

# The best of both worlds

What to look for in an IT optimize solution

**W**hen it comes to maximizing the performance, scalability and value of their IT infrastructure, corporations want the best of both worlds: the features, functionality and benefits of their business applications without the headache of managing and running them.

It has been a challenging proposition for enterprises to optimize their outsourced investment and the performance of their IT spend. Increasingly, however, these companies are turning to providers of colocation and managed services for an IT optimize solution that extends beyond the infrastructure to provide above platform-level support and services.

*Smart Business* spoke with Don Goodwin, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Latisys, to help executives determine what to look for in an IT optimize solution, and how they can gain the comfort and assurance needed in turning over ownership and management of their IT infrastructure to a colocation and managed services provider.

## What is the most significant difference between an IT off-load solution and an IT optimize solution?

The primary distinction between 'off-load' and 'optimize' has to do with the responsibilities around the compute layer of an IT infrastructure. With off-load, an IT organization is responsible for the procurement and support of the server hardware, as well as the hypervisor and operating system. With an IT optimize solution, the server hardware, hypervisor and operating system components become the responsibility of the service provider. The provider will capitalize the hardware purchases to leverage their economies of scale, utilize 'Service Provider Licensing Agreements' to provide the software in a cost effective and scalable fashion, and provide advanced around-the-clock support for both — all for a predictable monthly expense.

## What kind of requirements do companies that are ready for an IT optimize solution have?

Given that these profiles build upon each other, the functional requirements from clients that are classified within the off-load and off-site profiles are similar. Organizations within each profile require highly robust platforms from which they can deploy the critical IT services needed to operate their businesses.



**Don Goodwin**

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The primary distinction we see between optimize and other profiles is the need for an organization to further optimize their operation by:

- Moving even more dollars from CapEx budgets to OpEx budgets by shifting hardware and OS/hypervisor software licensing responsibilities to the provider.

- Optimizing head count through eliminating the need for IT staff to manage the tactical care and feeding of the network, hardware, hypervisor and operating systems.

- Filling knowledge gaps for server hardware, hypervisor technology, and operating systems by leverage the expertise and support of the service provider.

## What are the key benefits of an IT optimize solution provided by a colocation/managed services provider?

Optimize enables an IT organization to focus on meaningful, strategically important IT initiatives and better utilize available IT budgets. This holistic approach allows the organization to spend time innovating the systems, processes and procedures that improve operational efficiencies and drive hard dollars to a company's bottom line, which not only simplifies the conversation between the business and technology leaders, but also improves the overall reliability of the infrastructure.

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## How can an IT optimize solution ease the burden of the capital investment required to adopt the latest data center technologies?

IT optimize eliminates the capital burden altogether. This cost is shifted over to a predictable monthly expense that encompasses all costs for the technology — from initial acquisition to ongoing support. On top of the server, hypervisor and operating system costs, the optimize profile has the potential to eliminate all of the big-ticket items typically found within the SME infrastructure, including Storage Area Network (SAN) and data protection platforms.

## Many firms are dabbling in virtual servers, but managed virtualization is different. How?

The big difference, aside from the subject matter expertise that comes along with the service provider offering (24-7-365 access to more than one expert) has to do with the way the costs are structured. Off the shelf, the hypervisor software often costs as much as the hardware costs. The optimize profile reduces the economic stair function associated with scaling out virtual machine infrastructure. This allows for managing capacity based on actual resource utilization as opposed to the need for avoiding uncomfortable conversations with the CFO.

## How can firms that are hesitant to turn over ownership and management of their IT infrastructure pick the right partner?

Many organizations think they give up strategic control of their operation if they don't own the hardware. This simply doesn't have to be the case. Here is a short list of tips for picking the right partner:

- Ensure there is rapport. IT professionals should want to engage your team members, inherently supporting the transfer of knowledge that makes the IT organization stronger.

- The adoption of services should not be adversely disruptive. If you have to change every process and procedure in the book, it's probably not a good fit.

- Maintain control. Engaging a service provider isn't about giving up control but changing the perspective from tactical to strategic.

- Don't make your decision based solely on the lowest bid. Consider all costs variables to understand the implications of selecting a particular partner. <<

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