



# Issues Derailing IT Team Innovation

Key Challenges Facing IT Teams in 2016

**IPSWITCH**



# Introduction

What are the key challenges facing IT teams that can keep mission critical applications and infrastructure from running at full speed?

IT teams work valiantly behind the scenes every day to make sure their digital businesses stay connected. With challenges like dealing with cyber threats and new technology or even just the sheer volume of day-to-day work, it is getting harder and harder for IT teams to keep necessary innovation from going off the rails. These threats to innovation are most glaring in small to mid-sized IT department where personnel and budget resources tend to be more limited, and team members need to be both generalists and specialists.

These are the true front lines of IT – where decisions need to be made quickly and business operations depend on systems functioning properly. Looking ahead to 2016, Ipswitch set out to uncover the biggest issues facing down IT teams.

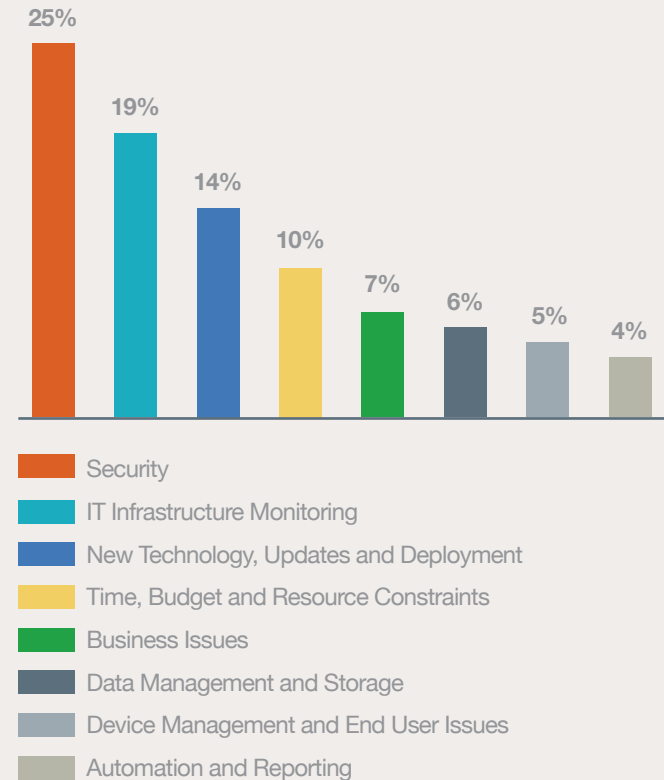
# How We Did It

In July of 2015, Ipswitch surveyed **2,685 IT professionals across the globe** to determine their top IT concern for 2016. The survey was straightforward. We simply asked IT professionals to identify their single biggest IT challenge. The survey was administered via email with a link to a web-based questionnaire, through an international IT database. All regions of the globe were represented in the survey results and broke down the following way: North America was the largest sample size with 61 percent, followed by the EMEA region at 24 percent. Asia-Pacific accounted for 12 percent of all survey respondents while the Latin American/South American market was represented by three percent. This report summarizes what we learned.

The 2,685 responses were analyzed and categorized into eight distinct topic areas:

- Security
- IT Infrastructure Monitoring
- New Technology, Updates and Deployment
- Time, Budget and Resource Constraints
- Business Issues
- Data Management and Storage
- Device Management and End User Issues
- Automation and Reporting

The following report outlines the results and provides context to the issues that have the attention of IT departments everywhere.



