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IT Ops in 2021: what's ahead

2021

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Workplaces defined by change

It's clear that the workplace hasn't finished redefining itself. IT Ops will keep adapting to shifts in remote and on-site work models for a while to come.

"Somebody who can work from a tablet or a laptop can work from anywhere. But there are employees who need to be in a specific physical space, which we call 'the digital worker.' It could be a bank clerk, a loan processing officer or an insurance claims agent, and those roles need to be modeled as personas, not at the individual level. Physical digital location space is a realm that we hadn't thought about unless we were trying to design user experiences for a retail floor or something along those lines. Now, we are starting to see that pattern as a critical need going forward."

Karthik Ranganathan, Chief Enterprise Architect at NTT DATA

Karthik Ranganathan

"Be clear about workflows, escalations, lines of communication/collaboration—make sure those are all still working. Don't assume that just because it worked before COVID, it works now. Be prepared to experiment and tweak things to work in the new model. Even if IT teams are fine, this extends to how they interact with other teams across the organization."

Assaf Resnick, Founder and CEO at BigPanda

Assaf Resnick

"The need for cross-organizational visibility is more critical now than ever before. IT teams can often be siloed—and working from home can make that worse. To find gaps in IT operation hand-offs, track productivity (response to tickets, support workloads by operator, development release cycles, etc.) over time to see if there has been a major change (up or down) in workloads and engagement. Examine your teams' workflows and identify places where tools sprawl might be creating delays due to mental switching costs; streamline through integration and/ or aggregating monitoring, change and topology data into a single pane of glass. IT Ops teams will have less competing noise, better understanding of the health of their IT Operations and the right tools to help them."

Assaf Resnick, Founder and CEO at BigPanda

"By July 2021, I predict companies will return to a hybrid office/home work model. Many employees fled expensive housing markets and moved to more affordable cities over the last year because they were able to work remotely while retaining their premium salaries. Suddenly, as offices reopen, companies will ask employees to decide whether they want to return to the company locations or take a cut in salary to stay where they are."

Cari Jaquet, VP of Marketing at BigPanda

Cari Jaquet

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Higher potential for machine learning and automation

Everyone agrees that machine learning and automation play a major role in the future of IT Ops, and innovation is extending what that role is capable of.

Karthik
Ranganathan

Mohan
Kompella

David
Levinger

"It's important to get a better understanding of the cost of incidents, in terms of the cost per minute for core operation systems, versus systems that are driving business change, versus systems that are driving innovation. Our return on investment is significantly higher for an innovation program if we can avoid incidents, and that's where AI and automation start to drive tremendous value for operations. If we can proactively identify incidents in a forward-looking way, core operations can be a contributing element to drive what the future looks like. And so we want to drive AIOps through that lens, as a key focus area for 2021."

Karthik Ranganathan, Chief Enterprise Architect at NTT DATA

"Employee quality of life will increase in a meaningful way as a result of automation. The automation of repetitive and minor tasks will free time for more valuable and creative work, allowing IT employees at all levels to focus on more rewarding tasks."

Mohan Kompella, VP of Product Marketing at BigPanda

"If you've been in the IT industry for any length of time, automation is kind of the holy grail. We want everything to be automated, because manual changes take a long time, and they're error-prone. We want to avoid that, especially when we're troubleshooting an incident; as much as possible, we want to quickly garner insight into what caused it, how we can solve it and how we can make sure it doesn't happen again in the future. My teams and I have focused as much as possible on infrastructure as code and committing everything into an automated process so we don't make manual mistakes over time. There's undeniable value to AI in that effort, especially when you start to look at the massive diversity of endpoints and data that IT teams are now being asked to evaluate. Human beings are just not very good at correlating data above a certain scale. Anything that can help us see and work with those patterns is extremely valuable, and I think that fact is key to using automation proactively, now and far into the future."

David Levinger, Head of Operations at Machinify, Inc.

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IT becomes more vital to business strategy

Engines for digital transformation such as cloud and machine learning offer new opportunities for IT to directly enable overall business strategy with more flexible, capable and open infrastructure.

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Steven Liegl

Jason Walker

Paul
Szymczyk

"Where I see a lot of value in the ITIL [IT Infrastructure Library] framework today is that, with organizations working remotely, it provides insight to help really understand the flow of things between IT and the business. This framework does need to be flexible in terms of who is part of the model. Traditionally these have been people, such as a change manager or incident manager, but with AI and automation, some of those roles will be taken on by machines. So, as we adapt the ITIL framework to future organizational views, we need to decide how both people and other systems fit in. That flexibility is important as we all try to squeeze everything we can out of our technology."

Steven Liegl, Head of Network and Infrastructure at WEC Energy Group

"In the investment world, there is a financial concept known as a 'zombie company.' These companies are only able to remain in business because financial debt is artificially cheap. When rates rise to normal levels, they are not able to survive. In the IT world, the pandemic has exposed a new type of zombie company: a company that has not digitally transformed their IT infrastructure

and operations and was surviving because they relied on their brick-and-mortar business or antiquated supply chains. These zombie companies are going to die off in 2021. Economic contraction is going to eliminate companies who have not modernized their IT and infrastructure, and therefore can't address the demand for digital services."

Jason Walker, former Head of IT Ops at Blizzard Entertainment and Field CTO at BigPanda

"There will be a rise of 'Switzerland' platforms that can unify tools, teams and workflows. As companies embrace the cloud, most will not be able to leave their legacy environments and tools fully behind. Siloed and fragmented Cloud Ops, DevOps, IT Ops and NOC teams will prevent organizations from being able to drive across-the-board improvements in uptime, SLAs and MTTx metrics. This will be an obstacle for CIOs and IT executives looking to maximize uptime and delight customers, which will lead to 'Switzerland platforms' being a must-have."

**Paul Szymczyk,
VP of Global Sales at BigPanda**

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New rules for IT Ops software

As enterprise expectations for IT Ops software continue to get higher, we expect to see significant re-alignment within the market segment, with enterprise customers being the main beneficiaries.

"Financial pressure due to the COVID-generated economic downturn will drive consolidation in the IT Ops vendor space. Strong companies will buy up promising but cash-poor start-ups, moving into adjacent spaces through acquisitions."

Jason Walker, Field CTO at BigPanda and former Head of IT Ops at Blizzard Entertainment

"Surging stock valuations, cheap money and newly gained efficiencies coming out of COVID-related efforts will continue to drive mergers and acquisitions in the market."

Paul Szymczyk, VP of Global Sales at BigPanda

"We are about to witness the mass extinction of dinosaurs—vendors with on-prem software who have been dragging their feet on re-platforming to a SaaS solution. They will try desperately to hang on to existing customers while pivoting investments, people and messaging with the promise of their new SaaS-centric, all-in-one platform."

Cari Jaquet, VP of Marketing at BigPanda

Jason Walker

Paul Szymczyk

Cari Jaquet

Seizing the day and defining the future

The IT Ops renaissance continues, with advances in tools and technologies that make teams more efficient and adaptive. The course is set for driving efficiencies, accelerating incident response and preserving uptime.

**It's a great year. Reach out to BigPanda:
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