IT NE**X**T

MEDIA FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF CIOs

WE JUST LOST OUR EDIT TEAM!

benefits of the cloud? For example, how much management bandwidth will it free? How much real estate will be unlocked?

Once you are through with the exercise, take the next step by evaluating the CSP. Do remember to map your requirements and expectations with the CSP's capabilities and the kind of service level agreements (SLAs) that you want.

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THE CSP?

Strategic capability: These include the quality of manpower employed by the cloud service provider, its partnerships with other industry players in the cloud ecosystem, patents held or filed, and membership of technology forums and standards bodies.

Portfolio and customer empowerment: It's important to see that the CSP has a good breadth and depth in terms of it offerings, and supports various service needs through a flexible pricing approach.

Customer empowerment is a very important aspect of a cloud model. The service provider should provide adequate "self-care" support and also provide for service lifecycle management. Features such as real-time reporting and application visibility will further strengthen the case.

Apart from this, there should be a transparent way of measuring service performance, ideally supported by enforceable service level agreements. Another key consideration in selecting a CSP is the country in which it is located and jurisdiction by which it is covered. Once these concerns have been assessed and reasonably addressed, migrating to the cloud can be much easier and less of a headache.

Business viability: While the above two key factors should influence an IT manager's decision, it is equally important to find out the kind of brand visibility the CSP enjoys, the track record of its top management team, and it strategic investors or VCs.

Last but not the least, it will help to check out independent assessments of the CSPs available from reputed market research firms like IDC, Gartner, Yankee and Forrester.

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IT AUDIT

Track IT, cut cost

Internal audit can help enterprises view their IT assets at par with monetary resources to minimise misuse

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It never ceases to amaze me that in spite of the widely reported cases of hacking, data theft and misuse of company's IT resources, many enterprises have not taken the initia-tive of conducting internal IT audits, let alone think of conducting an external one. This sce-nario has especially been observed in smaller business organisations.

First, let us see why smaller organisations should be concerned about doing an internal IT audit.

IT users in organisations, intentionally or unintentionally, misuse the company's IT resources in terms of bandwidth, Internet usage and what they store on their hard drives. Now, just as an organisation will not like their monetary resources to be misused, they cannot accept the misuse of their IT resources.

The question now arises as to who should conduct the internal IT audit? If cost and

IF COST IS HOLDING YOU BACK FROM HIRING A SPECIALIST TO AUDIT ENTERPRISE IT ASSETS, SOMEONE OF THE RANK OF IT MANAGER OR ABOVE CAN FIT THE BILL

manpower are not a constraint, then ideally, there should be a dedicated internal IT audit team or specialist. But what does the IT department do when either the cost or lack of initiative from the management poses a problem?

In such a case, even though it goes against the basic tenet that a person should not audit ones own work, I feel that someone of the rank of an IT manger, or above, should take the initiative. It is better to conduct an internal IT audit than carry out no audit at all.

GET THE MANAGEMENT'S BUY-IN

The first step will obviously be to educate and convince the senior management for their support. The IT manager will need to explain the requirements of conducting internal IT audits and its advantages. It's impor-

tant to point out how IT resources are being wasted or misused and what threats and risks the organisation faces, preferably backed by statistical data.

Ideally, all this should be in form of a written communication, followed by a presentation to the management.

Once the management gives the go-ahead for conducting an IT audit, the next step is to convince them to appoint a small IT steering committee, comprising of senior people, to oversee the functioning of the IT audit, and to frame the IT policies and guidelines to be followed. The internal IT auditor will report to this committee.

ADOPT A FRAMEWORK

The next step is to adopt a framework such as the ISO 27001 standard. This will ensure that the major areas are addressed by the internal auditor. Although the current ISO 27001 standard does not address issues such as Wi-Fi technology and Green IT, it nevertheless does not deter a company from including additional points in the audit guidelines.

The internal IT auditor will need to be educated on auditing skills. Ideally, the person should undergo a professional training such as CISA or the ISO 27001 Lead Auditor program. At the same time, it goes without saying that upgrading of technical skills will remain a continuous process.

Another important thing that the internal IT auditor should be monitoring closely is the laws relating to IT. This is generally overlooked, and can lead to serious problems.

DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS

It is important to remember that as an auditor, IT managers should not just have an excellent understanding of technology, they also need to be a good communicator. In case the IT auditor is unable to communicate clearly and effectively with the management and employees, the audit process is bound to fail.
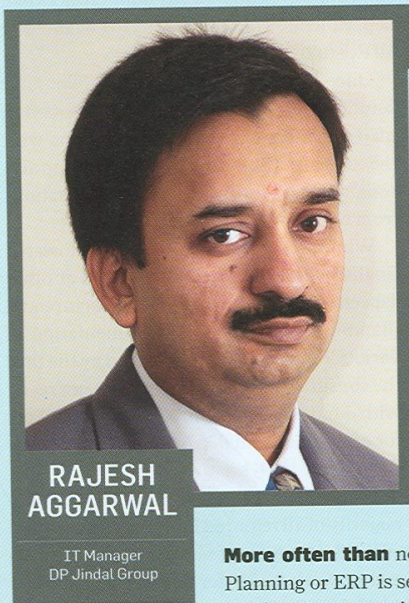
Other soft skills such as leadership and inter-personal skills are also important.

Finally, when it comes to acquiring software tools for auditing, if the organisation is not willing to invest in licensced software, there are a plethora of free auditing tools available online. The IT manager (now in the shoes of an internal IT auditor) will need to evaluate such tools and deploy the ones that best suit his organisation's requirements.

The role of an internal IT auditor can be interesting, yet challenging for the IT manager. The biggest challenge perhaps will lie in disclosing the true findings of an audit to the management in such a manner that ultimately it benefits the organisation. If communicated correctly and in a positive manner, these findings will garner further management support for strengthening the auditing process and curbing the misuse of IT resources in the organisation.

ERP

Coordinate, let others plan

It is a must that all beneficiaries see it as a tool for better planning of their 3M resources of man, machine and material

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More often than not, Enterprise Resource Planning or ERP is seen as a magic stick that can boost an organisation's profitability. In reality, however, the success of an ERP solution depends on a number of factors that go beyond just the technology.

In fact, it would be good to remember that ERP is nothing but a tool that can help organisations plan their 3M resources—man, machine and material—in an effective manner. Given this, the organisation's top management should clearly understand what the solution means for the organisation.

To further ensure that the ERP is successfully rolled out, the enterprise needs to properly define the various functional procedures. There is also a need to set up a core team comprising the right set of decision makers and users. Besides, the IT manager should also seek answers to few questions before embarking on an ERP journey.

● What is the amount that the organisation is willing to invest?

● How will the company measure the return on investment (RoI)?

● Is the organisation agile enough to

> **FOR ERP'S MAGIC TO WORK, IT TEAM SHOULD BE THE BRIDGE AMONG THE TOP BRASS, THE FUNCTIONAL HEADS AND THE CONSULTING TEAM**