# #1. Security

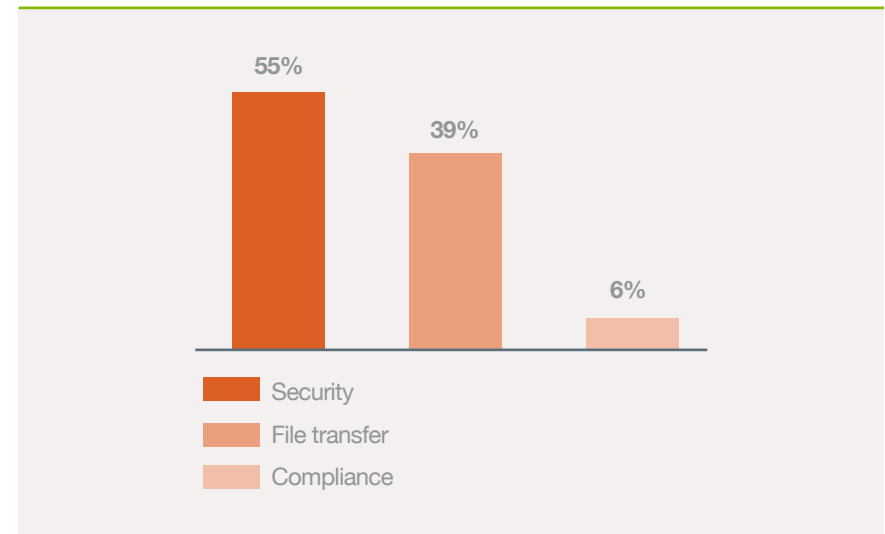


## SECURITY WAS THE TOP CHALLENGE; RECEIVING 25 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL RESPONSES.

General security issues such as breaches, malware, vulnerabilities and zero day attacks were the biggest concern for more than half (55 percent) of the respondents in this category. Given that the security industry is now estimated by most analysts to total approximately \$70 billion in revenue per year, it's not surprising that security ranks high among IT concerns. The harsh reality is we are not doing a good enough job keeping pace with the adversaries working to create vulnerabilities within your network in order to steal your sensitive data.

These groups have become far more sophisticated in their approaches while becoming well-funded by nation states and crime syndicates along the way. Despite the mind numbing dollars being thrown at the problem, we can't say with any degree of certainty as to whether we are safer than we were a year ago or five years ago. Accepting some level of risk is part of doing business. Managing that

risk by recognizing and shoring up points of vulnerability is the difference between using data as a competitive advantage and being the victim of a catastrophic data loss.



“ Our biggest challenge is keeping our network secure and stable with limited resources.”



## **TODAY'S SOPHISTICATED AND WELL-FUNDED CYBER THREATS CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE AND ATTACK NEARLY EVERY PART OF YOUR NETWORK. HOWEVER, DATA THAT IS MOVING FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER IS AT ITS MOST VULNERABLE AND CARRIES WITH IT THE HIGHEST PROBABILITY FOR LOSS.**

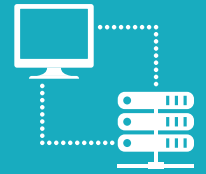
Moving data safely from one location to another both inside and outside of the organization was the second leading response within the security category with 39 percent. When transferring information, whether it is business or personal related material, IT pros fear that users are not always considering the potential pitfalls of the channel they are employing. IT also worry about users who simply email data files or use free services such as Dropbox that can have serious implications long after the information has been transferred.

Compliance was also called out as a third major concern within security. The regulatory guidelines in financial services, healthcare and other high-risk industries demand full transparency and protection of critical business data across the borderless enterprise. Even with this in mind, the responses indicate a remarkable lack of preparedness and confidence on the part of IT pros to pass an audit.

Based on the results, it is clear that security remains a top concern for most IT organizations. They are slightly more concerned with outside threats penetrating their defenses and manipulating their network. However, ensuring the successful and secure transfer of files and information as well as compliance is still top of mind for many IT teams.

