

Midlands Business Journal

AUGUST 10, 2018

THE WEEKLY BUSINESS PAPER OF GREATER OMAHA, LINCOLN AND COUNCIL BLUFFS

VOL. 44 NO. 32

Security, data integrity, pace of change spurring evolution of tech industry

by Dwain Hebda

Issues surrounding data integrity and access, mounting security challenges and the pace of change are fundamentally transforming the role of the IT profession, say local experts.

“Change is the only constant, and the rate of change that is being ushered in by technology is, perhaps, unprecedented in recorded human history,” said Arvind Thapar, vice president of strategy and acquisitions for First National Technology Solutions. “As such, it requires a different skillset to navigate the technology worker’s role in waters that can sometimes be turbulent.”

Thapar said the new breed of tech worker will not be able to rely on technical skills alone. Instead, success will rely on a more balanced skillset that includes the ability to adapt.

“With the rise of the ‘cloud’ operating model, traditional infrastructure skills like storage, networking and server deployment are beginning to evolve,” he said. “Roles like cloud architecture where technologists are required to be more adaptable and nimble across a range of disciplines, plus soft skills like empathy and the ability to listen, will continue to be valued even more.”

Thapar said the IT industry must do more to cultivate these traits, as many professionals still view their expertise too narrowly.

“It’s really galling to hear a technology manager say, ‘Well, I focus on ensuring that my systems are up. As to numbers behind my budget, let’s bring somebody from

the CFO’s staff in for the next meeting,’” he said.

“If the technology worker is to elevate their status with business leaders of any organization, they owe it to themselves to get educated on the financials of how various operating models stack up and how those would tie in to the business strategy of their organization.”

One driver of these new expectations is a more sophisticated marketplace. As clients become better versed in technology — or at least in articulating what they want such tools to accomplish — it ramps up demands on their IT vendors. This is especially true in the ongoing battle over security.

“One of the most important advancements in technology security is consumer awareness,” said Rebecca Bortolotti, owner and partner with Advent. “With the continued coverage of concerns regarding the presidential election to the sharing of consumer information, consumers are more aware of how their online presence may be tracked, monitored and manipulated.”

This new understanding and heightened awareness is helping expand security measures from mere firewalls to faster mitigation in the event of an incident, driven by new-frontier level technologies.

“While we may always be in reaction mode to a certain extent, the greatest strides involve

layered security and early detection of a data breach,” Bortolotti said. “New techniques are being deployed to ensure shortened recovery time in the event of breach to minimize damage, such as Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) solutions.

“Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a number of different func-

tions within a business from human resources to complex commercial operations is the next frontier. AI and machine learning are being deployed to help predict weaknesses in infrastructure to avoid future cybersecurity attacks.”

Major technology advancements have

always disrupted the marketplace, and the continued growth of online retailing is no exception. Thor Schrock, president of Schrock Innovations Computer Co., said brick and mortar retail may be approaching such a crossroads.

“Technology is automating more and more things every year,” he said. “Companies need to adapt their offerings to cater to the changing needs of the consumer. Increasingly, the general public is willing to purchase items from online providers like Amazon, eBay and Walmart.com. This is causing a negative feedback loop where local retailers carry fewer items in stock because volume is lower.

“As a result, customers looking for goods

locally can’t always find them so they turn to online ordering. As this loop continues, local retailers are going out of business. This ‘retail apocalypse’ will shake out the weaker local competitors while allowing companies who blend retail with desirable services to capture available market share.”

Schrock said one of the biggest challenges facing the tech industry is on the labor front as the demand for workers is outpacing primary training efforts. Especially, he added, given the late start the American education system had in such subject areas.

“There are lots of opportunities for kids to get experience in coding, engineering, systems design and robotics,” he said. “The younger generations are learning these skills, although students in other developed nations were learning these skills up to a decade ago.

“The challenge has become getting the existing workforce to retrain themselves as the IT job market has tightened and it has become harder for companies to acquire pre-trained talent. Devices do more things than ever, and when these devices work, they are amazing. When they do not work, they can be impossible for the consumer to fix on their own.”



Thapar

Reprinted with permission
from the publisher of MBI Inc.
from the August 10, 2018 issue of the
Midlands Business Journal

This permission is for photo and article reproduction or placement on your Web site. Under no circumstances, because of spamming and other issues, will permission be granted to transmit our stories by e-mail.

Midlands
Business Journal

Lukas Partners

Reprinted with permission from the publisher of MBJ Inc.
from the August 10, 2018 issue of the Midlands Business Journal.
This permission is for photo and article reproduction or placement
on your Web site. Under no circumstances, because of spamming and
other issues, will permission be granted to transmit our stories by e-mail.