



Running a bimodal organization

CORE ISSUES

- Defining Bimodal IT and its variants
- Understanding the bimodal battle within organizations
- Alleviate bimodal IT pain points
- Role of carriers

DEFINING BIMODAL IT AND ITS VARIANTS

Coined by Gartner in 2014, bimodal IT refers to having two different modes of ICT in operation at once: one mode focused on maintenance, stability and efficiency, while another, non-sequential mode that is an experimental and agile operation, optimized for speed of delivery than for stability. Gartner believes bimodal IT is essential to thrive in a changing business landscape.

Yet, does Gartner's definition match the outlook of leading technology decision makers? And, more importantly, are they working in bimodal organizations already? The answer to both questions is broadly yes; the sentiment expressed in Gartner's definition certainly resonates with industry leaders and many of them admit that two speeds of IT exist within their organization. There are, however, some important nuances in the way that bimodal operations are defined and have manifested themselves within different types of organizations.

One interpretation of bimodal IT broadly identifies Mode 1 as 'legacy technologies and processes that need to be overhauled' and Mode 2 as the 'digital products that are delivered to market by DevOps teams to enhance the customer experience'. Other ICT decision-makers have described bimodal in terms of internal operational systems versus external consumer-facing platforms, back office versus front office operations, and the old versus the new.

The reason when exploring why organizations had started to exhibit symptoms of bimodal IT operation, many ICT decision-makers view the growing number of end-users and departmental heads purchasing their own,

generally cloud-based, ICT services with a corporate credit card, as a key indicator.

By contrast, others argue that businesses have always operated in a bimodal fashion – the old is trusted and reliable, the new is exciting and unknown. This is a model that enables innovation to continually take place.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIMODAL BATTLE WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

However one chooses to interpret the term, ICT decision-makers agree that bimodal IT can become a real source of tension within the IT function.

The banking sector is a very good exemplar of the challenges that bimodal organizations face. The sector is highly regulated, so the protection and integrity of core systems is absolutely fundamental.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS



- Bimodal IT is as much a new trend as it is the age-old push pull between new and old
- The bimodal battle is fought on two fronts – technical and cultural
- Technical upskilling and training are vital to combat tension
- Partners and carriers can help by easing transition between legacy and new technologies.

At the same time, most banks are fiercely competing with one another for customers: digital capabilities like mobile payments and banking are seen as means of encouraging customer loyalty – yet they depend on the core banking systems in order to function. When core banking systems were first conceived they didn't factor in the now needed functionality and processes that enable flexible consumer facing operations. Front office teams don't like to rely on legacy systems to drive the speed of innovation – this, understandably, causes tension.

Within any type of organization, the battle between forms of bimodal appears to be being fought on two fronts. On the one hand, there are technical issues in the way that two distinct technology sets are configured, the interface between the two and the skills required to integrate different technologies. The other is cultural - the conflict springs from the very different ways the two teams operate and are managed.

ALLEVIATE BIMODAL IT PAIN POINTS

What can organizations do to alleviate these pain points and make bimodal strategies work for them? ICT decision-makers are ambivalent on the effectiveness of HR-led initiatives like job swaps and collaborative activities between employees working in either mode. Technical upskilling and training, on the other hand, are seen as vital.

ICT decision-makers attach greater importance to instilling an appreciation and an understanding of the role each side of the IT function plays within the business. One way of achieving this is to appoint a single individual (or a small team) with responsibility for managing communication channels and negotiating between the different groups.

Some ICT decision-makers take the view that both sides of the bimodal IT divide could find common cause in focusing on the needs of the end user. Putting the customer at the heart of every discussion, and connecting those talking to customers to everyone responsible for delivering services, ICT leaders believe, would leave organizations better-placed to succeed in a customer led digital world. Technologies such as big data and the Internet of Things give businesses even more opportunity to get closer to their customers, which means core systems at the backend must provide the flexibility the frontend needs to exploit them to their optimum.

ROLE OF CARRIERS

Based on ICT decision-makers experience, carriers have an important role to play. Many ICT decision-makers indicated that their move to a bimodal strategy is something they would seek a partner to help them with. Carriers are able to:

- Reduce complexity of IT operations and ease the transition between legacy and new technologies
- Provide a secure and reliable platform, with flexible resources for DevOps teams
- Help organizations speed up the pace of innovation, by enabling development teams to take new applications out of the sandbox into production faster
- Deliver an available platform with a great response time to ensure the performance of online products.

CONCLUSIONS



- Bimodal IT is an enabler of continuous innovation but comes with its challenges
- Focusing on the end user can help to sync the twin operational modes of Bimodal IT
- Regulated sectors can find the tension between modes aggravated by factors such as legacy systems
- Taking the help of partners can both ease and speed up the change.

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