**“Transferring encrypted files in a secure manner to ensure privacy standards are met.”**

# #2. IT Infrastructure Monitoring

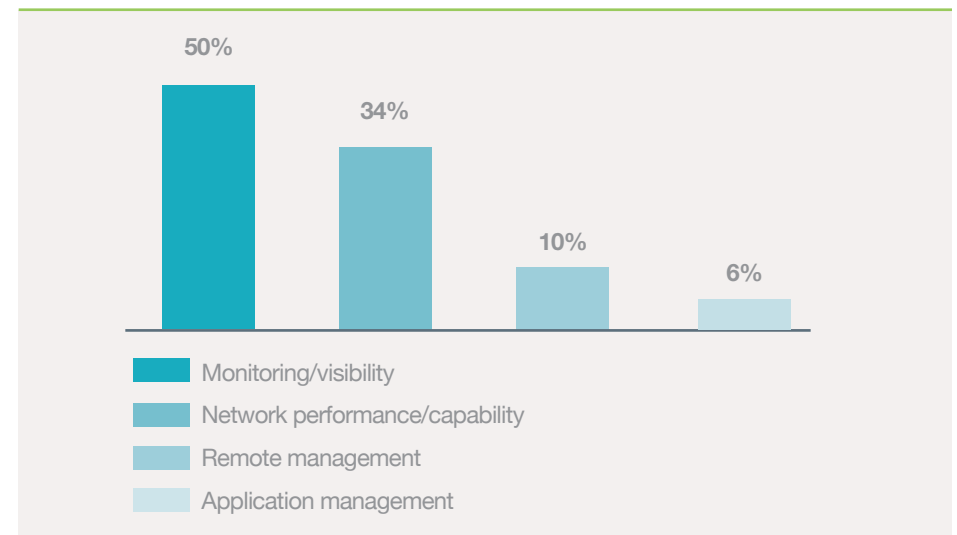


## IT INFRASTRUCTURE MONITORING WAS THE SECOND LEADING CONCERN FOR IT TEAMS IN OUR SURVEY, WITH 19 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL RESPONSES.

Within the infrastructure category, visibility into the entire infrastructure including systems, MS apps, network, virtual environments, web servers, HTML certificates, etc. was seen as the largest concern for 50 percent of IT teams. General networking performance concerns was the second leading response getter at 34 percent. This included everything from sluggish performance to the ability of the network to handle required workloads.

Ensuring network performance is no easy feat as IT teams are tasked with keeping the organization's networks running efficiently and effectively around the clock and need to be concerned with all aspects of the infrastructure including apps, servers, virtual environments and network connected devices. Not to mention application performance is another important aspect of IT's role, as every company relies on an application on a network and a halt in performance means a stop to business.

To add to these pressures is the growing demand for remote access continues to rise with employees working from home, etc. Remote management and application management were the next two leading categories with 10 percent and six percent respectively.



“ A primary challenge for 2015/16 is refreshing infrastructure to provide increased performance, capacity, agility and resiliency.”

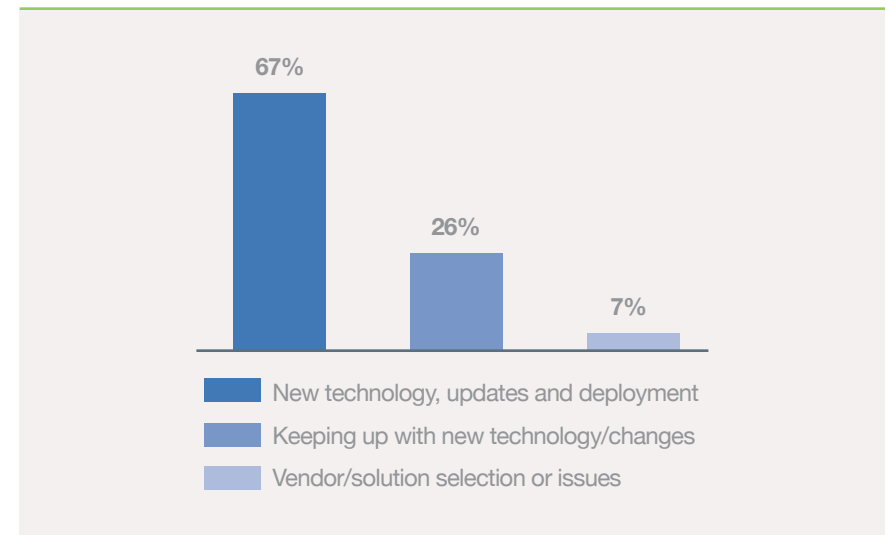
# #3. New Technology, Updates and Deployment



## THE ABILITY TO SELECT, MANAGE AND DEPLOY NEW TECHNOLOGY WAS A LEADING CONCERN OF MANY IT TEAMS SURVEYED IN OUR STUDY.

Two thirds (67 percent) of respondents in this category indicated that making necessary updates and deploying new technology within their organization was the number one issue facing their IT department. Staying abreast of new technologies and respective changes within the industry was on the minds of 26 percent of our survey responders. Vendor and/or solution selection was the third leading response getter for this category with seven percent. Determining which areas of a company's IT infrastructure to update and when can be one of the most important strategic decisions an organization can make in order to ensure business continuity. There are virtually hundreds if not thousands of considerations that come into play when introducing new technology into your environment. Is it compatible with existing technology, will it scale? How much end-user education is required?

