Insight

Modern Metamorphosis: The Imperative to Transform With Purpose

The data center is changing.

Organizations need to be intentional about what and how they change. Developing a multifaceted and actionable transformation strategy based on overall business goals is key. Working with an expert partner can greatly impact success.

Key topics:

- ✓ Drivers and outcomes of transformation
- ✓ Workload alignment
- ✓ Data center migration and consolidation
- ✓ Hybrid cloud
- ✓ Automation and modern IT operations

The path we're on

Modernization and transformation initiatives have gone far beyond first steps. Most businesses are now in the throes of change.

However, many legacy platforms, systems and processes remain in place. Integrations are often rough. In many cases, new technologies have been implemented without a clear understanding of why and how they are to benefit the business. Most organizations are struggling to attract and retain talent with the necessary skill sets to support transformation.

Internal challenges still stifle transformation.

IT leaders cite technology as the most challenging aspect of digital transformation in 2023, **followed closely by an uncertain business environment.**[1]

More than one-third of IT leaders (39%) report their current infrastructure presents a significant barrier to digital transformation.[2]

Any existing challenges on the road to transformation were likely emphasized by the pandemic, which abruptly forced many businesses into the cloud and toward new ways of working — regardless of readiness. As of 2023, digital transformation is an enterprise-wide effort at most organizations, with 36% ranking their efforts as optimized.[3]

As we look ahead, more change is anticipated. Recent months have impressed upon us the power of uncertainty and the criticality of being ready for anything. Technical debt continues to mount. Transformation is a must, but it needs a strategic approach.

Here at Insight, we are in the trenches with you.
We are the partner who can support you through this ambiguous time, helping you overcome challenges and define and execute a roadmap to success.

Key drivers of transformation

- Infrastructure flexibility
- Competitive advantage
- Cost savings
- Increasing globalization
- Meeting client and internal demands
- Protection against threats

What's at stake

- Speed and agility
- Differentiation and business viability
- Business resilience
- Scalability and growth
- Client and user satisfaction
- The security of business assets

What must be done

Agility, innovation, resilience and business growth are inextricably linked to the integrity of a business' IT strategy — and how it's put into action. Make progress on your path to transformation by driving change through the activities and focus areas covered in the following pages.

Workload discovery and alignment

What's in your IT environment, and is everything in its optimal place? Though simple questions, most organizations have far too much complexity within the IT environment to produce quick answers.

Challenges include:

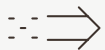Cloud adoption without a cloud strategy

Shadow IT

Orphaned systems

Organizational silos

Unrestrained growth and rapid implementations of new technology

End-of-support or end-of-life systems that aren't decommissioned

Poor or minimal integrations of legacy and new systems/processes

Workload alignment is a process that can be done in both a sweeping and rolling basis. A corporate directive to move to public cloud or a modernization initiative are common drivers of workload alignment. Troubleshooting performance issues, merger & acquisition activity, and data center consolidations or migrations are other drivers.

Read the blog **Best Practices for Multicloud** to learn how to ensure you're selecting the optimal cloud platform for each workload.

For many businesses, it's best to start with a workload discovery and alignment of the entire IT estate, then follow up with workload alignment reviews at regular intervals to ensure placements are still maximizing business resources and supporting business objectives.

The practice of workload alignment involves the following:
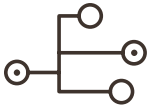
Performing an inventory and mapping the IT estate or specific portions of it

**Looking at applications and key workloads** to understand performance, dependencies and resource requirements

Evaluating current and prospective platform options to determine best-fit locations for each workload

Building out a plan that will be fleshed out further as preparation for migration

The best location for each workload is the one that meets the most or all criteria determined by the business. These typically relate to cost, latency, agility, integrations, workflows/process, security, internal resources and skill sets and maintenance/management. A Business Impact Analysis that identifies things like critical apps and application tiers can also be very useful when performed in conjunction with workload alignment.

But it's also about understanding your environment on a strategic level. What are your business users' needs? What would be required to replatform a workload or set of workloads? Do you have the resources to accomplish what you'd like in a given time period? There are no right or wrong answers — it's all valuable information to guide your purposeful transformation.
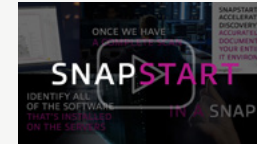
Do you know what you have?

There are many tools on the market that claim to help you identify what you have and map your IT environment. From our work in the field, we've found that all such tools had shortcomings — so we developed our own.

