

THE “MAINFRAME REFRAMED” ASKS: DO YOU TRULY UNDERSTAND THE TCO OF YOUR COMPUTE PLATFORM OPTIONS?



At the recent “Mainframe Reframed” Virtual Summit, technology leaders were challenged by a respected leader in private banking to know the facts about the costs of their mainframe versus distributed environments:

“To my colleagues who perhaps are not z customers, get the TCO done... if you don’t trust the vendors, there are plenty of communities out there.”

GTSG is one of those communities.

On September 30, hundreds of interested parties joined the “Mainframe Reframed” Virtual Summit where perspectives were shared among enterprise executives, vendors and industry analysts. Some of the numbers carry a powerful effect: 90% of the Fortune 500 still use a mainframe; 80% of the world’s data still resides on the mainframe; 220 billion lines of COBOLⁱ are still in production.

“The verdict is in”

Recent comments prompted by a study announcing that the mainframe is a more cost effective platform seemed to imply that the issue is settled.

Our view: the study may settle the arithmetic in general, but it doesn’t settle the decision at the individual shop level – each shop is different.

For example, one of the “Mainframe Reframed” commentators offered that, using an extreme example, if you’re a local library that somehow acquired a mainframe in the 1970s, you probably have a better option today. At the other extreme, another panelist noted if you have 300 Linux workloads you should assess the business case for the mainframe right away.

Be careful to not let the additional “background noise” - skills shortage, political issues, cultural bias, “cool” factor, etc., deter you from an objective analysis.

The challenge and call to action is right: assess the cost case objectively; do the math; know the TCO. The other factors can be assessed in their proper perspective once the hard facts are known.

Getting the straight answer- for your shop.

Every vendor has their interests, whether in the mainframe and/or distributed worlds, and yes, that includes us. Incentives such as discounted hardware, additional software, and even professional services may make it difficult for them to be perceived as putting together an objective and unbiased case. It's a matter of perception: will your management team perceive a view from a vendor as being truly independent and in your best interests?

This undertaking is not an exercise that can be performed by generic consultants armed with a TCO template. There is tremendous challenge to identify and understand the hidden costs of mainframe and distributed platforms- from the complexity of the maintenance to the costs of patch management, to larger issues like security and disaster recovery.

One of the recurring themes is low incremental cost of placing additional workload on the mainframe versus the cost of horizontal scaling with additional commodity servers.

The cost exercise also needs to level the playing field in terms of functionality. For example, can you develop modern mobile applications that meet the performance and scalability needs of the business on the mainframe?

Finally, part of any decision has to include the cost and risk of the change of platform. That assessment requires experience in workload migration the resultant downstream activities.

An independent look

Our private banking colleague actually touched on a comment that a Gartner analyst made to us a few weeks ago: GTSG is

different in this respect from other members of the mainframe community in that we're deeply immersed in the technology but we're not part of the hardware/software ecosystem.

We definitely have a mainframe heritage: we've been in the business for 28 years and some of our practitioners have more than 40 years on the platform. At the same time, we also have a distributed business that is bigger than our mainframe business, so our bias isn't the same as a pure-play mainframe provider.

We're consultants so you'll get an answer to the simple questions

- Given my current and anticipated workload, what are the costs of running on the mainframe versus on a distributed platform?
- What are the costs and risks associated with making a change?

We'll look at the hardware and software costs, at where you may have opportunity to improve your procurement leverage, and at your staffing and see where you have opportunity to improve. We will then take three to five year views of the platform comparison based on the expected outcome.

Our stake in the outcome is ensuring you get the right answer for your shop. Because our business is services, not hardware or software, partnering with you to get the right answer will demonstrate our commitment to your success. If you appreciate the quality of our work, we can help you plan, migrate and support your platform decision.

We recognize that the only way that happens is if we first earn your trust by doing good work.

Our practice has grown by helping shops like yours make sound, fact based decisions that your management team and businesses can support. Our incentive is to continue growing our practice by building relationships with new clients like you. Getting to the right answer lays the foundation for you trusting us to help you execute your plan and / or speak well of us to your friends and colleagues.

Take the next step

We'll close the way we opened: the call to action is to "do the math." Know the answer and make a fact-based decision, rather than relying upon potentially outdated assumptions.

If any of what you've read here strikes a chord, reach out to us at (877) 467-9885. Thanks for reading.

ⁱ <http://blogs.wsj.com/cio/2014/10/02/cobol-is-dead-long-live-cobol/>