Is my IT trained and comfortable with this technology? How will it impact my budget for other crucial projects? These are just a few of the questions that IT has to cope with every day when considering buying and deploying new technology and it's clearly a top concern.



“*Implementing new technology and having supporting staff understand how to use it to increase their efficiency and productivity at work.*”

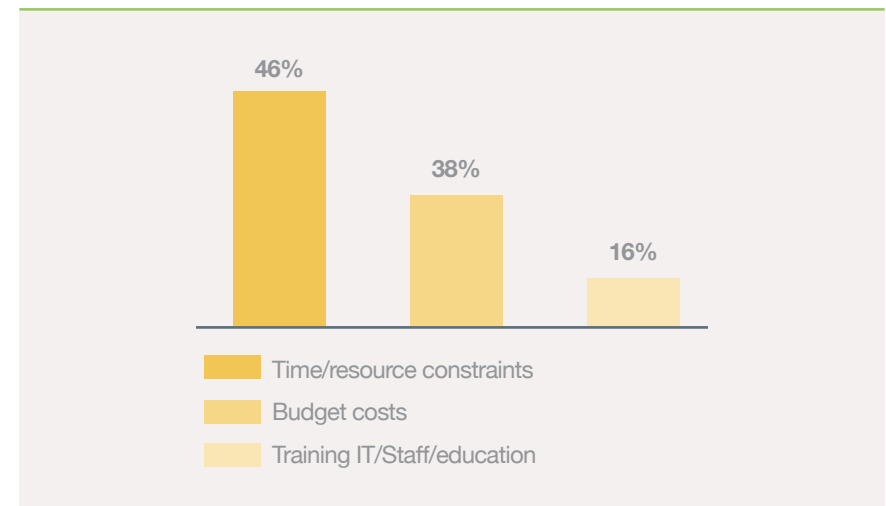
# #4. Time, Budget and Resource Constraints



## IT TEAMS ARE CONSTANTLY CHARGED TO DO MORE WITH LESS, AND ARE CONFRONTED WITH DOWNSIZING IN THE FACE OF INCREASING COMPETITION AND A SHRINKING BOTTOM LINE.

The ability to keep up while battling time and resource constraints was a common theme amongst IT teams surveyed with 10 percent indicating this was the biggest hurdle facing IT. Nearly half (46 percent) of respondents in this category indicated that time and internal resource capabilities hindered their ability to do their jobs effectively. Another 38 percent indicated that limited budgets were to blame for their inability to execute on all necessary projects. Training and educating their IT departments was third on the list of issues with 16 percent.

The challenge for IT teams is to learn how to thrive in a world where complexity and risks in an IT environment are growing faster than the IT team. To manage this growing complexity while maintaining the same or smaller headcount and budget, organizations need simple and powerful IT management tools that save time, resources and is budget friendly.



“ Staying on top of maintenance while juggling daily ops and projects. Never enough hours in a day, and never enough staff to get everything checked off the list!”



