

The Infrastructure Behind Best-in-Class Life Safety Technology

By MobileHelp

The Changing Role of Corporate Infrastructure

Examining the role and scale of corporate IT infrastructure yields insight into dramatic growth over the past decade and a half: morphing from being relegated to basement space with a few dozen servers to sophisticated data centers with thousands or tens of thousands of servers.

This shift has been critical: Infrastructure now runs the applications that process business transactions, handles the customer data that yield business, market and product development insights, and supports the analytical tools to help executives and managers make and communicate business decisions. In fact, infrastructure has made possible much of the corporate growth and rising productivity of recent years – and has been at the forefront of catalyzing new industries entirely.

At MobileHelp, the development of a technology plan that could support and drive business growth, both organic and incremental, was key to the launch of the business itself, and has been a core competency and primary catalyst for new product and solution development over the company's decade of doing business in the medical alert and health IT space.

Building Infrastructure: The Architecture of Business Success

According to Jean Robichaud, CTO of MobileHelp, there are several central issues MobileHelp took into account when it was developing the initial technology strategy to support its product solution:

Business Objectives and Goals: As part of the business strategy, those developing the IT infrastructure had (some) insight into what the business wanted to look like in the next five to 10 years;

Budget: They knew what budget they had available to invest in planning for IT infrastructure development or improvements. A business also needs to take into account the time and resources needed to implement and maintain the IT program and its employee training and growth; and

Need for Mobility: Like many companies in the tech space, MobileHelp was founded on a mobile offering and knew it would need that capability to compete effectively in the coming years.

Deep understanding of those fundamental components, however, was not the only challenge MobileHelp took into consideration.

“Because our company’s main product line is life safety, there’s an extra layer for quality of service incorporated into our infrastructure that may not be as critical for other companies,” said Mr. Robichaud. “Because people’s lives depend upon our product, every aspect – from the second a customer presses their emergency button to the moment they get a call from an emergency responder, who knows where that customer is and who they are, and can send the appropriate level of help – there cannot be failures.”

According to Jean, what that looks like for MobileHelp is the inclusion of multiple layers of redundancy in every aspect of the infrastructure – from the device to the emergency call center.

For all businesses, once that infrastructure strategy is defined, the combination of software system, security, and availability requirements dictate the infrastructure requirements. The inherent challenge being, of course, how to incorporate those aspects into the bigger technology strategy with efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

New Solutions to Leverage in the Marketplace

According to Mr. Robichaud, recent developments in the IT industry allowed MobileHelp to address many of its challenges and obstacles related to building a technology infrastructure that would allow the company to expand:

Cloud computing: IT infrastructure is gradually becoming more and more available as a service (IaaS), allowing businesses like MobileHelp to avoid investment in their own hardware, which often entails costly licensing and maintenance requirements. Similarly, software applications are becoming equally available as a service (SaaS), ranging from office to accounting to CRM applications.

"When we were building our infrastructure, we knew we needed to leverage the expertise of others to bring costs down," said Mr. Robichaud. "By using the economies of scale of large cloud hosting providers, we could deliver a much more cost-effective solution to our customers."

And the cloud-based options for business are expanding quickly: [CRN recently published an article about the 100 coolest cloud computing vendors](#): From Amazon, HP, Unisys and Rackspace to the New York Stock Exchange, vendors are now offering infrastructure as a service for businesses to incorporate.