SnapStart discovery engine locates and maps IT assets 10–20X faster than other tools and with very high levels of accuracy, using simple commands via a laptop or VM. Check out our SnapStart video library to see how it works.

The value of workload alignment

✓ Improve IT environment decision-making.
✓ Gain greater control of costs and CapEx.
✓ Increase confidence surrounding compliance and security.
✓ Enhance service delivery.
✓ Strategically align IT and the business.

Data center migration and consolidation

It takes a lot of resources to run a data center. In order to compete with cloud-native startups, established organizations may need to reprioritize and reevaluate whether it makes sense to stay "in the data center business" in the same way they always have. No matter what, IT leaders need to be ever-conscious about costs and business resilience.

Choices include:

Data center consolidation

Rein in server sprawl and increase density with virtualization. By consolidating your data center, you can reduce costs, simplify maintenance and reallocate resources to other IT or business needs.

Moving to a new data center or colocation facility

Changes to the business or new ownership may dictate relocation of a data center. Or, changes in maintenance costs or an increased likelihood of natural disaster may make it logical to move. In some cases, colocation facilities offer the right blend of costs, scalability and performance.

Migration to cloud or hybrid cloud

Cloud adoption has grown leaps and bounds in recent years, but there has also been a fair amount of repatriation due to poor planning and cloud spend management. Hybrid cloud often provides the most benefits — flexibility, cost optimization, risk management — when approached strategically.
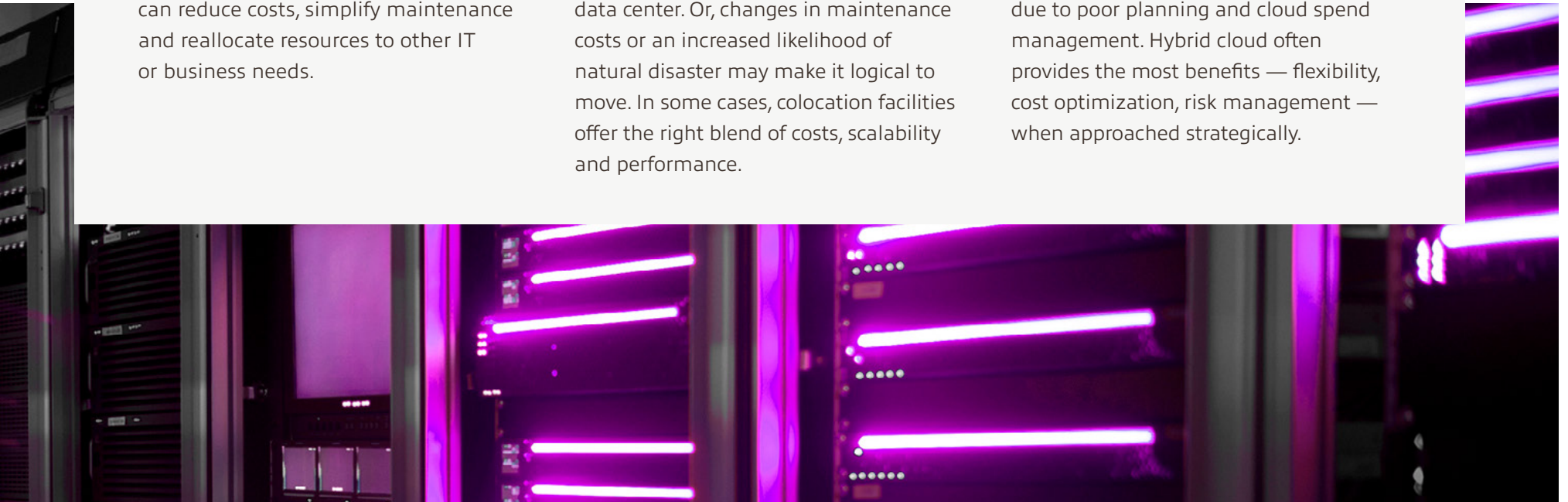
When Insight's migration experts take on a new data center migration or consolidation project, we keep our guiding principles top of mind.

1. Business-critical applications can seldom take extended outages.

2. Focus on migrating workloads versus systems — and understand the impact on business processes.

3. Align appropriate data migration tools and techniques based on the profile of the data, locations, performance and SLAs, versus a one-size-fits-all approach.