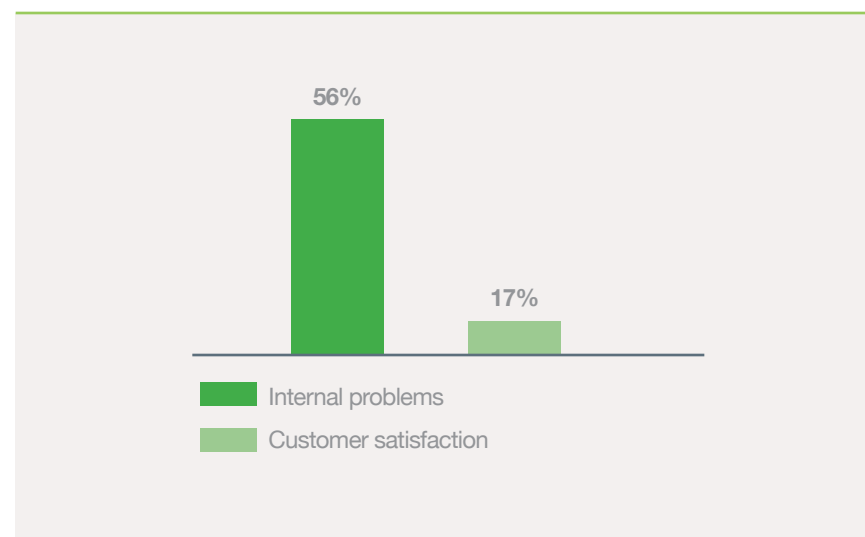
# #5. Business Issues



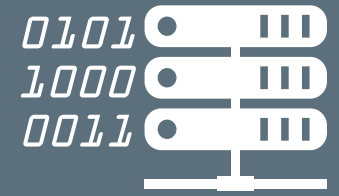
## BUSINESS RELATED ISSUES SUCH AS INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WERE NOTED BY MANY IT TEAMS AS A ROADBLOCK TO MORE EFFECTIVE IT OPERATIONS.

Of the total respondents that flagged this as their primary concern, 56 percent indicated that these were largely internal problems. Another 17 percent believed that the main cause of the problems was more related to customer-facing initiatives and areas of the business. The complexity, cross-functional dynamics and competing priorities that exist in every organization only increase the challenge for IT teams. Every department has its own business goals and agendas that rely heavily upon IT for support. As IT is constrained by budget and IT resources, sometimes tough decisions need to be made that can leave some projects on the cutting room floor. The ability to focus on the task at hand and not get caught up in the internal debates is critical for IT success.

“*Getting different IT sections to communicate and collaborate effectively with each other.*”



# #6. Data Management and Storage



## DATA WAS ON THE MIND OF SIX PERCENT OF ALL IT PROFESSIONALS. HOW TO MANAGE, PROTECT AND STORE BIG DATA WERE THE PRIMARY DRIVERS OF THESE RESPONSES.

The ability to control and contain costs while still ensuring that data was readily accessible was seen as the chief concern in this area. For years now we have been hearing about the value of data and how important it is to the success of the business. While there is no denying that information represents value to the organization, the flip side are the costs in terms of both actual dollars and resources required to maintain and store the data so that it is readily accessible when needed. While storage costs have been dropping rapidly, this is far outpaced by the increase in data being stored as well as secondary costs such as power and facility management.

What's more, organizations continue to struggle to manage disaster recovery effectively. The expected costs often multiply when running a duplicate data center, stripping the organization of valuable budget. To combat this, many companies simply turn to back up as a stop gap solution which brings forth its own set of unique challenges.

**“ Our largest job by far is the collection of data from multiple sources, internal and external. These sources all have different protocols for connecting to the systems that contain the data. It is always a challenge to bring a new data source online.”**

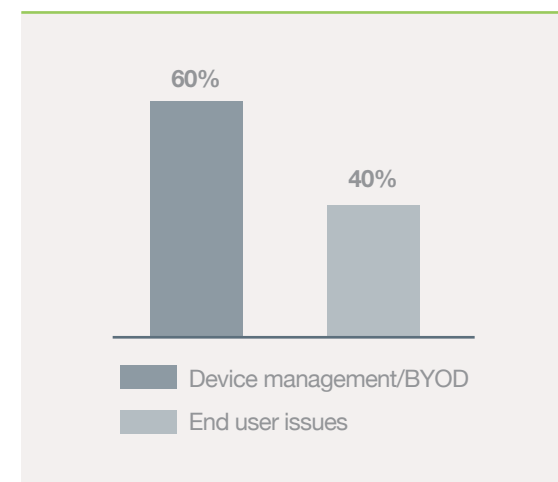
# #7. Device Management and End User Issues



**WHILE BYOD POLICIES THAT PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEES CONTINUE TO GROW IN POPULARITY, THEY HAVE MADE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE IT TEAMS TASKED WITH MANAGING DEVICES CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK.**

An influx of tablets and smartphones, along with the increased use of wearables in the workplace has made device management a top concern among IT teams, with five percent of all respondents indicating it as a major challenge.

