The Mainframe Lives On: An Industry Perspective

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While there are significant benefits to be gained by leveraging the mainframe as a strategic platform for new workloads, those benefits may escape the faint of heart. That's because participation in the mainframe renaissance requires:

- **Authentic leadership.** As-a-service solutions are great for obtaining certain types of undifferentiated functionality on the cheap. But CIOs who simply "follow the crowd to the cloud" will pay what everybody else pays—and risk what everyone else risks. To capitalize on the mainframe opportunity, CIOs have to take time to understand that opportunity and communicate it to the team.

- **Investment in new tools.** Millennials don't have years of COBOL analysis experience. And they will find "green screen" tools unsettling. They will require tools that empower them to work on the mainframe just as they would on Windows and Linux systems. Veteran mainframe pros can also benefit from tools that help with

agile best practices—because, as it turns out, old dogs actually enjoy learning new tricks.

- **IT de-siloing**. At most agencies, the mainframe team is segregated from the rest of IT. This no longer makes sense, because applications are increasingly built across platforms. Ultimately software development teams should have the flexibility to host application components wherever it makes the most sense to do so—whether on the mainframe, in the data center or out in the public cloud.
- **Vendor aggression.** Most CIOs have become complacent when it comes to mainframe software—or have limited their negotiations to price and service concessions. But to take the mainframe to the next level, CIOs need their mainframe software vendors to be much more innovative and to support new IBM z Systems features such as Linux and Java processing.

These are not high prices for the superior capabilities the mainframe offers. CIOs who pay them will be far better able to cope with escalating stakeholder demands even as agency IT budgets remain constrained. The result will be better use of taxpayer dollars to provide the most resilient and secure delivery of next-generation public digital services.

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