4. Always consider the impact of the data center on compliance, security, business continuity and disaster recovery.

5. Simplify and streamline before migrating to reduce costs, risks and time.

6. Planning is 75% of the effort.

Large-scale modernization leads to massive gains for global software company.

A global software company was on a tight deadline to migrate 3,000+ servers to Microsoft® Azure® and wanted a streamlined cloud migration plan for all aspects of its vital transformation. With help from Insight, the migration of servers was completed in 18 months, along with expanded DevOps capabilities, a FinOps dashboard creation and more.

Read the client story

The value of data center migration and consolidation

✓ Reduce data center costs.
✓ Decrease strain on resources.
✓ Improve speed and performance.
✓ Increase agility.
✓ Simplify IT architecture.

Hybrid cloud

Both the cloud and on-premises platforms have benefits and drawbacks. A hybrid cloud strategy allows you to be selective about the platforms and workloads best suited for each other based on business needs. This level of control can yield the best business outcomes and enable transformation to happen more easily.

Today, 91% of organizations rely on multiple public cloud providers and 20% plan to repatriate public cloud workloads to an on-premises model in 2023.[4]

Private cloud

A cloud computing platform run on-premises and used by a single enterprise

Public cloud

A cloud service that is shared among multiple customers with resources that are owned/operated by a third-party provider

Hybrid cloud

A combination of private and public clouds used to run workloads and move data and apps as needed

**If you're looking to transform with purpose, hybrid cloud is an ideal strategy.**

It lets you scale and manage capacity seamlessly, accommodating spikes and fluctuations in resource requirements.

It provides control and security for workloads with particularly sensitive data or that are subject to regulatory oversight.

It gives you access to public cloud services that support innovation and data-centered development, avoiding the need to build similar microservices in-house.
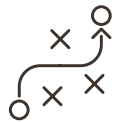

It enables you to drive a cloud strategy that's more feasible than shifting an entire legacy infrastructure to public cloud, in terms of time, resources, costs, skill sets and change management.

Hybrid cloud is not without its challenges, though. It must be orchestrated, governed and managed thoughtfully if you are to reap the maximum benefits. Cross- and multi-platform management tool sets can be difficult to select and operate. Securing hybrid environments may require a different approach and an in-depth understanding of cloud versus on-premises security capabilities.
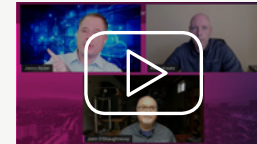
Meeting in the middle

The allure of hybrid cloud is not lost on vendors. Offerings like As a Service, virtualized workloads (running on-premises workloads natively in public cloud) and containers represent a convergence and blurring of boundaries between private and public clouds.

For more on this topic and an in-depth discussion about hybrid cloud, watch this LinkedIn Live session with Insight experts, *Driving Transformation With Hybrid Cloud.*

 The value of hybrid cloud

✔ Balance control and innovation.
✔ Support gradual transformation.
✔ Increase flexibility and agility.
✔ Scale with greater ease.
✔ Optimize IT costs.

Automation and modern IT operations

Successful transformation isn't just about what's in your technology stack — how you orchestrate its components matters. Failing to pay close attention to workflows can completely jackknife the success of a transformation initiative.

IT infrastructure optimization **is expected to have the biggest impact on driving innovation and revenue generation** for the second year in a row.
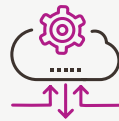
Top IT priorities to enable digital transformation are optimizing data and analytics capabilities (51%) and increasing cloud adoption (49%).

Optimizing IT infrastructure through better monitoring and management is the top overall technology initiative in 2023 **according to 50% of IT leaders.**[5]

Automation is gaining significant traction as a tactic for process transformation. When used effectively, automation can increase productivity and efficiency, lower costs and improve consistency. But what do you automate? In theory, you can automate almost anything — but should you? As discussed in this video with an Insight expert it's recommended that you:

Determine what you hope to achieve by saving time and coming to market faster — what's the endgame?

**Pinpoint where you'll see the greatest gains —** you're going to want to start here.

Apply a set of policies toward that automation framework to ensure your company and data are protected.

In other words, nail down your "why" before jumping to "how."

For many organizations, security is an area rich in automation opportunity. According to the Insight-commissioned Foundry survey, The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023, 24% of IT leaders cite the lack of process automation as a primary challenge in cybersecurity.[6]

Regardless of what you automate, be aware of the risks involved in moving too fast. Skipping over adding proper controls can quickly make automation work against you, as each error is replicated over and over again.