Within this category, responders broke down into two primary areas of response. Device management or BYOD at 60 percent, with respondents noting that this makes it more difficult to keep internal data protected and creates issues with monitoring. The other major category within this group was end user issues as they relate to device management, which accounted for 40 percent of responses. Demands from end users put more pressure on IT teams, and coupled with educating colleagues and responding to issues, IT pros require better support and more efficiency in this area of their job.



**“ Keeping data protected when employees elect to use their own devices to connect with servers.”**

# #8. Automation and Reporting

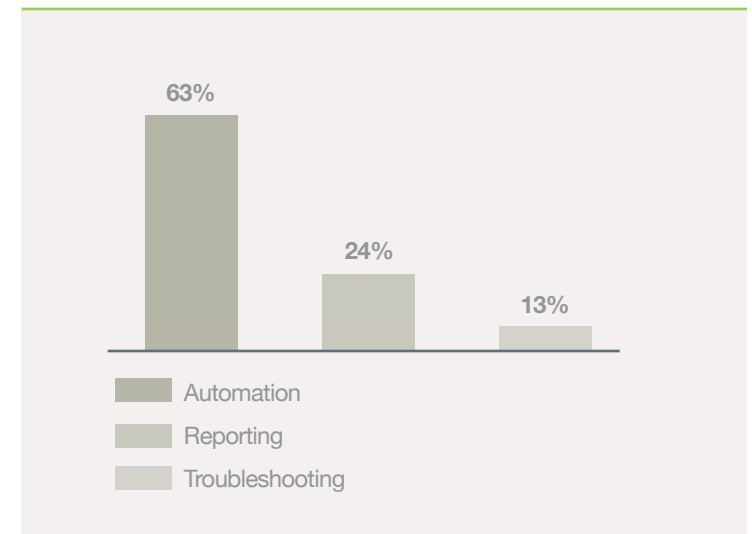


The ability to automate many of the time-consuming but critical IT tasks within an organization garnered the attention of four percent of the total survey base.

**AUTOMATION WAS THE PRIMARY CONCERN FOR 63 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL CATEGORY WHILE REPORTING CONSTITUTED 24 PERCENT OF RESPONSES.**

Troubleshooting was the primary concern of the remaining 13 percent.

With IT resources constrained, time needs to be spent where it will have the most impact on the business. Automated as many of the routine tasks is one of the key strategies of IT teams that need to do more with less. Many of the time-consuming tasks that are required to enable daily operations, as well as regulatory and policy compliance, can be automated by the incorporating the proper technology. This frees up countless resources to tackle more critical IT projects and concerns that affect business outcomes.



**“ More automation of manual processes in order to increase business throughput, quality and accuracy, whilst reducing resource costs.”**



# Conclusion

Going into 2016, this survey revealed the top challenges of IT teams in the ongoing battle to tame complexity and enable modern businesses. Threats and demands on IT infrastructure continue to increase while budget and resource constraints remain a constant challenge in most organizations. The ability to select and deploy new technology has become more complicated than ever before as offerings are varied and far reaching. As the workforce continues to diversify, IT must adapt to the “new” employee and their steadfast expectations about how they should work and live, which including working on the devices they are comfortable with while using the applications they prefer.

Protecting and managing the data and systems that allow businesses to function properly is a primary concern, as is the ability to navigate difficult business issues that can often derail critical IT projects before they get off the ground. Finally, the ability to automate the mundane IT issues that detract from more important activities remains problematic for many IT teams.

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# About Ipswitch

Ipswitch helps solve complex IT problems with simple solutions. The company's software is trusted by millions of people worldwide to transfer files between systems, business partners and customers; and to monitor networks, applications and servers. Ipswitch was founded in 1991 and is based in Lexington, Massachusetts with offices throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia.

For more information, visit [www.ipswitch.com](http://www.ipswitch.com).

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