

SAI Industry Insights: Marketing the IT Department

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Has your IT department been disrupted? Most folks will agree that cloud and similar “on demand” technologies have disrupted the IT provider market in a big way. Traditional IT providers have had to reinvent their offerings and strategies in light of cloud providers such as AWS, Google and others. But what has happened to the traditional, internal enterprise IT department? How has your IT function been disrupted? How does your enterprise IT keep up with the “competition” that external clouds provide?

Wait! We can provide that! Over the past several years, we’ve spoken to many executives from organizations large and small. Many forward-thinking organizations have implemented their own private IaaS, and even PaaS and SaaS offerings. Some even provide brokerage for external clouds. That said, more than a few have stumbled in overall adoption and in “acquiring” and “keeping” internal clients. From shadow IT to large marketing departments using external PaaS for web app development, we’ve seen them leave the internal IT fold. In some cases, using an external cloud is completely appropriate, though for others, it isn’t. Assuming enterprise IT can offer services to support their internal clients’ needs, what could be the cause of this lack of “internal” adoption?

Does IT need a marketing function? So, your developers are using cloud services from AWS. Perhaps one of your subsidiaries is using Azure for developing its web apps. While some of these make perfect sense in this hybrid cloud world, many still belong behind the corporate firewall, or could be served more cost-effectively from internal IT. What’s an IT department to do? Perhaps it’s time to consider an IT marketing function. While the idea is not exactly novel, it has some compelling aspects to be considered. After all, if enterprise IT were an actual for-profit IT provider [well, maybe they are ☺], they would have a sales and marketing function to help sell their services.

How would an IT marketing function work? An IT marketing group could have a tremendous impact on the utilization of internal IT, and even on the continuous improvement of the IT function – and the business benefits realized as a results. Here are a few ideas:



An IT marketing function (dare we call it “MarkITing”?) could:

- **Educate** internal clients on services available
- Help IT **understand the needs** of internal clients, and, in turn, help create specific value propositions to better “sell” internal IT
- Showcase and **evangelize the benefits** of using internal IT in the context of specific business benefits – not just, “here it is, use it”, but “if you use this, you could see cost improvements in [insert specific area here]”
- Help **shape competitive pricing** strategies, and avoid the use of external clouds where it is not in the best interest of the company
- **Inform the creation of new services** and the enhancement of existing services

The list goes on and on. In turn, enterprise IT becomes better informed about client needs for service features, timing, consumption models, pricing, and much more.

Do you need an IT marketing group? This “Food for Thought” is not prescriptive, and we’re not suggesting you rush out to hire marketing bigwigs as a first step. Take it step by step and evaluate how a marketing function might improve how IT is perceived and used. Consider your existing talent and the processes you presently use. How are new or enhanced services communicated with internal clients? What are the present processes for understanding existing needs and predicting near-term future needs? How does your organization presently use external cloud providers, and how are these services acquired? How is your internal IT brand perceived? How do you find out how your IT brand is perceived? How do you presently investigate your “competition”? Does it make sense to combine some or all of these responsibilities into a single role?

Wrapping it up. We at SAI understand that there are many considerations when using external and internal cloud services. We present this content as Food for Thought only, and have made several assumptions in order to present our ideas. We understand that you might argue that using internal IT is a given, though we see the current reality of “shadow IT” and rogue LOB external IT spending as cautionary arguments against this. We hope you’ve found this industry insight of interest, and we look forward to providing more Food for Thought on other topics in the near future.

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