The Three Drivers of Converged Systems

THE NEED TO REFRESH UNDERLYING SERVERS AND SYSTEMS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE CONVERGENCE DISCUSSION.

IDG

Every so often enterprises encounter a purchase choice that's a distinct advantage for them. Case in point: Enterprises that haven't upgraded servers since the last economic downturn have the option of either upgrading to the latest servers, or taking advantage of highly converged appliances that integrate server, storage, and networking components.

While research firms like IDC estimate strong spending on converged infrastructure between now and 2016, Forrester Research analyst Richard Fichera also notes that the converged infrastructure segment "will remain intensely competitive and richly rewarding to customers for the foreseeable future."[1]

The advantages of converged systems are clear: They're easier to set up and manage, which reduces staff resource expenses. Enterprises can decrease the number of licensing agreements and vendor relationships from three to one — and sometimes more, if the converged system incorporates management and monitoring capabilities. Overall, with faster deployment time, enterprises can tackle initiatives with more agility.

A new IDG Research study backs up this enthusiasm. It reveals that IT professionals are already seriously considering converged systems. While IT is clear on converged systems' many benefits, respondents still express concerns over the viability of convergence. Savvy IT departments are studying how they can overcome those concerns to derive the benefits that beckon.

[1] http://blogs.forrester.com/ richard_fichera/13-02-21- hp_shows_its_next_genera- tion_blade_and_converged_ infrastructure_no_revolu- tion_but_strong_evolution

What's Driving the Move to Converged Systems?

The survey results show that converged systems are already making inroads into the enterprise. A majority of respondents note that their organization is either planning a migration to converged systems (cited by 36%) or has already migrated at least some applications (also 36%). That represents a clear majority of enterprises that have made the commitment. More evidence of that commitment: Of those that have already migrated to converged systems,

43% say at least half of their organization's applications are already running on converged systems.

These results indicate that enterprises are considering moving to convergence sooner rather than later. Of those who do not currently have converged systems, over the next 12 months, 21% will be evaluating them and 7% testing them.

That's a big commitment to a new technology (though not a new concept). So what's driving the move to converged systems? According to the survey results, IT is using converged systems to address three key challenges.

The move to cloud (cited by 57% of respondents). Cloud computing brings agility, as do converged systems. Indeed, both have elements of virtualization, so they logically work well together. Converged systems give IT the ability to respond quickly to changing business conditions, to make the business more agile and competitive. A company that can respond to competitive pressures in a day by deploying converged systems has an advantage over a company that takes a month — or more — to deploy new systems.
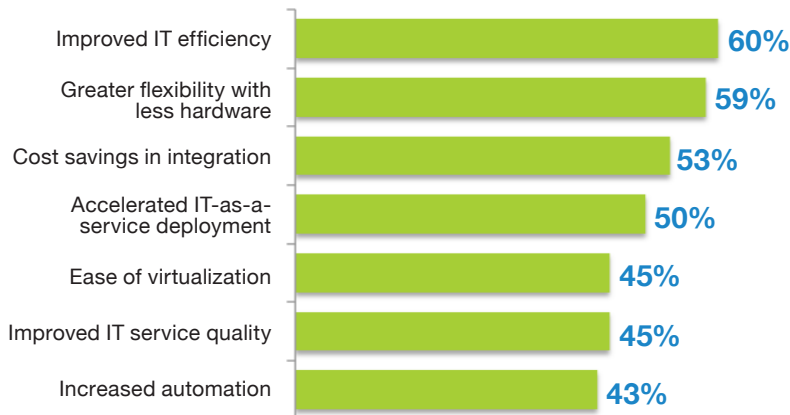
IT complexity (cited by 48%). IT has ended up with heterogeneous systems for a variety of reasons — to avoid vendor lock-in, because of mergers and acquisitions — but the ultimate result is excessive complexity. For every system, IT must deal with

Benefits Anticipating or Received from Use of Converged Systems

Benefit	Percentage
Improved IT efficiency	60%
Greater flexibility with less hardware	59%
Cost savings in integration	53%
Accelerated IT-as-a-service deployment	50%
Ease of virtualization	45%
Improved IT service quality	45%
Increased automation	43%

SOURCE:
IDG Research Services

maintenance, licensing, upgrades, and security patches. Respondents are looking for ways to dial back complexity.

Resource utilization (cited by 47%). This refers to either human or hardware resources. Converged systems are easier to manage, taking less staff time. They're also more consolidated and better integrated, using fewer hardware resources.

Respondents cite other issues as well. They recognize that siloed systems contribute to increased costs (cited by 41%); that provisioning of new systems takes too long (34%); and that it is difficult to keep up with business demands (33%).

What's Slowing the Move to Converged Systems?

Even with high levels of interest among IT professionals, concerns remain. Enterprises not only have to choose from new vendors, but established vendors in the server, storage, and networking space are offering converged systems as well.

Beyond that, according to the survey results, there is still concern about the cost of new systems or their potential return on investment (cited by 47% of respondents). Another 40% express concern about having the right IT skill sets to manage converged systems (but because they are simpler to manage, this should be less of a concern), and 34% worry about the reliability of new technology.

These are issues common to all new technologies. Sometimes it's not clear how the enterprise will benefit from a technology that requires a large budget commitment. New technology, especially on the cutting edge, means there are fewer experienced practitioners, which may make it difficult to find staff within viable salary ranges.

Still, Benefits Beckon: The Value of Convergence

Despite the reticence, the survey results show that IT professionals are aware of converged systems' many benefits. These include improved IT efficiency (cited by 60%), thanks to the ability to manage systems through a single pane of glass; and the ability to have greater flexibility with less hardware (59%), thanks to not only refreshed servers, but also virtualized storage and networking. Respondents also cite cost savings from integration (53%), and the ability, using converged systems, to accelerate IT-as-a-service deployment (50%).

The key issue for IT professionals to remember about converged systems is not just the value they bring to the enterprise today, but the agility and flexibility they bring to the enterprise for tomorrow. Enterprises may have been reluctant to deploy new technology because technologies of the past have been difficult to evolve once deployed, but converged systems are the first new infrastructure technology that takes future agility into account. Hence, they're a strong investment for the future.

For more information on Dell's FX systems, visit
www/Dell.com/FX

How Dell PowerEdge FX Solutions Smooth the Road to Convergence

The Dell PowerEdge FX converged solution lets enterprises not only tailor their IT infrastructure to specific workloads, but also scale that infrastructure as business needs change over time. Its modular 2U rack-based chassis allows enterprises to combine the efficiency of blades with the simplicity of rack-based systems.

The PowerEdge FX2 enclosure hosts redundant, pass-through networking options, including Gigabit Ethernet or 10 Gigabit Ethernet I/O modules. Other aggregation modules let network administrators add more network functionality, simplify physical cabling, and reduce the complexity of upstream switching. The PowerEdge FX2 chassis improves efficiency by sharing cooling and power architecture. It also incorporates the iDRAC7 controller for systems management from any location without the use of agents.