Establishing a broader practice of modern IT operations that embraces automation can help you ensure a better balance between innovation and governance on the path to transformation. To learn more, read The Complete Guide to Modern IT Operations.
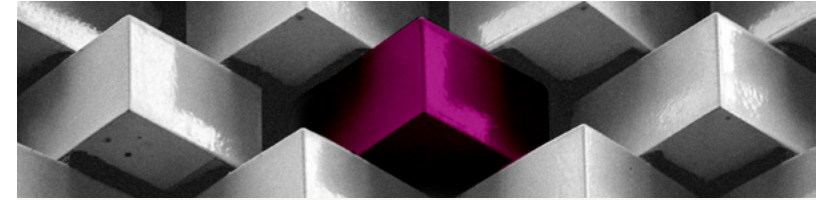
How and where to automate

By starting small, automating the tasks that consume a fair portion of your IT team's time, you can gain critical experience with automation before you expand your efforts.

Learn more tips and find out about key automation opportunities in the infographic Automation is a Journey.

The value of automation

✓ Optimize workflows.
✓ Speed up deployment cycles.
✓ Enable agility.
✓ Shift IT staff to more strategic priorities.
✓ Accelerate application development.

Keys to success

Transformation initiatives often begin with ample energy and optimism, but they get derailed by weak strategies, unclear objectives and a lack of resources to handle the tasks at hand.

Follow this basic framework to avoid pitfalls:

Assess your IT environment — The more you know, the fewer surprises will catch you off guard later. Doing your due diligence ensures a smoother road to transformation.

Identify key areas of opportunity — Establish your purpose. Where will change make the most impact? What outcomes are you hoping to realize? Find your "why."

Create a transformation roadmap — Define the path you plan to take. The more solid your vision, the easier it will be to rally stakeholders around it.

Align the best solutions to your specific challenges — Sometimes the solutions best suited are not the ones you imagined. Prioritize the business and its needs, and the rest will follow.

Provide ongoing support for measurable, meaningful outcomes — Transformation does not supplant the need for maintenance and management. Care for your environment, and it will care for your business.
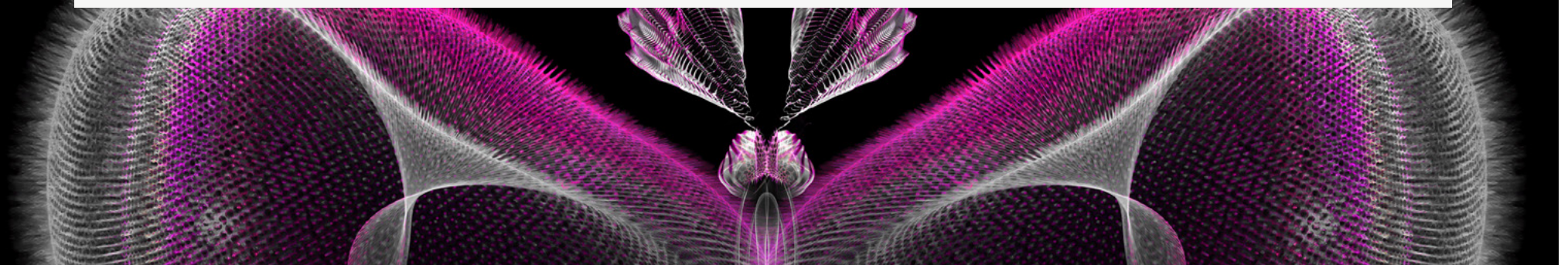
Insight is your resource each step of the way.

From assessment to strategy, technical services to managed services, we are here to help you become the organization you want to be — to transform with purpose and direction.

Visit solutions.insight.com today to start the conversation.

For more information, view the following:

SOLUTION BRIEF:
Data Center Transformation

WHITEPAPER:
7 Core Practices to Achieve Data Center Modernization

SOLUTION BRIEF:
Data Center Consolidation Services

INFOGRAPHIC:
Key Components of a Modern Data Estate

Insight

solutions.insight.com | insight.com

Sources:
[1] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 19. Commissioned by Insight.
[2] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 20. Commissioned by Insight.
[3] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 17. Commissioned by Insight.
[4] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 11. Commissioned by Insight.
[5] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 9. Commissioned by Insight.
[6] Marketpulse Research by Foundry Research Services. (January 2023). The Path to Digital Transformation: Where Leaders Stand in 2023. Slide 38. Commissioned by Insight.