

Adopting scalable, flexible IT infrastructure for future growth

According to Erik Jordaan, director of BT-SA, when it comes to infrastructure and operations (I&O), a properly and strategically designed solution will save companies exponentially more money in the long term than this week's discounted deal. He recommends companies opt for an infrastructure that is scalable to accommodate future growth and which is flexible enough to adapt with changing technology.

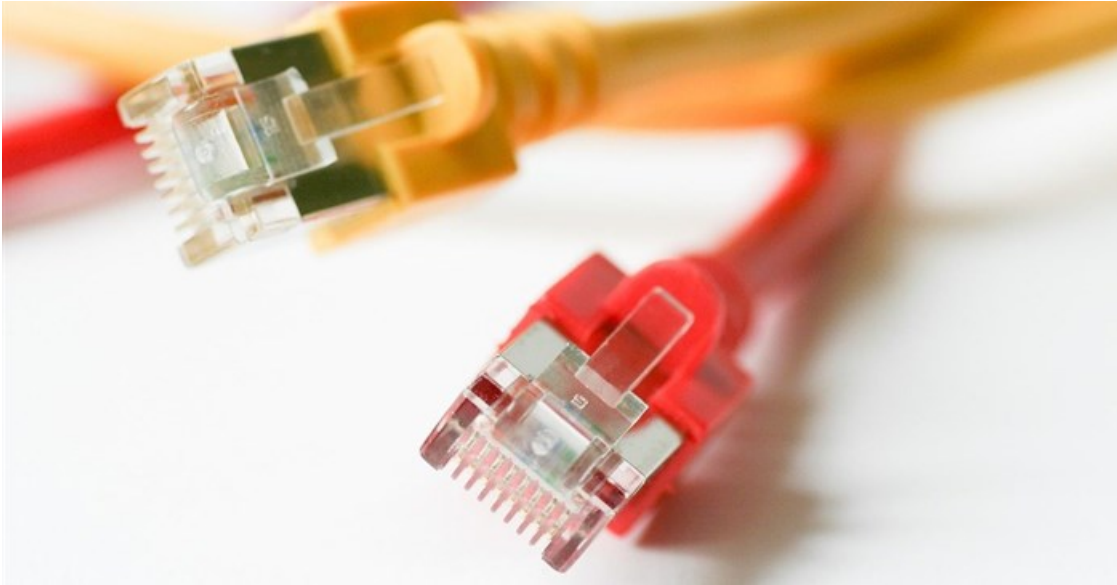


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“Companies grow, and sometimes even shrink, as their fortunes change, and a well-designed system should accommodate the incorporation or removal of components without needing to be completely redesigned,” said Jordaan.

It's the same with technology. Despite shrinking ICT budgets, technology continues to develop rapidly, often necessitating an unplanned and unbudgeted revamp of infrastructure, hardware and/or software. That's where the smart companies that opted for solutions based on their adaptability win over those who took the short-term view and settled for cheap solutions that meet only their immediate needs.

Network cable

Network cabling illustrates this point well. Presently, it's cheaper to run CAT 5e network data cables rather than pay extra for Cat 6 UTP.

“One might even argue that if the network devices you’re installing don’t require Cat 6 features, why spend more? But, this is one of those crucial decisions where taking the long view and investing in the faster, more adaptable, but more expensive product, will work in your favour in the long term,” says BT-SA’s Stephan van Aswegen, senior manager: Data & Cabling.

In addition, he offers this smart infrastructure tip, “If you’re running new or replacing old cable in your existing network, and don’t have the budget to re-cable the entire network, you should install Cat 6 UTP with a different colour, like Blue Cat 6 UTP along with a new Cat 6 patch panel. In this manner, you can install all new data points with Cat 6 blue cable and when the time comes, and budget permits, you can remove all the old grey cable and replace it with the Blue Cat 6 UTP.”

Alternative power solutions

“If more than a decade of load shedding and unreliable access to electricity has taught us anything, then it’s that if your business has any mission-critical power needs, you’d better have a smart, alternative power solution in place to meet those needs,” cautions Andre Viljoen, BT-SA electrical manager.

Alternative power solutions that span solar installations, UPS devices and generators can represent a pretty significant investment for customers and not all the costs are evident in the upfront sticker price. Viljoen cautions buyers to pay attention to the service level agreements (SLAs) offered with the installation.

“In this particular industry, saving a few rands upfront can cost you a packet later. These are sophisticated products and complex installations that require expert support; support that will cost you more down the line if you don’t get a good, solid SLA upfront,” he explains.

More smart installation tips

When it comes to I&O, it’s better to start smart than to get smart later, but thankfully it’s never too late to start somewhere. According to Gartner, six ways to lower your IT I&O costs include:

1. Opt for software-defined and integrated infrastructures – this increases flexibility, shrinks the physical footprint of your installation and all the associated device and maintenance costs.
2. Invest in server modernisation – replacing aging servers with those that can support higher levels of workload consolidation (think virtual machines) is more economical.
3. Network negotiations – audit your current use of bandwidth and telecoms services and renegotiate your telecom services contracts often, to keep costs lean and manageable.
4. Assess client device management – take stock and see if your client computing model is consuming too much of your I&O budget. An evaluation might reveal more cost effective options like embracing BYOD or moving to desktop virtualisation on thin client systems – dependent on your organisation and computing requirements.
5. Consider the cloud – using cloud resources like SaaS (software as a service), PaaS (platform as a service) and even IaaS (infrastructure as a service) can have the most profound effect on reducing I&O costs.

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