5 Steps to Build an Agile Infrastructure & Operations

Build an I&O agility program that goes beyond "business as usual."

Having focused for so long on internal optimizations, many IT infrastructure and operations (I&O) leaders have built rigid infrastructure processes and one-size-fits-all service "pipelines" meaning that they are missing out on opportunities to become more agile.

"The majority of I&O leaders are in organizations that are still structured around traditional technology domains/silos that don't adequately support newer requirements such as bimodal IT, digital business and digital business platforms," says Hank Marquis, research director at Gartner. "They are struggling to optimize IT operations and identify where to target their agility efforts."

Fixate on Improving I&O Transactions With Both Business and Other IT Functions
Focus on improving your high-level business and IT transactions in order to establish a powerful agility and innovation mindset. Fewer well-targeted transaction improvement goals can deliver more success faster than a broad cross-section of maturity improvement initiatives. A transaction orientation pulls processes, technology and people into business alignment. By making improved transactions the goal, improved processes and services will result.

Assess Your Current Capability
Assess current I&O capabilities to spot potential roadblocks – and opportunities – by understanding what you have achieved to date. Only then can I&O leaders plan the transformation that is needed. Focus on three areas for evaluation – organizational maturity; customer satisfaction; and employee engagement.

Plan to Make Small Changes
Plan more frequent but smaller changes related to reducing "transaction friction" to inspire executive sponsors who can help ensure that the improvement plans get the attention and resources they need. Communicating in business terms is key to inspiring sponsors. I&O leaders must set reasonably sized improvement goals and remain flexible, because improvements come opportunistically and incrementally, rather than all at once.

Execute and Validate Your Focus Tasks
One of the biggest inhibitors to the successful execution of the plan can be overestimating what can be accomplished in the established time frame. It is essential to show improvement is happening, and that it translates into improved value to the business. By executing against tasks that will have a real and noticeable impact (for example, focusing on improving transactions), the improvement plan can gain momentum and benefit from additional support from I&O team members and other stakeholders.
Make Improvement Continuous

To achieve and sustain agile operations, periodic assessment and continual improvement must become part of the organization's culture. Half-yearly or even quarterly, reassessment of specific domains is a best practice during improvement. The most successful organizations focus on a few tasks directly related to transactions with users and customers, deliver them, identify the next set, and keep improving.