CREATING VISIBILITY ACROSS TODAY'S COMPLEX INFRASTRUCTURES

In this Q&A, Mav Turner, vice president, product management at SolarWinds, provides insight into the capabilities that are critical to understand and manage today's expanding infrastructures.

What IT management challenges do government agencies face as infrastructure expands beyond the traditional data center and into co-location, hybrid cloud and other new environments?

One challenge is related to staff training and the accelerating pace of change. If an agency's IT staff doesn't keep up with the core technologies that are emerging, and if they don't have the proper technical skills, they won't be able to effectively leverage the newest technologies to better serve constituents. In addition, the organization will face greater risk in terms of both security and project management. Another challenge is around visibility and tooling. As organizations move workloads beyond the traditional data center, the ability to connect end to end becomes more challenging. As a result, organizations lose visibility into how those assets are performing.

What risks should state and local government leaders be thinking about when incorporating new sources of data and technologies into their infrastructures?

Stability and security. When infrastructure is evolving rapidly, it's more difficult to have a stable, highly available platform if you're not aware of how changes will impact you. SaaS and services vendors may be pushing code changes weekly or even multiple times per day, and those changes may impact something you have built technology on top of. To ensure platform availability, it's critical to thoroughly understand the change control process of whichever vendor(s) you're using. Regarding security, once you start bridging infrastructure components to create a hybrid cloud, risks expand greatly. If you're moving really fast and security is not top of mind, you

might build something that is highly functional but it may expand your risk exposure; you have to be very intentional and pragmatic when you think about securing your infrastructure in a hybrid world.

How do enterprise-level management and monitoring tools help simplify the operation of these complex new infrastructure environments?

The key is to create visibility across the entire infrastructure, whether something is on-prem, pure cloud or hybrid. With everything so distributed today, it's much more difficult to isolate problems because there are so many interdependencies. Enterprise-level management and monitoring tools help simplify operations by providing clear visibility into the expanded infrastructure, its interdependencies and the location of potential problems.

How can organizations best use management and monitoring tools to meet current demands while also creating a path to the future?

Most government entities can't just bulk replace everything. There is a long tail of technology and legacy applications that they'll have to support for a long time. To future-proof their monitoring strategies, organizations must ensure they can bring the full scope of both legacy applications and the new modern applications into view — all in a single pane of glass that allows them to see all the services they're delivering. Some vendors focus on the newer technologies and don't address legacy technologies. It's critical to work with a well-established vendor that understands these things and can tie the whole infrastructure together.

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