |
| Scope change: | 20% |
| Interfaces with other organizations: | 60% |
| Skill set upgrades/training: | 40% |
| Selective outtasking: | 20% |
| Other(e.g., cross-department initiatives): | 2% |

Note: For above question, multiple responses were possible. Hence, percentages total to more than 100%.

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“Top Technologies in Infrastructure and Operations”

New and emerging technologies — ranging from open-source software to blade/component servers to virtualization — will dramatically change I&O over the next 10 years. John Enck and David Williams, both Gartner Research Vice Presidents, presented a business imperative action plan that shows how enterprises can stay ahead of the technology curve by:

- Assessing their current state — determining how many of the top technologies are already in use in their infrastructure
- Evaluating where these technologies can add value to their infrastructure solutions
- Developing a long-term process for detecting and evaluating new technologies as they enter the market

“The Mobile Scenario”

Mobile communications represents one of the most significant enterprise IT investments — Gartner estimates that the total mobile market will reach \$1 trillion per year by 2012 — and one of the most challenging problems for the I&O leader. Gartner Vice President and Distinguished Analyst Nick Jones laid out a scenario for the mobile market, and detailed steps that enterprises can take to make the most of their mobile investments, including:

- Working to reduce mobile total cost of ownership by negotiating better contracts and managing usage better
- Developing policies and support models for employee-owned mobile devices
- Establishing mobility as an integral part of a multichannel architecture

What People Asked About

“If we’re forced to ‘downsize,’ where is the level we should start cutting staff?”

This was one of many issues related to organization that were raised at this event. There are no hard-and-fast rules for this very difficult subject, but one basic principle is to retain personnel who have the necessary skills sets and aptitudes, and those in roles where their absence would cause the most pain for the enterprise. For example, you should try to limit cuts at level 1 (first-line technical support), because those personnel are IT’s “face” within the enterprise.

“Will the alternative delivery models that are now emerging make it even riskier to give up control of enterprise data?”

Outsourcing providers and their clients have struggled with this issue for more than three decades, and it’s only going to get more difficult. One key will be making significant advances in the terms and conditions that are required of service providers. Many software-as-a-service storage providers, for example, work on an “as is” basis, which doesn’t provide the protections that enterprises require.

“Which vendor will end up as the eventual winner in the CMDB market?”

If you listen to the vendors' market hype, each one believes its own CMDB solution is the primary one. But the reality is very different. Gartner hasn't even identified a leader in this space, and the market will remain highly fluid for some time to come. We do believe that the winner will be the one that enables the best federation capabilities.

“Why should we spend money on IP telephony when everything else is going wireless?”

It may seem counterintuitive to make significant investments in landline IP telephony when the “action” seems to be entirely in wireless devices. But remember the bandwidth issue: All enterprise-supported wireless devices have to link to the data center, and the bandwidth demands of an all-wireless communications infrastructure would be far too great, at least for now.

Things to Watch For

Perhaps the most important message from Symposium/ITxpo is about the importance of the concept of I&O maturity. It's impossible to know where you're going unless you know where you are now — hence the interactive IOMM tool. That should help address some of the big issues in the year ahead, and beyond:

- **Benchmarking and metrics:** Measuring enterprise performance — both against its established goals and its peers — is critical to demonstrating the business value that I&O contributes.
- **Organizational and staffing issues:** An enormous amount of attention was paid at this event to finding optimal ways to organize and staff I&O. The successful I&O leader will need to show leadership in recruiting and retraining personnel with the necessary skill sets, organizing and training them properly, and compensating them adequately.
- **Consolidation and virtualization:** These two critical issues go hand-in-hand, because virtualization is rapidly becoming an essential I&O tool, and it's impossible to virtualize without first consolidating. Many attendees are well along with their consolidation projects, moving beyond data center and server consolidation to achieve a significant level of data consolidation, as well.
- **Power and cooling:** One of the key trends that Gartner has identified in the past year is the greening of IT. As we build larger and larger data centers — with computing capacity growing about 25% per year and storage about 50% — we're also using far more power and generating far more heat. The I&O leader will face these issues more and more in the coming years.

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