Able One

The New Normal:
What Matters Most to IT Leaders Right Now

Report prepared by:

Arrow
Five Years Out

An Unplanned Shift in IT Priorities

With little to no warning, IT leaders were tasked with maintaining as much operational continuity as possible amid an unprecedented global lockdown: office closures, travel restrictions, social distancing, home quarantines and supply chain disruptions. Since technology mediates almost every single interaction in business, IT leaders have been the key players in their company's crisis-response plans.

IT priorities have shifted and IT leaders have had to pivot to help their organizations weather what was happening in the world. They have had to:

- Ensure their organization can manage the huge and sudden spike in the demand for remote-working capacity
- Protect against the ever-increasing cybersecurity risks with the shift to work-at-home models and cloud
- Keep remote workers connected
- Support the changing operational needs of the organization
- Support sudden and unexpected migrations to cloud technologies

Findings from our research

We asked over two-thousand CIOs, VPs of IT and IT directors to tell us how their priorities have shifted at this time and what their biggest challenges and initiatives are for the remainder of 2020. The results tell a story about what IT leaders are most concerned about and what IT initiatives they plan to direct budget toward in order to address their challenges and concerns. Previously, we saw more traditional technology initiatives in play. In this new world, we're seeing and hearing that IT plans and priorities will never go back to what they were before. As the initial wave of urgency subsides and becomes the new normal, businesses are shifting priorities for 2020 to ensure that they can continue to operate securely and resiliently for these weird and uncertain times.

Detailed results

Responses to the question "what are your top priorities right now". Reponses were collected from 2,000 IT leaders during the period from March 1 to April 31, 2020.

IT Leader Challenges/Concerns	Count	%
Cybersecurity/information security/network security	900	45%
Data protection/data loss prevention	857	43%
Cloud adoption	849	43%
Compliance, privacy and ethics	610	31%
Backup & recovery/disaster recovery/business continuity	584	29%
Endpoint security/BYOD/mobile device management	565	28%
Aging infrastructure/end of life	508	26%
Server and/or storage performance/speed	401	20%
Want to reduce costs by automating tasks	388	20%
Analytics/predictive analytics	357	18%
Keeping up with growing data volumes/accelerating storage demands	342	17%
Data is complex & unstructured/inefficient silo sprawl	311	16%
Managing or storing data in third-party cloud environments	255	13%

Top Three Priorities of IT Leaders

Unquestionably, the three biggest concerns among IT leaders are IT security, data protection and cloud adoption.

Cybersecurity, information security, network security.

 Cybersecurity vulnerabilities have been highlighted in organizations across the U.S. 45% of the IT leaders we asked said that cybersecurity, information security and network security were top of mind for them. With more and more of their workflows digital and cloud-enabled and the exponential rise in remote workers, risk exposure is far greater and security of their information and networks are huge concerns. Spikes in phishing attacks, malware and ransomware attacks have increased. Not only are businesses being targeted, but end-users on laptops and mobile devices are as well. The data shows that IT leaders have not only shifted to enable their remote workforce, but have also had to dynamically shift security to protect remote employees and the data and systems they access.

Data protection/data loss prevention.

43% of the CIOs, VPs of IT and IT directors who responded to our study reported data protection and data loss prevention as one of their top three challenges. The shift to remote work models has generated a cluster of privacy, data protection, security and compliance questions. These challenges are driving the need for companies to ensure their data is secure and protected, as well as ensure that their data protection practices are forward looking. Many data protection strategies were focused on company networks. Devices taken out of the office for remote work have been serious cause for concern when it comes to data protection and data loss prevention.

Cloud adoption

The effort to maintain business operations has put cloud technologies at the forefront for many organizations. 43% of the IT leaders who responded said that they are working on cloud adoption. Many organizations have been moving towards cloud as part of their digital transformation strategies and recent events have been a catalyst to these initiatives, in some cases. In others, the impact has stamped out any barriers to cloud adoption. Cloud has been the answer to the immediate needs for remote business in response to the unprecedented times, but companies won't return to their old ways when they're on the other side of this. Many CIOs are saying that the impact to their business has opened up their eyes to pain points they weren't aware of, which is driving more of a cloud or hybrid cloud strategy.

What Does This Mean to You?

IT leaders are still finding their footing with this new normal that has been ushered in. Building a pathway to the future will hit straight to the heart of an organization's strategy in this recovering world. Budgets worldwide are under incredible pressure. IT leaders will have to take limited capital and re-deploy it on digital strategies and technologies that will future-proof and enable the forward momentum of their business.

Technology has emerged at the core as the indisputable driver of value in supporting business continuity. IT has been the lifeline during this time. Our research shows that CIOs are implementing changes in their playbooks that include shifting spends to remote work, proactive security and data protection as well as cloud adoption. Our dialogues prove that IT leaders want to capitalize on the momentum of the digital transformation that has occurred as a result. Now, organizations have the opportunity to rebuild operations and processes, and accelerate the adoption of digital solutions.

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WHAT MATTERS MOST TO IT LEADERS RIGHT NOW