

The new enterprise rock stars



Cisco and Intel® partnering in innovation



With the rise of application development, infrastructure teams must find new ways to support and enable their software counterparts.

Intel had a memorable TV advertisement in 2009, depicting Ajay Bhatt—co-inventor of USB—as a rock star among his peers. In the ad, the actor portraying Bhatt saunters into the room with swagger, signs autographs, and elicits delirium and adoration typically reserved for mainstream celebrities.

“Our rock stars aren’t like your rock stars,” the ad concluded.

Maybe at the time, but not now. What was tongue in cheek in 2009 has proven to be prescient for the entire business world.

“Every company—regardless of industry, product, or service—must learn to express itself through software,” says Roland Acra, senior vice president and general manager of the Cisco Data Center Business Group. “And that’s because software applications and services have become the primary drivers of business innovation, agility, and differentiation.”

“Businesses are looking for new ways to engage their customers and drive top-line revenue,” adds Iddo Kadim, CTO at Intel. “The best way to do that is to develop their own software.”

It should come as no surprise, then, that the standing and importance of application developers have dramatically increased in a short amount of time. They are the new enterprise rock stars.

ENABLING THE ENABLERS

The rise of application development has had a direct impact on IT infrastructure teams, who must deliver the foundations on which software innovation and differentiation are built. Traditionally dedicated to supporting all end users, Acra says they must now focus their efforts on developer needs.

“Infrastructure teams are in a tough spot,” he says. “They’ve always been able to dictate technology systems and processes, but you can’t do that with developers. If developers get bogged down with internal or technological friction, everyone will fail.”

Every rock star has a team behind them that helps pave the path to success. And every infrastructure team has an opportunity to play that indispensable role, to be the technological enabler of business enablers. But it requires a shift toward application and software centrality.

“IT has always had to put together servers, network, storage, databases, and other components every time a new application was being developed. Then they would have to over provision capacity to protect against demand uncertainty, which led to low utilization and unnecessary cost,” explains Kadim. “It has become critical to provide application developers with elastic compute, networking, and storage resources on demand.”

“Developers shouldn’t have to worry about firewalls, Ethernet ports, and other infrastructure minutiae. They should be able to express their application’s needs in plain terms, and the infrastructure should be able to comply,” says Acra. “This requires you to analyze, simplify, automate, and protect your entire IT environment—what we call the ASAP data center.”

It also demands a holistic policy model that provides abstraction between applications and underlying systems. Cisco and Intel have worked together for years to develop, integrate, and optimize foundational technologies that enable this abstraction without compromising IT performance, security, or governance. The combination of Intel® Xeon® processor-based Cisco Unified Computing System™ (Cisco UCS®) and Cisco® Application Centric Infrastructure (Cisco ACI™), in particular, provide the underpinnings of a policy-based, next-generation data center.

“This stuff would be easy if you had one application on one server behind one switch, but IT environments aren’t like that anymore,” Acra notes. “There’s a massive graph of interdependent pieces, and those pieces can change from day to day, hour to hour. Applications are complex, workloads are bursty, and hybrid infrastructure is dynamic.”

That’s why a software-defined, application-centric architecture can be a boon to developers and infrastructure teams alike. It frees developers to write code without concern for underlying systems—whether bare metal or virtual, private or public cloud. It gives infrastructure teams the security and control they need to protect the business across those hybrid environments. And it can provide the basis for better collaboration and partnership among all IT groups.

“Abstracting infrastructure from software gives application developers independence and agility,” says Kadim. “At the same time, infrastructure teams are able to improve systems management and utilization, which lowers capital and operating costs.”

“Of all your users, developers are the ones you need to support the most,” Acra says. “They are the critical enablers of your company’s success and their needs change the fastest.”

After all, your rock stars aren’t that different from Intel luminaries. They just need the right stage on which to perform.

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Join Roland Acra on Monday, June 26, in Las Vegas for a Cisco Live Innovation Showcase, *Developer’s Delight: Cure Your Hyperscale Envy*. [Register today](#).