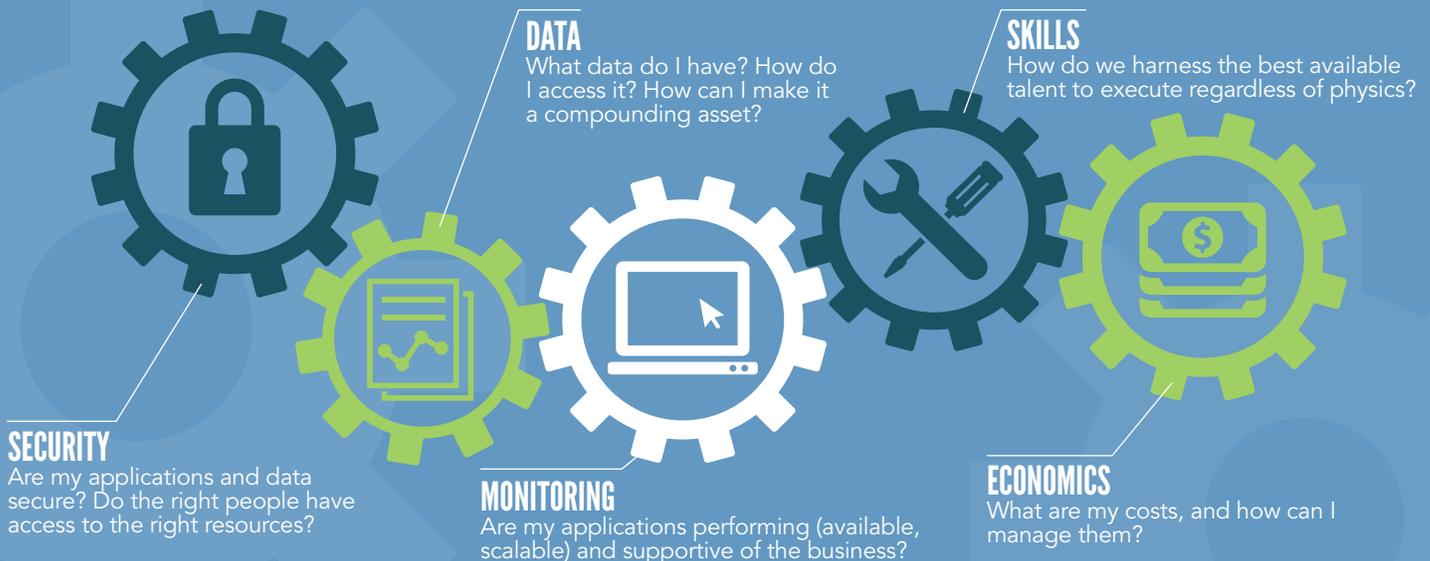
The Blending of Core Aspects: In very recent history, a CIO or CTO would have been required to manage security, data, performance and developer skills in a silo, and vendors would optimize their products around those specific technology "stacks."

According to industry experts, the blending of those once-disparate concepts into an all-inclusive world means boundaries are becoming increasingly ambiguous. In other words, IT now needs management tools that are enterprise infrastructure "agnostic" to keep pace with application developer productivity.

"Our infrastructure incorporated all of the above aspects, and one could not be viewed as more or less important," said Mr. Robichaud. "And they fed into one another – data security and scalability allowed us to expand our product offering, which would not have been feasible without the skill set of our human resources, within a set cost structure. The ability to consider all those factors at once – as opposed to being driven by siloed product and service options – gave us the opportunity to grow significantly."

MobileHelp's product line demonstrates the significant strengths of the cross-section of those core infrastructure aspects: its devices feature data transmission persistence and security. Its service delivery platform and central stations feature immense range in geo-redundancy, scalability,

The Distilling of Core Infrastructure Aspects:



elasticity and allow for the intersection of human communication around emergency situations to be as effective as possible in securing the right level of help for its customers and their unique situations.

The Value of an Effective Infrastructure

Mr. Robichaud credits the crucial thought process around the initial design of the company's infrastructure with making it ultimately more efficient, helping to redefine its business model, and improving the overall customer experience. This has been reflected in more than one way within the organization and the development of its business from simple mobile medical alert device to health management solution set:

Real-time Data Collection: The company's infrastructure supports and manages the ability to capture customer information reliably and inexpensively;

Large-Scale Analytics: The real-time data collection process has allowed MobileHelp to provide its customers with a range of critical information – from providing a caregiver with their mom's exact location to allowing mom to track and monitor her biometric vital signs, such as weight and blood pressure;

Speed to Market: A strong infrastructure has given MobileHelp the ability to bring new products and solutions to market in a nimble way that has ensured they maintain their competitive edge;

The Customer Experience: MobileHelp has employed the successful service provider mantra of working to get the customer experience right – by switching and routing consumers across different types of networks. A well-tuned infrastructure provides them with that kind of flexibility;

Employees' Productivity: Most of MobileHelp's personnel conduct their work on the corporate infrastructure, which allows management to quickly and easily make decisions about issues such as how to balance security with ease of use and which types of devices make the most sense; and

Developers' Productivity: Mr. Robichaud noted that developers spend less time consulting with server and network teams, grappling with incompatibilities, and struggling to use technologies to bridge gaps. At MobileHelp, the IT infrastructure was positioned not just as an efficient taker of orders but also as a partner in determining and executing the business strategy.

While infrastructure plays a crucial role in all business development, Mr. Robichaud gives credit to MobileHelp for the critical and continual competitive edge it has provided to the company.

"Our business demanded that we created an infrastructure that supports our overarching goal – allow people to quickly get emergency help, if and when they need it," he said. "But using that infrastructure has also allowed us to move the issue further upstream, and address the reasons that people might fall in the first place. That type of business augmentation requires strength in infrastructure, and we're grateful we put the time into developing ours."



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